

**UFYB 174: Greatest Hits Vol 3.  
Radical Self-Love & Self-Care**



**Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Kara Loewentheil**

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## **UFYB 174: Greatest Hits Vol 3. Radical Self-Love & Self-Care**

Welcome to *Unf\*ck Your Brain*, the only podcast that teaches you how to use psychology, feminism, and coaching, to rewire your brain and get what you want in life. And now here's your host, Harvard Law School grad, feminist rockstar, and master coach, Kara Loewentheil.

Hello my chickens. How are you guys? It is snowing here as always. I feel like we were pretty lucky in December it was pretty mild. Last month in New York, it's just been a lot of snow.

My friends and I used to have a rule that you weren't allowed to make any decisions about your life in February because you were not trustworthy in February. So it's kind of fun to see how far I've come. I trust myself to make decisions in February right now, but I do also find it helpful when I feel like I'm losing my mind these days to be like, "It's February, it'll pass, this is what February is always like."

So we are continuing with our greatest hits series and this is a limited special series where I am re-releasing some of the most important, most impactful, deepest episodes that I've ever done on the podcast for a couple of reasons. Some of you are new to the podcast and understandably have not listened to the entire 200 episode back catalogue.

I don't know what you're waiting for but fine. So for some of you these episodes are new. For some of you, these episodes will be repeats but I so encourage you to listen to them anyway because you'll get it at a whole other level.

We actually just had somebody in The Clutch post about how when she first listened to the anxious attachment and dating episode, that was the last one in the series that we released, the time she listened to it she really applied it to her romantic relationships and it was really helpful. And then that was that.

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And then she listened to it again when we just re-released it a few weeks ago and she understood it on a whole deeper level. She saw both how it was operating in her romantic relationships at a deeper level, but also the ways in which it was operating in her work life and her friendships.

And those were areas that she hadn't even thought of the first time she heard the episode because her thought work kind of hadn't even taken her to those places yet. So when you listen to a teaching again, you learn something new every time. I listen to the episodes of other people's podcasts that have impacted me the most over and over and it's such a good practice to get into, to re-listen, hear something new.

The lesson always hits in a different way, depending on where you are in your work. I mean, the truth is like, all of it is your thoughts cause your feelings, but that hits us in such a different way, depending on where we are and what we're working on.

So this episode today is one of my very favorites, all about radical self-love and self-care. And this episode is so important because self-care and self-love are such buzz words, but they're being used to sort of do everything from sell you products, like skincare or Botox to kind of overindulgence.

Y'all know I'm a huge fan of indulgence so I don't even mean overindulgence, but I kind of mean sometimes it's used to kind of say that completely checking out of our own lives and not having goals for ourselves or not trying to rise to the occasion or not trying to become the person we want to be, that that is self-care. It's just misused in so many ways.

And so this episode really dives into what is self-love, what is self-care from a thought work and a feminist perspective. From a feminist thought work perspective in fact. One of the things I talk about in the episode is how revolutionary it is for women to reclaim ownership over our own bodies.

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A lot of what we're sold as self-care is actually just kind of grooming our bodies for other people's approval and that that is again, obviously no shame, I think we all are complicit in the patriarchy in different ways and I certainly get my nails done and wear lipstick.

I'm not here to tell you you should or shouldn't do anything. But the idea that grooming to meet a certain visual standard society sets, that that's self-care and that's how you refill your own cup and that's what it means to love yourself, that's where I really disagree and kind of feel like we have to draw a line.

And so women are so socialized to believe that their value is in their service and their utility to others, and the more marginalized identities you live in, the more that's true. And so one of the things that I touch on in the episode that I think is so important is changing our relationship with ourselves and our bodies so that we are relating to our bodies as our home, as a subject. Not as an object for us to kind of crimp and wax and reduce and stuff into Spanx for other people's enjoyment.

This is something that y'all know I'm extremely passionate about and I teach so much about body image. And so I also want to let you guys know that I am teaching a totally free Unfuck Your Body Image webinar. So the webinar is going to be on March 11th at 1pm Eastern.

As always, if you cannot attend live, we will share a replay if you register. And this webinar is all about the top three body image hacks that I think you can implement right away to start seeing a change in your body image and really start seeing a change in your relationship to your body.

So that's the Unfuck Your Body Image webinar, and I'm going to teach those top three body image hacks. I'm also going to be sharing a very

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limited opportunity to work with me more in depth on your body image and by body image, I really mean your relationship to your body.

We talk about body image and that sort of what you see as your body, but really I'm talking about what is your whole relationship with your body? What do you think your body is for? Why do you have one? How do you treat it? How do you talk to it? How do you see it? How do you live in it? All of that is part of this work.

This is work that until now has only been available in The Clutch, but I really want to make accessible to as many people as possible, and so for the first time, I'm offering you all the opportunity to work on this material outside of The Clutch, through the Unfuck Your Body Image course, which I'm going to be talking about more on the webinar.

So it's the first opportunity that anyone has had to do this with me outside of The Clutch. So it's a really big deal and I'm super excited about it. But even if you're not interested in that, the webinar is going to teach you my top three body image hacks. I'm going to teach you something about the history of body image and how it relates to American culture and white supremacy and the history of slavery.

I go into your visual diet, visual detox, how social media impacts your brain and your body satisfaction, really teach you so much amazing tools and information that's going to help change your body image regardless of whether you ever want to work with me more closely or see my face. So you're going to want to come to that.

Unfuck Your Body Image webinar, totally free webinar, March 11th, 1pm Eastern. You are going to register by texting your email address to the number +13479971784. And when you're prompted for the code, you just

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write back BODYIMAGE, all one word. Or you can go to unfuckyourbrain.com/bodyimage. Again, one word.

So unfuckyourbrain.com/bodyimage. All of a sudden, I'm like, is that a forward slash or a backslash. No, it's a backslash. Whatever slash you do when you're doing an URL. Listen, I'm 110. I don't know how the internet works. Or text your email address to +13479971784 and then use the codeword BODYIMAGE, all one word.

And by the way, if you are interested in that six-week program and in really doing this work with me at a deep level, I really encourage you to come to the webinar live if you can because when I have sold this program in The Clutch, it has sold out sometimes on the webinar, sometimes within 24 hours afterwards and now we're going to be offering it publicly to so many more people so I just know it's going to sell out really fast.

And if this is something you want to do and you do want to really change your relationship with your body and you are ready to do that work at a deeper level, I don't want you to miss out because you figure you'll get to the replay a week later and then it's sold out. So text or go to unfuckyourbrain.com/bodyimage. Get yourself on the webinar list and if you can, come to the webinar live.

Alright chickens, so without further ado, I'm going to - past me is going to take it away and teach you about radical self-love and self-care and I will see you next week.

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So, I've been thinking and coaching and teaching a lot about our relationships to our bodies and I've been really going deep in what that

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means for our relationship to ourselves. How our relationships to our bodies has been making me think about our relationship to ourselves as a whole.

So, I've talked about self-love on the podcast before. I mean really, all my episodes are about self-love in some way, or the lack of self-love and how that manifests in our thought patterns. But as I've been developing all of the new curriculum and teaching and tools for the Body Image Breakthrough class, I keep coming back to two phrases.

Radical self-love and exquisite self-care. I'm going to tell you why, what those mean to me, and what I think they can mean to you. So, let's start with radical self-love and I'm going to use the old high school debate technique and break out the dictionary to define it.

So radical means relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something. Far reaching or thorough. And it also means advocating or based on thorough or complete political or social change. So, I think these are so related.

Because what is radical self-love? We live in a society where women are taught to put themselves last. We're taught that doing that is what makes us good, what makes us worthy, what makes us valuable. Men are more often taught that they are valuable in and of themselves, but women are taught they're valuable for what they can do for others.

And the more marginalized identities you live in or with, the more ways you're told that you're not good enough. So if you are Black or Indigenous or a person of color, if you are fat, if you live with a disability or a chronic illness, if you're neurodivergent, if you're LGBTQ+, if you're a "minority" religion, if you're poor, and there's many other aspects.

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There are pervasive social ideologies that undermine and diminish and negate the value of any human with any of these characteristics. And the more of them you have, the more of those messages you get. And these messages, they don't just exist in a vacuum. They're integral to our social order.

Who gets elected to political office, who gets hired and promoted, who gets glorified in the media? Usually people with none or at most one of these identities. If the person has two, they stand out. Think about, let's say fat white women actresses or singers. They're not that many. A handful.

If they have three of these identities, they are usually the only one you can name. Think about Lizzo. So when I think about radical and talk about radical self-love, I mean choosing to love yourself in the face of all of the socialization and conditioning that you have absorbed from a society that is literally built on maintaining those hierarchies and those belief systems.

That's why it's a political act. More women who believe in themselves and love themselves unconditionally, that's more women who will run for office, who will go for the promotion, who will make waves in their chosen arenas. And you may be listening to this and you're not a woman, you don't identify as a woman, same deal.

Self-love isn't the only thing we need. We do need structural change as well. But here's the thing; who do you think is going to make the structural change? Someone has to go out and do that work, right? Is it going to be people who hate themselves for the ways they're different from the privileged norm?

Those are not the people who are able to make change. It's going to be people whose radical self-love will not allow them to settle for accepting a world that doesn't recognize their value. Because that is the thing about



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radical self-love. It's thorough. That's what we learnt radical meant. It reaches every area of your life.

And it changes everything. Because one of the most insidious aspects of oppression is that it gets inside your brain. And it makes you believe that number one, you deserve to be treated worse than other people, and/or number two, there's no other option. Nowhere you can go, no job you can have, no one you can be with where you won't be treated that way.

And these premises work together. So, I'm going to shift gears a little bit because I want to give you the example of how this works in personal relationships. I think it's easy to see it there. You will always accept love from other people that matches the love you have for yourself.

So, let me say it again. You will always accept love from other people that matches the love you have for yourself. If your love for yourself is conditional, it will seem totally normal and acceptable to you to be with a partner whose love for you is conditional. If you criticize and mentally abuse yourself, it will seem totally normal and acceptable to you to have a friend who does that too.

Now, I want to be really clear. This is not about deserving or victim blaming. You don't control other people's models ever. Their actions are caused by their own thoughts and feelings. But this is how the brain works. We seek what is comfortable and familiar. Makes sense to us, right? Upholds our worldview.

If you hate your body, then if your partner says they hate your body, this will not seem odd to you. You're like, yeah, agreed, we have this in common, we both hate my body, that makes sense. Whereas if you hate your body and someone says they love your body, you have cognitive dissonance. You don't believe them. You try to dismiss it.

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If you think you're too much and too loud, and then a friend tells you that you're too much and too loud, this won't seem odd to you. You'll be like, yeah, that's what I think too, that makes sense. Now, you may feel hurt and have a defensive reaction, but that's really because you believe it.

Your response will be to try to convince the other person that they're wrong or beat yourself up that they're right. But now imagine if you have radical self-love. So how would you react to someone who's inconsistent in their affection or their attention?

If you're consistently affectionate and attentive to yourself, you just aren't available for a relationship with someone who isn't. Why would you be with someone who treats you in a way that you don't treat yourself? It just won't compute in your brain.

If you treat yourself with love and care and respect and reverence, when you come across someone who doesn't, it won't feel so comfortable and familiar. It won't make sense; it won't seem normal. They'll stand out. You won't understand why they would think you would want what they're offering you.

If you've cooked an elaborate, gorgeous meal and somebody comes by and is like, hey, I found some old French fries in my car, do you want them? You're not offended or outraged, but you're just like, why would I add that? What is that adding to what I already have here?

You will always accept love that matches the way you love yourself. When you love yourself radically and completely, you're simply not available for any other kind of love. And if someone comes along who doesn't love you this way, you're just not interested. There's no hustling to prove your worth or get their love because you're not in any doubt about your worthiness. You already have that love from yourself.

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So, if someone comes along who offers a similar level of love for you, well, that's delightful. And you might be like, yeah, bring it to the party, that sounds fun. But if someone was offering less, you're not interested. And it doesn't feel like any kind of loss.

So, I think the same is true in our relationships to society and institutions. We can't opt out of them quite as easily as we can opt out of a second date, but it's still a helpful analogy. Because let's think about it. What is more helpful to the status quo than a marginalized person or community who accepts their marginalization as deserved or unchangeable, who internalizes a sense of their own inferiority and who's willing to subsist on the crumbs that fall from above?

And not all of us are in the same place on this. I would say probably a few people listening to this podcast are all the way at explicitly accepting and agreeing that because they're a woman or because they're a person or color or because they're fat or because they live with a disability, they're worthless.

We don't have that thought consciously, but we internalize so much of the stuff that we end up hustling for our worth because we have internalized these messages of unworthiness. And as long as we're believing them, we're complicit in the status quo.

We're not thinking about changing it. We're just thinking about getting legitimacy and getting validation. When you're hustling for your worth in a person or relationship, you don't think about changing the partner or the friend to a different one because your thought process is I just need them to see I'm good enough.

And the same thing happens in our interactions with society and institutions and jobs and everything else. And on the other hand, what is more dangerous to the status quo than a marginalized person or community who

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loves themselves radically and completely, who will not count in society that does not reflect that love, who has freed themselves from internalized self-hatred and rejection and who believes completely in their right to exist and be equal and be loved?

That's what is dangerous to inequality. That's when you can't abide a society that doesn't match what you know your worth. And so, I think this is where the second phrase that I have been coming back to comes in. How do we create that radical self-love, how do we start to practice it and live it?

It happens in your thoughts, of course. But the way that I like to access it is to think about what would it be like to take exquisite care of myself, right? This is where exquisite self-care comes in. And I actually think that this phrase I may have borrowed from Susan Hyatt, who's a coach, who talks about being a woman who takes exquisite care of herself.

And I think we mean it in some overlapping, but somewhat different ways. When I look up the definition of exquisite, what it means is extremely beautiful and typically, delicate. And when I think about what delicate means in this context, I don't think it means breakable or fragile. I think it means careful, on purpose, treated gently and with reverence.

And that does not mean bubble baths and spa days. I mean, those are fine, but that's not what we're talking about. I mean taking care of yourself exquisitely. The way you take care of someone you completely and fully love.

So, think about how you touch yourself. When you get dressed or when you put on face cream. Do you rush yourself? Are you rough with yourself? Are you inattentive to yourself? Or do you touch yourself the way a lover would? Gently, with tenderness.

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Think about how you feed yourself. Do you eat the leftovers off your kid's plate standing up over the sink? Is that how you'd host dinner for a new loved one, a new partner, a new best friend? Think about how you talk to yourself. Do you say things to yourself you'd never say to someone you love?

This is not about perfection. Even with people we truly love, we sometimes are short, we snap, we have perfunctory sex. We're not always fully engaged. But your relationship with yourself needs to be at least as thoughtful and nurturing and loving as your relationships with other people in your life.

And when you are trying to figure out how to love yourself radically, asking yourself if you are taking exquisite care of yourself is such a window in because the answer will either be yes, in which case, amazing, no, I just never thought about it but now I'm going to, or no, and here's why.

Here's all my thoughts, all my reasons that I shouldn't do that and I need to do things this other way, and I'm not worth it and I don't deserve it and I'm not good enough and I can't be alone with myself. Whatever thoughts are keeping you from taking exquisite care of yourself.

Those are the thoughts that are in between you and radical self-love. So, I always teach the thought has to come before the action. Exquisite self-care is the action, but it flows from radical self-love and it is a way of accessing how to be radically self-loving, and a way of identifying where your thoughts may not be lining up to produce radical self-love and how you can change them.

If you create radical self-love in your thoughts and your feelings, and if you take exquisite care of yourself in your actions, you are less likely to accept less than exquisite treatment anywhere else. So I want to be really clear when I say this because sometimes when we talk about the role of self-

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care or self-talk, self-touch, all of that, it can be misinterpreted to sound like we're saying something like if you do a face mask, patriarchy will fall.

That it's sort of privileged and self-indulgent and that it distracts from community solidarity work and focuses on the individual and their own internal experience, and that that is, for those of you who are more political nerds, that that is just sort of a sign of neoliberalism, capitalism's focus on individualism.

If you didn't know what that last three sentences meant, it really doesn't matter. It's not crucial to the point of this podcast, but for those of you who that's how you think, I want to speak in that register. And so y'all know if you've been listening to this podcast that that is not where I'm coming from and not what I'm teaching.

I have worked as an emergency room counselor for sexual violence survivors, I have escorted at reproductive health clinics, I have been a litigator for reproductive rights, I ran a think tank, I've done policy work, I was an academic. I have worked in a variety of different ways on social change.

And what I understand as a coach is that people have to carry out the social change. It's like we talk about this like there's some community effort that can happen without individuals participating in it and doing it. And the individuals have to do it.

And what I also know is that liberation is an inside job when we're talking about the liberation from oppressive ideology. When we're talking about liberation from oppressive institutions, that is a social collective world changing job, but it again, has to be done by people who have liberated themselves individually.

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You have to. Any social change that has ever happened has happened because somebody had freedom in their mind to look around and say, you know what, society is telling me this is how it's supposed to be and I'm inferior and I don't fucking accept that. I do not accept that premise.

That comes from radical self-love. So, when I talk about the importance of exquisite self-care, I mean it as a radical subversive act. If you are socialized to believe that your body belongs to other people and only matters for the work that capitalism can get out of you or the sexual value that men can get out of you, or whatever else, what is more radical than reclaiming your body for yourself?

Treating your body with reverence, with care, with love, only for your own benefit because it is the home you live in. That is a radical, subversive, revolutionary act to love yourself in the face of a society that tells you you are not worthy of love, or you are only worthy of love when you are catering to and upholding the privileges other people have or oppressive systems.

So, make no mistake. Exquisite self-care is not the solution to everything, but it is a part of the radical self-love where any change has to start. And the way that I'm talking about it in this podcast, it is a tool. It's both for its own benefit for all the reasons I just said, but it's like a diagnostic tool to help you figure out what thoughts you have internalized that you don't know you believe.

So if you say to yourself, I'm going to make myself a nice dinner and sit down and eat it, and then your brain immediately doesn't want to do that because it thinks that's lonely and sad because you don't have a partner and you should be working instead, and now all of a sudden, we can see all these thoughts that are keeping us disconnected from ourselves, not in a place of radical self-love.

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So it's both subversive, revolutionary act on its own that gives you the emotional resources and the mental freedom to create change in the world if you want to, but it's also a really great tool to use to figure out what's keeping you from practicing it. When you set out to decide to practice it or you just think about it, all of a sudden, you will begin to see the unconscious thoughts you've internalized from society that are keeping you from practicing exquisite self-care and that are keeping you from radical self-love.

And this is why thought work and self-coaching and self-development, whatever you want to call it, is not frivolous or silly or optional. It is imperative. It is transformational. And it is radical in all the best ways because any change we want to see outside of us has to start in our own minds.

To be a person carrying one or more marginalized identities and to use the power of your own mind to kick out the colonizing forces of social conditioning on your brain, that is what will change your life and that is what will change the world.

Okay, so my chickens, how many of you feel like you have an amazing relationship with your body and there's really nothing else to work on there? You feel great about yourself, whatever you eat or don't eat, whether you exercise or not, you love everything you see in the mirror, you think you look amazing in all clothes, you can't imagine thinking that you are more ravishingly attractive and amazing and vibrant and gorgeous and you just love your body so much.

I don't know if that describes anybody socialized in a patriarchy. Certainly not before thought work. So here's what I want you to know. Until now, the only way to work in depth on your body image with me has been through



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The Clutch. Inside The Clutch in the past is the only place I have offered my body image work.

But I've decided that even though I love all of you Clutch chickens and you will continue to get access to so much amazing teaching and resources that are only available in The Clutch, this part of my work I do want to make available to everyone else who's not in The Clutch.

And so for the first time, I'm going to be teaching a six-week body image program. It's going to be called Unfuck Your Body Image and it is the first time that you can do a deep dive on eating, movement, body image thoughts, health moralism, all of the ways that the patriarchy and capitalism and everything else fucks up our brains about our bodies and our body image.

So in order to kind of introduce it, I'm also going to be teaching a totally free webinar on which I'm going to teach you my three best tricks for unfucking your body image. And that is totally free. Whether you sign up for the program or not, you can come to the webinar and you can learn these three tools for unfucking your body image.

The webinar is on March 11th, it's at 1pm Eastern. Again, totally free. You can go to [unfuckyourbrain.com/bodyimage](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/bodyimage) to register, or you can text us. You just send your email address to +13479971784. Again, that's +13479971784. And you'll get a prompt asking for the code and you just text back BODYIMAGE, all one word again.

So [unfuckyourbrain.com/bodyimage](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/bodyimage) or text your email to +13479971784 and use the codeword BODYIMAGE to register and I will see you on that webinar, March 11th, 1pm. I'm going to teach you my three best body image hacks, totally free, and I'm going to tell you about this new unique opportunity to take your body image work so much deeper and really change these thought patterns.

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I know I talk about this all the time that body image and body acceptance were one of the hardest areas of my own thought work that I ever worked through, but I know what tremendous transformation is possible when you rewire your brain around these issues, and I know it's very hard to do it alone. I certainly couldn't.

So I cannot wait to share this work with more of you and I can't wait to see all of y'all on that webinar because there's no reason for you not to register unless you just don't like free wisdom. And if you're listening to this podcast, obviously you do like free wisdom. So you should come to the webinar too and of course, as always, yes, we will send out a replay if you can't make it live. I'll see you there.