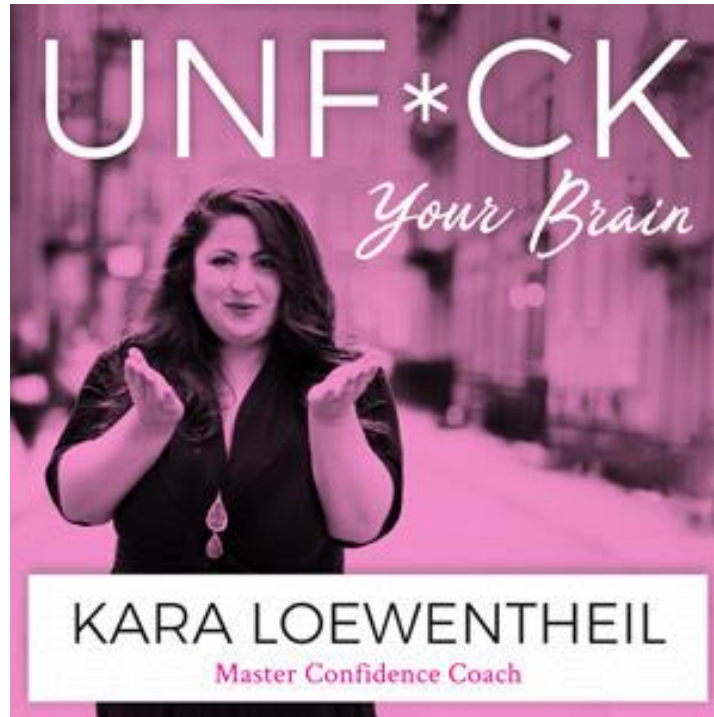


UFYB 181: Thought Work After Abortion: An Interview with Amanda Kingsley



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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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. I am so excited today. There's so much good stuff going on. So three things I need to tell you. The first thing is that it was 60 degrees earlier this week and I feel like spring is actually going to come. I wasn't sure for a while. I think it's coming.

It is now snowing today and I did not dress appropriately for the weather because I'm in denial and I feel like the first day it's 60 degrees, that's an unbreakable contract that spring is coming. And so you can't just change the weather back to winter.

So then I start dressing like it's spring and I expect the universe to cooperate with me and it doesn't, which is so rude. So that's number one. But I'm also in an amazing mood because of my thoughts, but I actually just was reading and selecting the recipients of the super exciting thing that I'm doing.

That was an awkward way of explaining that. So as many of you know, I was certified at The Life Coach School for my coaching certification and for my master coach certification. And I firmly believe it is the best tools in the business. And I have been working obviously on diversity and equity and inclusiveness not only in my business but this is something that I'm very passionate about for the life coaching industry at large.

Writ large, which is I love life coaches, but I wouldn't say that our industry always has the most amazing reputation. So I'm really committed to raising the level of coaching in this industry. You all know I teach at a very

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sophisticated level that most coaches don't teach at. I coach at that level; I teach my clients to coach themselves at that level.

We're not fucking around here. This is life-changing stuff. So anyway, the point being that obviously, one of the problems in the coaching industry is a lack of diversity and equity and inclusion. And that's for a variety of reasons because traditional life coaching often is pretty blind about the big blind spots of people's own privilege or experiences of oppression.

I think a lot of women of color and women in other marginalized identities and bodies, certainly fat women, disabled women have had some negative experiences sometimes with coaches who didn't understand structural oppression or told them it was all their thoughts, or they experience these things because their vibrations were low or whatever other fucking nonsense goes on out there.

So there's that and then some life coach certifications are not that expensive and you get what you pay for. And meanwhile, The Life Coach School is a serious investment and it's 100% worth it, but obviously centuries of structural discrimination have created an inequitable distribution of wealth in this country and not everyone has access to the same resources.

Not everyone has access to the same lines of credit even to take out a loan because they really believe in themselves and their business and they know that they will create it back, but they may not be able to get financing, depending on the bank and their credit history and all that stuff goes out of a legacy of structural discrimination in banking, in finance, in the accumulation of wealth in this country.

I could go on and on. The point of this is that so I decided one thing I was going to do was I was going to sponsor a coach every year and pay for half

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of their tuition to The Life Coach School certification program. So we got all of our applications. There were so many amazing applications.

I was reading them and I was in love with everybody. I want to sponsor everybody. It was enormous numbers of applications, so that was not possible. But I couldn't do just one. So I'm sponsoring four amazing women of color to become life coaches and to get certified through The Life Coach School.

And you guys, if you follow me on social media, you will hear all about them and their names and who they want to help and what their niche will be. But I'm just so excited to see what these women are going to do. They each wrote such amazing applications about who they wanted to help and the steps they'd already taken.

It's an interesting thing to try to think about who do I think will use these tools and who's going to accomplish their goals. And looking at kind of what these women have already done to try to make their dreams a reality and then who they want to help and serve was just so amazing and inspiring.

So I am super excited about that. That's what I was doing this morning. I was finalizing those. So any day that starts that way is a good day. Any day you make four women's dreams come true and contribute to diversity and equity in the coaching industry and bringing the perspectives of women of color to bear and enabling them to serve their communities, that's a good day.

And then number three, we're going to dive in today to a topic that is really near and dear to my heart also. We're all about the mission today. Some of you may know I used to be a lawyer and I was a reproductive rights lawyer. I've really been a reproductive rights advocate and activist my whole life. I wrote many impassioned articles in the high school newspaper.

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And then I went to college and I was a clinic escort at a reproductive healthcare clinic and I was the coordinator of the all-women's center and worked on helping people access reproductive care on campus and off campus.

And then my whole legal career I worked at the Planned Parenthood as a media writer, I went to law school, I worked at all the big reproductive rights legal organizations. And when I was in academic, I worked in reproductive rights. So this is an issue that has always been very dear to my heart because I believe that without the ability to decide whether and when and under what conditions to bear children, women cannot control their own destinies.

That's the bottom line for me. And so now I don't - after 15 years in the reproductive rights and reproductive justice movements, I now work from a different perspective. Not on my values about that. Those haven't changed. But now I'm coaching people. I'm not litigating abortion access.

But today, I'm going to be sharing with you guys a conversation I had, an interview I did on another podcast with my student, Amanda Kingsley, who is an amazing coach. She is in my advanced certification in feminist coaching that I'm teaching right now, and she coaches women post-abortion on making peace with their choices and their lives and working through whatever complicated thoughts and feeling they have after having had abortions.

And so she is really bringing coaching to this thing that is so stigmatized in our society that people really don't talk about it. And it's so polarized that people don't acknowledge the complexities that individual women face, even though the statistics tell us that more than one in three women in America will have an abortion in her lifetime.

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So you absolutely know people who have had abortions if you are not someone who has had one yourself. And yet almost nobody talks about it publicly because there's still such stigma. So I love the work that Amanda's doing and I was so pleased to have this conversation with her about what coaching can offer and how we can kind of unfuck our brains in the wake of this decision, which so many people make for so many different reasons, and yet we don't talk about nearly enough. So I hope you all enjoy this interview as much as I enjoyed doing it.

Amanda: We're going to start with the beautiful and amazing Kara Loewentheil. Going to kick off the year with you girl.

Kara: Thank you. And thank you for pronouncing my name right on your first try. That's a major accomplishment.

Amanda: Welcome, welcome. I have known your name for a very long time. So I'm very transparent with all of my guests, there are some nerves here happening. I feel really excited to have you Kara on the show for a lot of reasons.

Kara: Listen, by the time we're done with that advanced certification, you're not going to be nervous about me at all. You're going to be like, oh my god, I wish you'd stop talking to me.

Amanda: So for those of you who don't know what Kara's referring to, she's about to kick my butt. In a couple months here I'm going to do an advanced certification with her in coach training and it's probably going to kiss my ass and we're going to have a lot of fun and then I'm going to be even more of a powerhouse in the world.

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Kara: Exactly. You're just going to be a badass and definitely not intimidated by me at all.

Amanda: Exactly. Okay, Kara, I don't know if you listened to any of my show but I like when my guests introduce themselves. I feel like this podcast just, I don't need to know anything about you. They don't need to know anything about you except what you feel is important for today, for these people, for these listeners. So of course, we're going to give you all the accolades in the show notes and all the good things.

Kara: That's okay. I'm full up on accolades. This is actually the fun interview in which my previous life is most relevant. Usually I go on these podcasts and they're like, talking about my legal career and I'm like, this has nothing to do with anything, talking about body image. But for you, it's actually - so the brief story is that I used to be a lawyer and an academic, but the main through thing in my life until coaching was that I was in the reproductive justice movement.

So I was a clinic escort in college and then I worked at Planned Parenthood Federation of America in the media department, I went to law school, I worked at all the big reproductive rights or reproductive justice organization over the summers, and then I had to go clerk for a judge, but then I was a litigator at the Center for Reproductive Rights.

And then when I was in academia, I worked on not just abortion rights, also I worked a lot on public accommodations and religious access. Sort of like how do we ensure people can all get access to contraception, even if they happen to be the janitorial staff at a church where the church doesn't believe in contraception. That kind of thing. How do we balance religious rights under the constitution with people's access to equal rights?

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So I have worked on, around, or relating to abortion my whole life, my professional life, until I became a coach. Actually the last five years are the least I've ever worked on abortion. That was the main thing I worked on for 20 years. So I was of course thrilled to come on this podcast and thrilled to have you in the advanced certification because I think this is such an important topic that isn't talked about.

We know that more than a third of American women will have an abortion in their lifetime and yet almost nobody speaks publicly about it in the mainstream. So I just think it's such a crucial issue.

Amanda: Can I ask, so I always say birth runs in my blood and what I mean by that is all things women related have just always been a thing that interested me. Literally since I was a kid. Did you know as a young teen - at what point did you know you were interested in reproductive justice?

Kara: Yeah, I mean, I don't remember - there wasn't a single defining - I didn't have a personal - I actually have never been unintentionally pregnant or intentionally pregnant. Never been pregnant, have never had an abortion. So it's not like I had a come to Jesus moment about it.

But I think that I have always been very - my perspective on feminism, the reason I've always been so focused on it has to do with autonomy. I come from a very - it's not the word I always would have used for myself, but I actually recently asked a coaching colleague what were the three things she thought I cared about the most. It was kind of a values exercise, and she said autonomy, intellect, and sex.

And I was like, that's actually really accurate. That's right on the nose. Abortion involves as least two of those. So I think from the very beginning, it seems so obvious to me, there's no way for women to have autonomy in

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society if they don't have control of their bodies and they don't have the ability to decide if and when they're going to have children.

And abortion is just to me, a normal part of reproductive healthcare that ensures that. And obviously there are other things we have to do like if we didn't live in a culture of people feeling entitled to sexual access to women's bodies and if we had better sex ed, we might impact the abortion rate one way or the other, but women since the beginning of time have been helping people get pregnant and not be pregnant.

To me, it is an age-old thing. And I always think I just felt like if we don't have this, the rest of this doesn't matter. We could fight for pay equity but if you have to be pregnant 13 times in your life because you can't get access to birth control or abortion when you need it, or you have to carry a pregnancy to term that you don't want, or that where there's a fatal anomaly or whatever, what does it matter? You're not going to be able to go to the office. It all builds on this.

Amanda: Wow. Oh my goodness. Alright, well I want to ask you all kinds of coochie things. You're actually one of the first guests that I took notes for before we started and literally it was like, four notes, so it's no big deal. No stress.

Kara: Well I felt honored and now I feel like you kind of undermined by honor but okay.

Amanda: Four is more than the last 60 episodes.

Kara: That's true.

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Amanda: But before we go there, I was just curious, I just had a moment. Were there any times in your law, your reproductive justice study, were there any moments that stick out as like, holy shit, that's happening in the world? Or like, any kind of defining moments for you that just nailed in your belief in your work that much stronger?

Kara: Not on the abortion front. I think the things that I found most shocking were more around maternal mortality and care. That's also what is so...

Amanda: Hence my tank top that says Black birthing lives matter.

Kara: Yeah. That's one of the things that's so - am I allowed to curse? Do you curse on the show?

Amanda: Oh, there's lots of cursing.

Kara: Okay. So that's one of the things to me is so fucked up about living in a kind of hetero-Christian, white supremacist society. There's all this focus, there's such a huge focus on making sure people don't have abortions, and then there's like, no focus on taking care of pregnant women. The US has I think the higher maternal mortality in any "developed" nation and Black maternal mortality is five times that of white maternal mortality in this country.

People are just dying and getting very sick having children in completely preventable ways, especially in a society with the resources we have. So I think with abortion, it was almost much clearer to me like, this is why this is necessary. But I think that I was more shocked by reading things about - and in parts of the world that don't have access to the same infrastructure and medical care.

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Pushing a baby out of you is like, no small thing. And yeah, for a lot of people it goes basically okay naturally, but for a lot of people it doesn't. And the kind of lack of care and resources that are devoted to taking care of pregnant women and birthing women.

Amanda: This was my study all through college and afterwards. And I did go to a little midwifery school. I say a little because I realized I wanted to have my own kids and I stopped so that changed. But yeah, this was my world before I became a mom and went into all my other avenues. But birth care in our country is atrocious. Atrocious.

And we mentioned Black birthing lives matter. There's a new app, I don't know if you've seen it. It's called Irth. Well, it's a whole organization but for anyone listening, that's an amazing place to find good care for people of color. So anyway, little side note. Okay, let's talk about the brain. So Kara did not mention in her self-introduction that her coaching now is centered around her work, Unfuck Your Brain.

Kara: I forgot what I do now. Yes. I teach women how to identify how they've internalized socialization, sexist messaging, and thoughts, and then how to really identify them because they often just sound like your own voice, so you don't know that that's what's happening. And then how to replace them. So of course, completely ties in with the narrative around abortion in this country is insane and women completely internalize that and it creates so much emotional drama and conflict.

Amanda: Yeah. My dad actually just called me maybe an hour ago and said congratulations, I saw you're entering this new program, and he's like, "What are you going to learn?" And I was trying to explain to him and I'm just going to have him listen to this episode now. He can get an early release.

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Kara: Don't worry Amanda's dad. It's a good idea. My dad was skeptical too when I became a coach but he's come round.

Amanda: Okay. So what I am so fancy with my four notes, I just was thinking like, of course we're going to title this episode like, Unfuck Your Brain After Abortion and I think I just want to be clear that not everyone's brain gets fucked up after abortion. That not - I don't know how many times I'll say that in my career here moving forward.

Kara: I mean, the studies show that one of the predominant emotions people feel is relief.

Amanda: Yes, number one. Number one. My story is that I did feel a lot of relief but I also felt grief and shame and all the other things. And then I was like, what is happening? This thing that I knew I wanted, this thing that was, I know was the right choice, my regret is not like I shouldn't have done this, but I have so many feelings.

So people who find this show generally have all those feelings too. So I was kind of like, identifying what are the thoughts that fuck us up the most. The ones I see the most in my community thus far. And so before I share with you what I think those are, can you just - you sort of touched on it, but what does a fucked brain look like? How do you know? What does that even mean?

Kara: I think that's a huge question but if you think about it in this context, I think that this is your specialty, this niche, but I would think that this is one of the most productive places to think about clean versus dirty pain and creating space for that because it's true, because the discussion is so polarized, it's like there's no space to discuss the negative emotions that someone might have, even though they completely think it was the right decision and they wanted to do it and they don't regret it and all of that.

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So there's just not enough room for nuance on the whole spectrum. Our society is so deeply steeped in the idea that motherhood is biologically natural and sort of a woman's greatest calling. And we hear that in so many different ways, both explicit and implicit, and yeah okay, it's gotten a little bit less intense over the last 50 years, we have many more women in the workforce.

But you don't undo thousands of years of programming with like - I was going to say with the ERA but we didn't even pass the ERA. But just as an example, with 50 years. So I don't think it's fucked up. It's not a fucked up brain situation at all to feel grief, to feel regret in the sense you're talking about, not of I made the wrong decision necessarily but like, all of these choices in our lives preclude one future versus another, and this is just a very clear one.

It's a clear decision point where we trade - even if we're going to have another child later, what that life would have been like if we had carried that pregnancy to term. All of that, which we want to have space for, it's part of the richness of human experience. The part that I think you want to watch for where society's fucking up your brain is the shame, is the I did something bad, I did something unnatural, I was being lazy, I was being selfish.

I mean, the idea - women are so socialized to believe that they should put everyone's interest in front of their own, especially their own children. And so the idea that you might choose to value your health, your education, your family's economic stability, your relationship with your partner, your own dreams, whatever it is, over having a child, just literally goes in the face of thousands of years of socialization that tells women what the point of them is, which is to have babies.

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And so I think that guilt, shame, that regret also, I think those are all the kind of regret that's really just shame. It's like, I did something wrong and bad and like, I regret it because I think I wouldn't have to feel this bad about myself if I hadn't done it. It's like all that.

Amanda: Yes, you just nailed it. This would feel different, which it would, but this would feel better if I hadn't done this.

Kara: Yeah. Our brains love to pick something in the past, whatever it is. This isn't unique to abortion and just be like, that one thing were different, then I wouldn't have to have this whole human experience where sometimes I feel good and sometimes I feel bad.

Amanda: Yeah. You have a whole episode on clean versus dirty pain on your podcast, don't you? So we'll definitely link to that. So I think that one big thing that I'm not sure comes from society and the patriarchy is about I can't trust my body. I feel like that one might be a little unique. But not totally. The other four that I wrote down I think are so related to the messages we've been...

Kara: Tell me more about I don't trust my body because I totally think that is patriarchally related but I want to...

Amanda: Yeah. That one I want to dig in with you maybe a little. So I can't trust my body is like, well, for me, it came from my IUD fell out. I didn't know it fell out. And so I'd gone 38 years feeling like badass proud awareness of my body. I was like, I know my body like nobody else, I'm so in tune with my body.

And then all of a sudden, this piece of metal fell out of my body and I had no idea. And I was like, I can never trust my body again. So for other

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people it might be I didn't find out I was pregnant until I was eight weeks, how did I not know? Oh my gosh, there's so many. Maybe I thought - and maybe fertility awareness. I thought I knew I wasn't ovulating and then I got pregnant anyway.

Kara: So interesting. Because it's like everything you're describing, your body just did what it was going to do and was supposed to do. It's like, if anybody fell down on the job, it was your brain. Not your body. Your body was just - the IUD fell out and your body was like, great, I guess you want me to make a baby, that's why this thing is gone.

And then you're blaming your body. I think that's still socialization because I think if you look at the Western canon, the philosophy and religion that has shaped Western culture, it is very much like, women are weak, they are of the body, their bodies lie, they are unpredictable and unstable and untrustworthy. These are all...

Amanda: Women can't be trusted in general.

Kara: Yeah. And women's bodies in general are tricky or are unknowable and mysterious and so you have to - so I actually think it totally does - I'm not saying that no men, people socialized as men don't ever have the thought oh, my body let me down, I can't trust it or whatever, but I just think that this in particular around pregnancy, there's just so much weird fragile masculinity fear about women, are they lying if they're pregnant? Are they really pregnant? Is it really yours?

All of that throughout historical society. So I do think that that's influenced by - women are socialized in general to regard their body as an adversary and to be willing at a drop of a hat to blame it for anything that goes wrong. Bodies have been blamed for everything from the fall of man to the rest of the world. So I do think that that's totally patriarchy.

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Amanda: Absolutely. Actually, there's another one on here that's similar, which is I don't know how to take care of myself. And that one you kind of just spoke to even more, which is like, this belief that the woman's body is so mysterious and complicated and hard to take care of.

Kara: Yeah, like untamable.

Amanda: We know better than you do.

Kara: Yeah, and women don't know anything.

Amanda: Yeah, I feel like that's a big one. So that I don't know how to take care of myself, that belief comes up a lot in the period when we find out we're pregnant with this unplanned pregnancy, be it a medical thing or just a flat out unplanned oops. I don't know how to take care of myself starts in the decision making and then goes all the way through and then afterwards.

Kara: There's so much of - women are completely painted as being - this is the Western canon. Irrational, emotional, not as logical as men, not as capable of making decisions, not fit for leadership. All of this, you go back to fucking Aristotle. So I think women are just socialized to constantly distrust themselves and doubt themselves. The minute that anything goes not according to plan. And I just think we're always one step away from declaring ourselves incompetent.

Amanda: So true.

Kara: If anything goes wrong. And then there's also this sort of like, we also have this very - it's a very modern conception we have right now that bodies are optimizable like computers. Sort of like we can completely

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control them and if we just do everything right, they'll always act a certain predictable way and we should know exactly.

It's a very complicated situation here. Humans have been - I'm gesturing to my body. We still don't understand most of this shit and humans have been trying to for thousands, hundreds of thousands of years trying to figure out what's happening in there, we don't know, how do we impact it, is it humorous, is it bile, is it bad spirits, is it insulin resistance.

It's all just the best science of the day is always us trying to figure out what the hell is happening inside our bodies. And maybe getting a little better at it but we still don't really totally know. So this idea that you should have known you were pregnant or you should have been able to track this better, if you'd only whatever, eaten the right way or not had that cigarette, you wouldn't end up with this fetal anomaly.

It's just like, there are good things that come from more knowledge about our bodies and being able to manage things a bit better, but I think we also take too much responsibility for it. Your body is ultimately kind of an unmanageable thing. It's an animal. Not completely under your control.

Amanda: This came up a little earlier when you were talking too, but I have the conversation quite a bit around "failed," and I'm using quotes in video but failed birth control. And it didn't fail. We know that it works 97%, 98%, 99%, 99.9% of the time. Your body just took that opportunity in the 0.1%. Nothing failed.

Kara: And also that depends on perfect use and nobody's perfect. When you're trying to - I want to preface this by saying I don't think it's a bad thing. I'm about to say when we interfere in a natural process, I mean, cancer treatment is interfering in a natural process, so that's not bad. We try to interfere in what our bodies have evolved to do for millions of years,

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they're going to be pretty good at it and we're not going to always be able to prevent it.

Amanda: Alright, another one is similar. Someone else is in control of me and my choices. Here's one that comes up, oh my gosh, almost daily. I had the abortion because my partner told me I had to, or he convinced me to. That's a huge, huge, huge one. So in control of me and my choices is partner, politics, family, religion, that autonomy you're talking about gets...

Kara: Yeah. But do we want to take that at face value I think is the question. From a coaching perspective, I think whenever we feel guilt or shame or worry, we made the wrong decision, we want to put the responsibility on someone else. So I think this is two phases.

There's the phase in which you made the decision, in which yes, maybe there was people pleasing going on, scarcity about money or relationships going on, maybe if we could go back there and coach you then, maybe you would come to the same decision for different reasons, a different decision, the same decision, who knows?

This happens all the time, not just with abortion. When people are in thought work, they'll then start looking back and being kind of like, maybe I would have done that differently if I'd known about it. Then they can get in this cycle of beating themselves up for that.

So yeah, any time somebody makes this kind of decision, I'm sure there were thoughts in there that if you were a perfect thought work being maybe you would have done differently, but it doesn't matter because the truth is that you still did make a decision. And I think really, the bigger issue is why you want to live your current life telling yourself that you didn't make that decision.

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Unless it was done without your knowledge, which does occasionally happen, especially to women of color in this country, if you knew and you chose to, then you did decide. And telling yourself that someone else forced you to, that only feels good because you're blaming and shaming yourself so you're like, well, feeling like a victim sucks but it feels better than telling myself I'm terrible.

But there's a third option. We can go out the trap door where you didn't do something wrong, you don't need to blame and shame yourself, and you don't need to blame somebody else.

Amanda: Yeah. Blame is gigantic. Gigantic in this world. So why do I want to blame someone else?

Kara: Blaming it on your partner, blaming it on whoever, usually because you are feeling guilt or shame now, or regret and you're not - whatever it is, you don't want to have the feeling you're having now and you don't know how to resolve it, so you want to blame it on somebody else.

Amanda: Yeah. So we talk a lot about that being a point in which you're giving away your power. That is the point in which you give away your power by choosing to believe that someone else is responsible for this place that you're at. Do you want to speak any further to that? What it means to give away your power?

Kara: Fundamentally, coaching on abortion is not different than coaching on any other past choice, which is the biggest problem is believing that your life would be better if you'd made a different choice. That's the biggest issue. So if that's what you have to work on first, yes, having a child or not having a child has a big impact on the circumstances of your life. But that still doesn't cause your happiness or your sadness.

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And we are just constantly looking for what I call exits of the human condition. We're on a freeway and we're like, I want to get off, I don't like this where I sometimes feel good and sometimes feel bad and my body doesn't do exactly what I want and other people don't follow my manual, being alive is just a lot. And I feel like we're constantly looking for some way to just get a break from being a human because we don't know how to manage our minds and accept it.

Amanda: Exit reality.

Kara: Yeah. We don't know how to accept the human experience. We're constantly trying to get away from it. And regret over a past choice and rumination and fixation over a past choice, whether it's getting an abortion or not, there are people who have children who regret that choice.

Amanda: There most certainly are.

Kara: I really wish that I had terminated that pregnancy. When you're someone who regrets your abortion, you don't ever think about that. But there are people out there, I hope we see more of that. I think that's the most taboo thing to say.

More than having an abortion, women are not allowed to say I regret having children. They're not even allowed to say I love my children a lot and of course this is my life and I'd glad they're here, and if I could do it over, I wouldn't have had them. That is so taboo. Anyway, I have a whole...

Amanda: So I told you today my son turned seven and I wrote on Facebook like, he's a pain in the ass and we love him beyond. Even writing that, I could hear - because I'm human, so I could hear the little voices like don't say your son's a pain in the ass. I'm like, well, you know.

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Kara: Right. And any...

Amanda: Taboo motherhood.

Kara: Regret is not caused by a circumstance or a choice. It's caused by your thoughts. I mean, it's a feeling you create with your thinking. So as long as you're basically like, I don't like my current reality, I think if it were different, I would feel better, what can I fixate on? It's going to be if I'd made that choice differently, whatever it is, having kids, not having kids, marrying the person you did, not marrying the person you didn't, taking that job, moving to that city, whatever, this is like, with any kind of very "sensitive" topic, one of the best things you can do is desensitize it a little bit.

It's still just your human brain. Just because we're talking about abortion doesn't mean that your human brain doesn't have its same biases and heuristics and dumb evolutions that it has that are going to impact how you think about it.

Amanda: Yeah. That's been a really interesting journey for me in choosing this niche and starting to speak about it. And I've been on such a rollercoaster of let's talk light and happy about it, let's talk sad and somber about it. I feel like it's been a year of me finding my true voice in that balance of we don't have to be all serious about this all the time.

Kara: And we can if we need to be. It's like there's all of it. And also, it's always - and this with coaching my clients all the time where I'm like, the medicine is different depending on the issue. If you're making a bunch of jokes about your abortion to deflect the fact that you've never processed your feelings about it, then we need to take it seriously for a minute.

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If you are kind of torturing yourself in this wallowing way where you're believing that this one act defines your whole life and it's the most serious thing that ever happened and your brain is totally true about everything, then sometimes we need to bring a little humor to it and be like, let's look at what your brain is actually saying. Does this make sense? Just depends on - everybody needs a little of the opposite of how they are.

Amanda: Yeah, absolutely. I think one of the things that got me through my experience the most was just - and I had barely been introduced to tools of life coaching, particular Brooke's work at The Life Coach School. And I think choosing ahead of time to have my own back was the thing that made the biggest difference.

Because I knew that even though I was 98% sure I was making the right choice, it could go either way. I could go either way. And that I did decide ahead of time to have my own back no matter what. And so something you said earlier, what I wrote down was we get to believe anything we want to believe.

Can you speak a little to that? And I talk to women who had abortions many, many years ago and have not talked to anyone. So they've been sitting these beliefs year after year after year and so to introduce this idea that you can change your beliefs is like, what, I can't do that, I've been thinking I'm a terrible person for 30 years.

Kara: Yeah. I always like to say your past is as over as ancient Rome. You don't spend a lot of time being like, I just don't think - who's the guy who killed Caesar? Brutus? Yeah. I just don't think Brutus should have done that and did he bring the right knives and maybe he - you just don't ever think about that. That's not something you can control; it doesn't create your life.

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And your mistake is you think your past creates your life now. But whatever I did yesterday is as over as the murder of Julius Caesar. I have as much ability to impact it as I do to impact that. So once something is over, it only exists in your mind.

If everybody died who knew about the murder of Caesar, it wouldn't affect anything anymore. Nobody would ever think about it. And the same is true of your past. So as soon as it's over, it only exists as you think about it. And so you just get to decide what that's going to be.

I usually say to people like, okay, well, you've tried thinking that it was a heinous mistake that ruined your life for the last 30 years and how has that gone for you? Are you enjoying it? Is that why you signed up for coaching? Let's maybe try something else.

I think another exercise people can do is like, when you believe you've made a mistake, what you basically do is you program your brain to unconsciously just go look for all the evidence that you made a mistake and interpret everything through that. So the kid you have now will throw something on the floor, and you're like, well, it's because I had that abortion and I'm a bad mother.

It just all gets sucked back in. So go look through your life for all the things that are positive in your life that you did or became or were able to create because you made that choice. You have to balance out, you have to redirect your brain on purpose to look for evidence of the positive.

And there always is. I mean, I think one of the things that's hardest for humans if you are dissatisfied with your own existence is there are so many turning points and we fixate on the big ones. We think like, having that abortion, that's the big one. But the truth is like, which corner you turned down yesterday when you went to the store to get milk...

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Amanda: Could have been a big one.

Kara: Completely changed your whole life.

Amanda: So true.

Kara: Because if you'd gone down the other corner, you would have gotten hit by a bus, or you would have maybe run into someone you like even more than your current partner, or you would have whatever, I don't know, seen a puppet that inspired you to create a TV show. We have no idea.

Your life is like a fractal. Every single decision you make fractals off into a million different possible realities. And so it's just a logical fallacy to kind of fixate on particular decisions like did I have the abortion, who I married, whatever, whatever, as if you just undo that switch, then you'd know exactly where you'd be instead. You have no idea. And so wherever you're going to end up, your happiness has to come from your own thought process and you have to create it on purpose.

Amanda: Yeah. If I had a motive in my work and as a coach, one would be to eliminate this belief about right and wrong. But I was just thinking there are some people, some listeners, some of my community who believe 1000%, I will never change their mind that they made the wrong decision. And I don't actually know. We don't know what right and wrong is. But I have found there is some wiggle room to just go like, just own it. I made the wrong decision and.

Kara: Right. You're making your love and acceptance for yourself conditional on not making mistakes. Let's say we get a certified letter from the universe that you fucked that up. Okay, so what are we going to do? That's what I always say. A certified letter from the universe.

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Amanda: Yeah. Well that is exactly what it is. It's like, okay, fine, if you want that, let's just take it. Exactly, I completely fucked that up and now.

Kara: It always comes back to your own self-acceptance. It's like you can be fighting so hard to believe that you didn't make a mistake, you didn't do something wrong, but alright, let's just say you did. Now what?

Amanda: And that's where we get to believe anything we want, circling back.

Kara: Yeah. And that goes back to always having your own back. Yeah, I fucked that up.

Amanda: And I choose to believe I can still live a powerful and at least moderately peaceful...

Kara: I had the abortion, I embezzled a million dollars, fucked it up. And now what? I'm still here. Either don't be here or if you're going to be here, what's the point of spending the time you have here just focusing on that one thing you think you did wrong? You rob yourself of the ability to do a bunch of other stuff differently.

Amanda: And that comes to the last thought that I think I see a lot as a brain error if you want to call it that, which is I don't deserve to be happy, as if someone else grants me my permission to be happy and they have now given me this ticket for life-long misery.

Kara: Your happiness is just some chemicals in your brain so nobody's really in charge of it. What is it really? All of our feelings are just sensations in our body created by thoughts, which set of hormones in our brains. So

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it's just like, your serotonin receptors don't know anything about deserving. That's just not a thing.

Amanda: That's just not a thing. So if it's your mother-in-law or your priest or your whoever...

Kara: It's like I don't deserve to digest my food. Your intestines don't - it doesn't operate that way. It's just not - you just are wrong about the system here. It's not a deserving-based system. It's just...

Amanda: It's like I'm not a person who uses Twitter but I imagine that's like Twitter quote. It's not a deserving-based system.

Kara: That's just not what it is. That's not what happiness is. We can get into the philosophical do you want to believe people have to deserve happiness and if so, who's doing the measuring and who's doing the meeting out and whatever. But I just think sometimes it's just easier to just laugh at how wrong your whole theory is.

There just isn't - I don't deserve to be hungry. I don't deserve to pee. This is just a thing that happens in your body. It really has nothing to do with deserving.

Amanda: Wow, that's awesome. Okay, as we wrap up here, is there anything you feel like either you wanted to say before you came on or you feel like after this conversation someone needs to hear? Or what's coming up for you?

Kara: I don't think so. I'm just so glad that you're doing this work because I do think so many women are suffering from their self-imposed - it's so much self-imposed suffering that is unnecessary. And this work is so

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important at every stage. Before you decide if you're going to terminate a pregnancy, during, after, all of that.

And I just think - I feel like my work in the first part of my career was about physical autonomy, which was abortion rights, and now it's about mental autonomy and mental liberation. And I think - so that is so important. The whole point of my work now is even if we have the physical autonomy or the economic autonomy, if we don't have the mental autonomy, if we don't have mental liberation, that stuff doesn't matter. We'll still make ourselves miserable. So I just think this is such a crucial part of the work. You really have to have both.

Amanda: Yeah, you really do. Alright, so when people want to learn all that goodness with you, they go to...

Kara: Unfuck Your Brain is my podcast. It's on any place you find your podcast normally.

Amanda: And of course we'll link it all up. Fantastic. Thank you so much.

Kara: My pleasure.

Amanda: I was only nervous for four seconds and it...

Kara: There you go. It was my pleasure.

Amanda: I can be an example of what's possible to other people.

Kara: Absolutely. You are.

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Alright chickens, I hope that you enjoyed that conversation as much as I did, and that if you are someone who did choose to have an abortion at some point or will in the future, that that work that Amanda is doing resonated with you and that that conversation was helpful.

So one other thing I want to tell y'all is that it is that time. We are doing our next free webinar. I don't know who we is. It's me. It's just me. I'm doing my next free webinar. So this is all about how to get more done in less time. And I think so many women struggle with productivity and with efficiency and getting everything done and take on so many additional obligations and responsibilities and worry so much more about whether they're doing a good job or not.

So even if you have a system that is working totally smoothly, I guarantee you that what I teach on this webinar is going to teach you to think differently about some of the hidden time sucks that are kind of draining your time and making you less productive and less efficient than you could be.

They're not obvious because they're happening in your brain and you don't even know that they're happening. So that is why I teach this topic so often because so many people struggle with that. It's such a crucial thing to understand to get done anything else you want in life.

We can coach you on your self-confidence and have you set an amazing goal, but if you don't know how to get things done efficiently and productively, then that's going to be a problem. So it is How to Get More Done in Less Time and the webinar is on Thursday, April 15th. It's at 6pm Eastern, it's totally free.

Let me say this once and forever. Yes, there will be a replay. We will send you a replay if you register. We will send you a replay. Of course, but come

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live if you can. That's way more fun. Alright, if you want to register online, you can go to unfuckyourbrain.com/getmoredone, all one word. unfuckyourbrain.com/getmoredone, all one word.

Or you can just text us, text your email to +13479971784. That's +13479971784. Text us your email, you'll get a message asking for the code word, and you just reply GETMOREDONE, all one word, to register, and we'll get you all set up. Can't wait to see you all there.

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