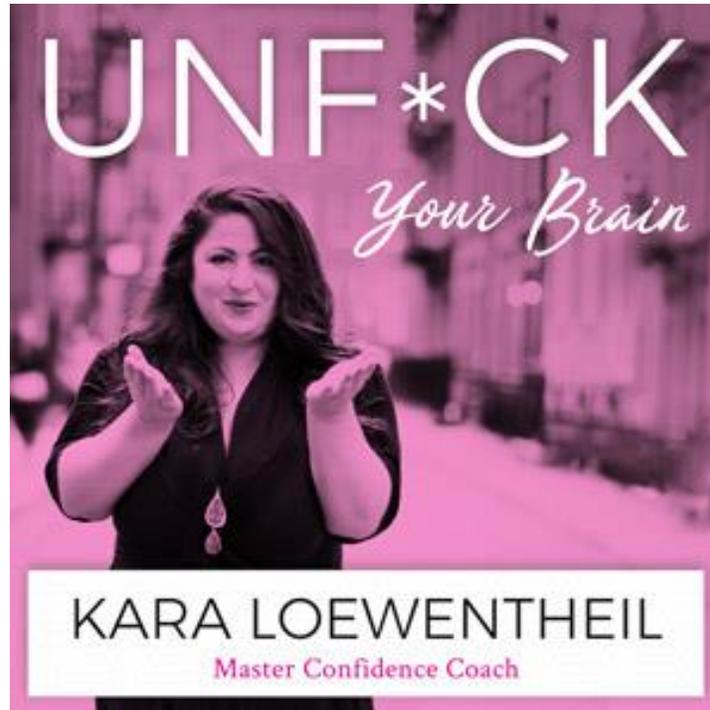


## UFYB 179: QA: Relationships



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

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## UFYB 179: QA: Relationships

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. So today we are doing another listener Q&A episode and we're talking all about relationships. So if you've missed the previous couple of episodes in this series, some of the most frequently asked questions I get are about what it's like to be in The Clutch and why it's any different from just listening to the podcast.

So one of the things that we have in The Clutch that we do not have on the podcast is the ability for you to ask questions and get coaching on what's going on with you, which is obviously totally different. And so in The Clutch, we have both the ability for you to ask your questions now and get answers, but we also have a huge resource library of all the questions that people have basically ever asked getting answered, which often totally includes the answer to your question.

Although again of course, if it doesn't, you can ask your question and get an answer. So we have almost 100 bonus private podcast episodes in The Clutch that are usually only available in The Clutch and where I have answered questions from members of the community.

So we are going to be sharing some excerpts of those focusing on kind of common themes and questions over a few different podcast episodes. And so today we are talking about relationship questions. This is something so many of us struggle because people just won't do what we want them to do.

They didn't do what we wanted in the past, they're not doing what we want now, they're not going to do what we want in the future. I like to break it down like that because it just always reminds me how much of my own

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drama about relationships comes from trying to control other people who I can't control and comes from what I make other people's behavior mean about me when it has nothing to do with me.

So I am not alone in needing coaching on those and several of the questions I think on this episode really grapple with those same themes and will be so helpful and relevant to any of you who have any trouble with any other humans in any relationships, which is all of you.

So that's what we're talking about today. And relationships are actually a big theme of our next Clutch College Live, which is a three-day live coaching event. We keep the seats really limited so that everybody gets personal attention and it's a really close community fun group feeling.

And we're going to spend a whole day at Clutch College Live talking about relationships. Our anxiety around relationships, our control issues around relationships, how we can feel more ease and connection and love with anyone who is a difficult person for us or a difficult relationship for us.

We're also going to spend a whole day on goal setting, how to set the right kind of goal that's a stretch but doable for you, and how to structure your process of achieving it so you don't get overwhelmed and give up and you also don't have to hustle and burnout.

And we're going to talk about the coaching model that I use and talk about on the podcast all the time. Your thoughts cause your feelings cause your actions cause your results. We're going to talk about how to become an incredible user of that model, how to use it to deal with any negative situation that's happening, but also how to use it to create positive emotion.

Like if you've ever wished you could just push a button in your brain and feel good, that's what the model helps you do. So we're going to be digging

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into all that good stuff at the next Clutch College Live. We are going to be doing coaching and teaching with me.

I also have some amazing Clutch master coaches who are coming to help out and who really bring an incredible wealth of diversity and niche specialty and coaching expertise and different life experiences and perspectives and I'm so excited to have all the students who come really get the benefit of the richness of all those different kinds of life experiences and coaching expertises.

So that's going to be amazing too. If you're in The Clutch, you are going to hear all about this on April 12th when we open up registration. If you are not in The Clutch yet and you want to make sure that you hear about this and you have a chance to sign up, you can text your email to +13479348861. That's +13479348861.

And you will get a link to join The Clutch. So if you've been on the fence and kind of waiting to join The Clutch, who knows for what, your brain just was like, "Well, maybe next months," because that's what brains do. Number one, you're putting off growing and evolving and making your life amazing, so I don't know why you'd put that off anyway.

But let this be your reason to get off the fence, come sign up for The Clutch so that when we open up registration on April 12th, you have a chance to sign up. These events sell out in one to two days usually. They're really popular, but I do keep them small because I want everyone to get personal attention.

So they're amazing. I can't recommend them highly enough. They're one of my favorite things to do. And if that sounds fun to you, then you want to come join The Clutch so you get a shot at it. Alright, so let's dig into some questions and answers about relationships.

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“I went through a very hard breakup a couple of years ago, which made me realize how much self-doubt I had about myself and how much I’m always trying to manipulate my relationships to obtain a certain outcome that’ll provide me with the external validation I need. I finally decided to put myself out there again and started going out with a guy I met through a dating app.

Not surprisingly, I started trying to manipulate him and our very brief relationship into something that would make me feel good about myself. Of course that didn’t work and the relationship ended with me finding out that he’s just not that into me. Although this made me feel really bad about myself, I was able to do some thought work to try to think more neutral and positive thoughts about myself.

However, I still find myself going against reality. I understand there’s nothing wrong with me and that him not liking me does not mean I am not worthy. However, I keep thinking if there’s nothing wrong with me, then why is it that he doesn’t like me? I know I’m fighting a battle I can’t win but I wonder if there’s a way to think more positively about this issue.”

Okay, so here’s the thing; you don’t really know that there’s nothing wrong with you and that him not liking you doesn’t mean you’re not worthy, and that’s okay. Most humans don’t know that. And even when they learn that they don’t know it, like you, it takes a while to get there.

But it’s a lie to tell yourself that you understand that and know that already because you don’t. Here’s how we know you don’t. Because you’re still fixated on why this guy doesn’t like you and you think that if there’s nothing wrong with you, everyone would like you.

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So that's how we know that you don't really like yourself and you don't really believe you're worthy. If there's nothing wrong with me, then why is it he doesn't like me? We could just as equally ask why should he like you? Do you like everyone you've met? Of course not. Much less everyone you've gone on a date with.

You can be - my teacher always says you can be the most delicious peach in the world and someone still is not going to like peaches. I think Dita Von Teese said that originally actually. My teacher says it too. So your brain is so committed to the idea that there's nothing wrong with you and that how you are causes what other people think about you that it's basically telling you that if it's true there's nothing wrong with you that would mean everyone should like you.

And so if anyone doesn't, it means there is something wrong with you. But those premises are totally wrong. What other people think about you has to do with their thoughts. Maybe you reminded him of his third-grade teacher, maybe he's not really ready to be dating, maybe you just weren't a good fit.

It could be a million things that doesn't have anything to do with something being wrong with you. If it was true that if nothing's wrong with you everyone should like you, then everyone could just marry everyone in the 10th grade. There would be no dating and breakups and divorces. All the things that happen in relationships.

And we could all just marry whoever. It wouldn't matter. So that premise is what's wrong here. If there's nothing wrong with me, then why is it he doesn't like me? Those things are totally unrelated. What someone thinks about you has nothing to do with you. It's their brain.

And your problem here is your brain and what it's telling you. And the real problem is you not liking yourself. That's what you need to work on. So it's not about him. He's just a green screen that you're projecting your

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insecurity on. You have to work on liking yourself. When you do that, you will know that him not liking you has nothing to do with you.

“Hi Kara. I’ve been listening to and loving your podcast for a couple of months. In your teachings, you say that love is a feeling that’s created by our thoughts. When thinking about romantic love though, I would argue there’s something more than our thoughts contributing to the attraction and feeling of love.

For 18 years of my life, I had the thought that I was straight, but my thoughts never created feelings of romantic love. Instead, I realized my feelings towards women were present in spite of my thought that I was straight. We can’t choose who we’re attracted to, yet you claim that our thoughts generate our feelings. Could it be there’s a difference between attraction and love? And if so, doesn’t attraction also create our feelings?”

I think this is a great question. So there’s absolutely a difference between physical attraction and the feeling of love. So I do think that our thoughts influence who we’re physically attracted to more than we give them credit for, but I don’t think they do all of that work.

So I think that some of our biological attraction has to do with hormones and pheromones that are not under our conscious control, and so I absolutely don’t think that this listener for instance could think herself straight. She is sexually attracted to women, that’s her basic biological orientation. And so thinking that she was straight didn’t change that.

Just like thinking that I’m eight feet tall doesn’t change the fact that I’m five foot two. Now, it might change how I interact in the world and the actions I take. I might buy pants that are the wrong size, just like trying to date men if I’m really into women.

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But it won't change that underlying experience. I think where it's trickier and where this question is more complicated is the feelings of romantic love. Because I think we all accept that there's such a thing as romantic love that's separate from sex and different from other kinds of love.

But I actually am not sure that that's true. I think when you really tune into your body, the feeling of love feels pretty similar, whoever you've having love about. But when you're sexually attracted to someone, there's a lot of other complicated thoughts and feelings in there about the attraction, about the sexuality, but then there's also our thoughts and stories about romantic love, which impact how we feel.

So I don't think attraction creates feelings. I think attraction creates desire, which is kind of a feeling, but that they're sort of different kinds. So there is biological attraction that creates desire, sexual desire. There's also thoughts about what you're attracted to and what you like that create the feeling of desire.

The other thing is of course, I don't know this letter writer's history, but I think a lot of people who are trying to believe they're straight potentially have some inklings - you had the conscious thought you were straight, but probably you had the subconscious thought that you were attracted to women.

You probably looked at women and occasionally thought that they looked appealing. I would guess. Or your feelings for your female friends might have occasionally been a little more intense than maybe what other people were experiencing. We don't know what all your subconscious thoughts were because you weren't doing thought work at this time.

But I don't sort of really believe that none of the attraction to women would have been present during high school. I just think you weren't aware of it

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and conscious of it. And so any thoughts you were having about it were subconscious.

So all you were conscious of were your conscious thoughts about being straight. Does that make sense? So I don't really think that thinking you're straight would produce those feelings of desire and attraction and love when they were competing with whatever those subconscious thoughts are. That would be my guess.

But fundamentally, I do think that physical attraction is different from love but I don't think that physical chemistry or biological attraction creates our feelings. I think it creates sexual desire. I think our thoughts create our feelings and that love is a feeling and that all kinds of love actually feel pretty similar if you are taking out the part about sexual attraction. If you take that part out of it. So love that question. It's a great meta question about the work.

“How do I know when a relationship is toxic? How much of it is my thinking and how much is truly my partner's actions? For example, one of many, if a spouse doesn't pay bills on time and racks up hundreds of dollars in late fees, thought work won't change that. So how does thought work help relationship issues?”

Okay, that last part is a huge question. How does thought work change relationship issues, so that's kind of in every way and I'm not going to address that exactly but I want to talk about this question, how do I know when a relationship is toxic and what thought work will or won't change?

So number one, a relationship is never toxic. That's never a circumstance unless they literally try to poison you. Your thought is that it's toxic. There's no such thing as it truly being toxic or not. There can't be because toxic is a human word that we have made up that people use to describe a huge range of behaviors.

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Like I'll say it's only toxic if they try to poison you. Some people will say it's toxic if they yell at you. Some people will say it's toxic if they tell you they don't like what you're wearing. Some people will say it's toxic if they don't like going to your family events. It can mean so many different things to so many different people. That's how we know it's a thought and not a circumstance.

Now, you could choose to believe your relationship is toxic. I don't really advise that because I don't think you get a good result from it, but it's up to you. When you say how much of it is my thinking and how much is truly my partner's actions, the answer is that it's always all your thinking.

Because your partner's actions are circumstances. So if your spouse does not pay a bill by the due date and you get a \$150 late fee, that is a circumstance. You're right. Thought work does not change that circumstance or make it not exist. But you believing that's a problem and what you think about it, that is all thoughts.

There are some people in the world whose thought about a spouse not paying bills on time and getting late fees is, "Oh, that's so adorable. They're so absorbed in their work, I love that I can fix this for them." Or there's people who just feel neutral about it, or there's people who just decide to pay the bills themselves because they know this happens.

And then there's you, and you're not alone in this, thinking, "Oh my god, this is toxic and a disaster." All different reactions to the same circumstance. Spouse didn't pay bill by bill date; utility gave us \$100 late fee. Or \$900 late fee. Whatever it is.

Thought work isn't about changing circumstances. The point of thought work is that we don't have to change circumstance. Because a circumstance is neutral. It truly is neutral that your spouse didn't pay the bill

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and now you have late fees. That's just a neutral circumstance. It's not inherently good or bad.

It is your thought about it, "This is terrible, this is toxic, I can't trust him, we can't afford this," whatever your thoughts are, that create all of your negative feelings. Having said that, I don't teach that you're "supposed" to use thought work to be in any relationship no matter what.

And that is a way that my work really gets misinterpreted I think no matter how many times I say this. You can always choose what kind of relationship you want to be in. If you decide you don't want to be in a relationship with people who don't pay the bills on time, that you want bill paying to be their job and you want them to do it a certain way and you don't want to manage that, you can totally decide to have a relationship based on that.

It's just important to understand that that's your preference and you're willing to give up whatever other things to get that. Rather than believing any sane normal person would do it this way and if your partner doesn't then it's toxic and it's dangerous and they don't respect you and there's something wrong with them.

Because when you are believing all of that, that they are wrong, then you want them to be different. And then you're constantly either trying to change them or resent them or you leave them and partner up with somebody else, and maybe this new person does pay the bills on time but they don't do something else you want them to do.

Like they don't wash the dishes on time. And then you got all the negative thoughts about that. If you are believing that circumstances cause your feelings, you will always be trying to control your partner, whoever that partner is. You might not have to try to control them about bill paying, but you'll end up trying to control them about something else.

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So really, I can answer the big question. Thought work helps relationship issues because your only issue is your own thoughts and feelings. That's your only problem.

Okay here's our next question. "I notice that I obsess and ruminate over romantic relationships that end. Even when I can objectively come up with reasons why they were a bad fit. I think the root problem is a lack of self-worth and seeking that from other people who seem vaguely compatible. I try to come up with alternative thoughts but still find myself sliding into obsessive rumination, reimagining conversations and alternative outcomes that don't involve x disapproving or rejecting me, but rather approving of and admiring me.

It's constant and embarrassing and a drag. And more generally, I'm aware that I'm less present when I'm stuck inside my head so much. What's the solution? A, come up with better thoughts, B, try harder to think those thoughts whenever I catch myself in some crazy mental mini movie reboot of a failed relationship, C, accept and even appreciate the criticism, D, all of the above."

I guess all of the above, but I don't think C is so important. So yes, I think you need to work on coming up with a new thought or two to practice about this. There's another option, E, which is that you need to be practicing these thoughts not just when you are in this little movie reboot in your head.

You can't just wait until you're in the middle of that to practice your new thought. So you need to be practicing your new thoughts consistently and, in this case, you need to be figuring out what do you imagine you would get to think and feel if somebody decided to keep dating you instead of not, or if they admired you, whatever that means.

What are the thoughts and feelings you would get to have? That's what you have to work on creating for yourself now. So the solution is yes, come up

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with a new thought or two to practice about this, yes, try to - it's not really try harder to think those thoughts when you're in the mental mini movie.

It's really you need to be practicing those thoughts all along. But I think probably there is a little element of trying harder in that you are used to kind of doing this and it's probably kind of seductive for you. It's a way that you peace out from your current reality is to live in this fantasy world.

And so you have to be willing to give up the comfort and seduction of this fantasy world in order to be present with your actual reality, which is going to be uncomfortable. That's why you're trying to escape it. So that is also the work too is are you willing to give up this fantasy in order to be with your actual current reality?

Because I think that these fantasies are just like the way other people use food or booze or whatever else to buffer, to zone out, to escape reality, to give yourself a hit of dopamine. And so you have to be willing to give that up and be uncomfortable and feel bad about yourself and think negative thoughts about yourself and really get real and sit with your current reality and work on changing that.

Okay, next question. "Hi Kara. I remember you saying once that since learning to manage your mind, you don't find social events exhausting and that you don't believe in labeling ourselves as introverts or extroverts. I still struggle at social events where I don't know anyone, mostly because I find it exhausting to engage in small talk with people.

I usually find it boring and can't wait to go home and read a book. If I were on my own, I would just limit the amount of gatherings I go to, but my partner is really sociable and likes when I go to events with him. This causes a lot of conflict because I want to go home earlier than he does, and then I start to have negative thoughts like he deserves someone who's more sociable, and I end up just feeling bad.

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I'm guessing I find social events exhausting because of my thoughts, but why? Even if I don't care what people think of me, I can still find social events boring. I admit some situations I am wondering if people find me boring or dumb."

Okay, so this is going to blow your mind. Listen up. Boring is a thought. When you feel bored, you are creating that with your own thoughts. And your thoughts are this is boring, and so your result is you're bored. I still feel I'm a little more of an introvert than I would - I don't believe in having intense labels, but probably I'm a little more introverted than I am extroverted.

But I totally find small talk fascinating because it's just people telling you their thoughts, which is always - I'm always fascinated to hear what are people thinking. So I don't find social events to be a struggle. Now, I might be a little tired afterwards because I am a little more towards the introversion side.

But I can also find them energizing if I'm - I sort of have two different modes of like, I'm here talking a lot and entertaining and that can be kind of energizing, and then there's a more receptive mode where I'm like, I'm drawing you out and making "small talk" and I'm listening to you talk and that one, I can be a little tired after it sometimes.

But in neither case do I find it boring, is it a struggle, do I need to have conflict with a partner about it. So you need to understand that you're boring yourself with your thoughts. But you also have to decide if this is something you want to change.

I think part of what's going on here is that you think you should go to the events with him and you're trying to make him happy and control his feelings, and so in the process, you're ignoring your own feelings, your own

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thought, which is that you don't want to go. And then you end up having this conflict around it.

So I really think you have two different sets of work to do here. It's like, you got to decide if you actually want to change this and stop trying to cause your partner's feelings and work on feeling totally fine about saying, "Honey, I don't want to go tonight," or, "I'm going to go but I'm going to leave after an hour. We should take separate cars."

Or whatever else. There's a million ways to solve the concrete problem of a partner staying at a party longer than you do. But you can't see those right now because you're all in your drama about this and you think you need to go because it makes him happy but then you don't want to go and then you think, "He should have someone more sociable, there's something wrong with me, this is boring," all of that.

So what I would do is just get really curious with yourself. The next time this comes up, just be an observer of your own mind. Just notice what you're thinking at the party and I think you will find that when you're thinking it's boring, you're bored. When you think it's exhausting, you feel exhausted. When you think it's a struggle, it feels like a struggle.

But I also want you to do some thinking about whether you actually care about this and want to change it or not. You could choose to believe I'm an introvert, I have social anxiety, I just don't want to go to these things, and then manage your mind about how your partner might be upset about that, without making it mean, oh, he deserves someone else.

Like no, he deserves you, you deserve him. You guys can deserve each other, even if you don't like to go to the same amount of social events. So you got to kind of take away some of this weight you're putting on it and then you'll be able to see more clearly if it's worth changing or not and if you want to change it.

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And if you do, then you'll be able to start paying attention to how you're creating your own experience at these parties with your thoughts. So multiple levels of the work.

One last thing I want to share with y'all. This is a note that I got from a podcast listener and I asked her permission to share it with you and she said yes obviously. I asked her permission and she said no and I'm sharing it anyway. No. I asked her permission and she said yes, I'm sharing it.

So here's what she said because I think it will speak to a question that a lot of you guys said. She said, "I've been listening to you for many years now. I started listening to the podcast in 2018 and I even listened to The Lawyer Stress Solution." That was the previous name of this podcast, back when I only coached lawyers.

"Even though it had absolutely no relevance to me while I was working on growing my real estate business, except of course that thought was proven wrong instantly because those episodes most certainly did have relevance to me. I got just as much from those episodes as I did when it became Unf\*ck Your Brain, so I highly recommend anyone else listen to those early episodes too.

I was in a pretty dark place mentally and I didn't really know where to start to change the way I thought about life, others around me, and most importantly, myself. I started going to therapy, which helped, but I needed a constant soundtrack to basically tell me everything's going to be okay, you got this, you should stay on this path.

To this day, I listen to new episodes pretty much as soon as they come out but back then, I was so hungry for further growth that I listened to episodes over and over and over again to make sure I got the most out of them, which is funny because in last week's episode, that's exactly what you suggested.

[UnF\\*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](#)

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Even with all of that, it took me until January 2021 to finally join The Clutch. My honest thought about not joining was something along the lines of, well, I listen to the podcast and it's helped me tremendously and there can't be that much more value in joining The Clutch than what I'm getting out of the podcast. Boy, was I wrong." She has that in all caps. Emphasis, boy, was I wrong.

"I have been diving deep into the coaching tools ever since I joined this amazing community and truly without The Clutch, I would never have grasped how to do this effectively by just listening to the podcast alone. It turns out you are totally right when you say that you take the work deeper in The Clutch. Long story short, this work is truly life changing and I'm so excited to continue to apply these lessons that I have learned to my life every single day. Thank you so much for creating such an amazing set of tools and community that women can use to change the fucking world."

So I totally cried when I read this. And there are so many things I love about this that I wanted to share with you all. The first one is the way that this chicken was combining coaching and therapy. It's a question that comes up a lot. As if they're sort of two very different things that shouldn't be used together, or it's one or the other.

I also love that she listened to the podcast over and over again because oftentimes you really need so much reinforcement to really be able to change your thought patterns, like going to a session with a therapist once a week, that's an hour of a whole week.

And when you can listen to the podcast on repeat, and even better, if you join The Clutch and you can have things you're practicing every day and community to be talking to every day, you're going to make so much more progress because you're just getting so much more exposure. Your brain is getting so much more immersion in it.

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I love that she re-listened to the episodes, which I totally recommend. And I love that she was so honest about why it took her so long to join The Clutch. I love that she shared that thought, which probably a lot of you also have. That the podcast has already helped you and like, what could the difference really be?

And I love that she explained there is such a big difference between just listening to the podcast and joining The Clutch. It's like night and day. The podcast is amazing. Obviously, I love this podcast. I've been doing it every single week for free for four years, so I love it and I believe in it.

But it's not the same thing as having access to a whole library of coaching tools and workbooks and exercises and having expert coaching on demand from coaches and having access to a community of women doing the work to support you and talk it through. It's just a totally different experience that completely up-levels and takes it deeper for you.

And now is an amazing time to join The Clutch because we are going to be opening up registration soon for our next Clutch College Live, which are three-day events that we do live online these days. In the future hopefully we'll get to be in person again someday. But we will be doing one in May that is live online.

And it's a small group event where we dive deep into a couple of topics. So the one coming up in May we're going to be working on the coaching model that I teach and how to both deal with negative emotion and change negative thoughts, but also create positive thoughts and positive emotion on purpose.

We're going to be working on setting big goals and achieving them, handling everything that comes up along the way, so you actually set yourself up for success, and we're going to be working on relationships. Any relationship you have, how to increase connection, decrease conflict,

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decrease your anxiety, and cultivate a better relationship in any kind of setting or any kind of relationship you have.

So if you want to come to that event, you have to be in The Clutch in order to attend. And they sell out pretty quickly. We really limit the size to that everybody gets lots of personal attention. So it's always an amazing time to join The Clutch because it truly will up-level anything that you've learned from the podcast, like Caitlyn explained.

But now is a particularly good time to join because you will have a chance to try to sign up for one of these spots at a live event. So if you want more info, you can go to [unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch) or you can text your email to +13479348861. That's +1349348861. Just text your email and we will send you the info. Or you can go to [unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch) and Caitlyn and I will see you in there.

If you're loving what you're learning in the podcast, you have got to come check out The Clutch. The Clutch is the podcast community for all things Unfuck Your Brain. It's where you can get individual help applying the concepts to your own life.

It's where you can learn new coaching tools not shared on the podcast that will blow your mind even more. And it's where you can hang out and connect over all things thought work with other podcast chickens just like you and me. It's my favorite place on earth and it will change your life, I guarantee it. Come join us at [www.unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch](http://www.unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch). That's [unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch). I can't wait to see you there.