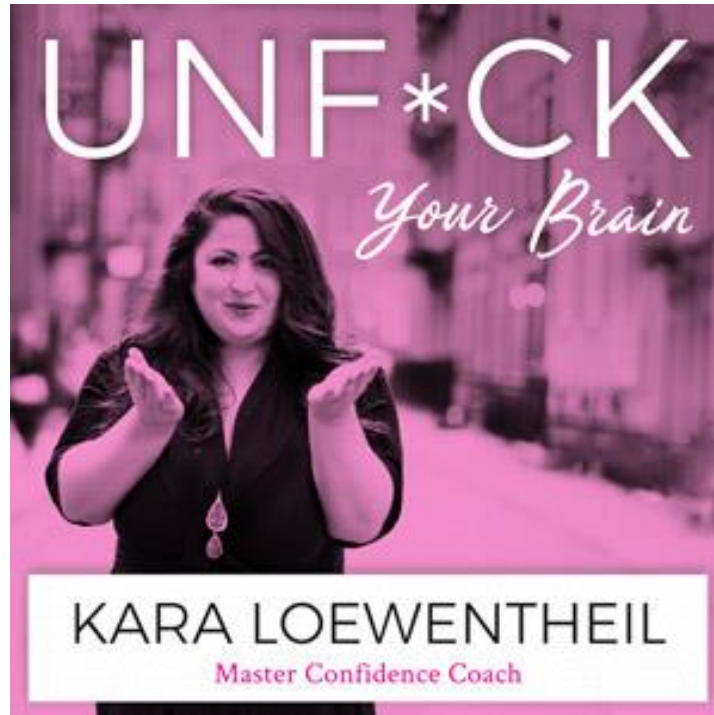


**UFYB 217: The Problem With (Most) New Year's
Resolutions: A Conversation
With Caroline Dooner of the F*CK It Podcast**



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. How are you all doing with this end-of-year madness? We are experiencing madness on the inside, madness on the outside. So obviously New Years is in some ways - it's the time that the rest of the world is briefly into self-development in terms of setting resolutions.

But of course, if you don't know about the brain and you don't know about coaching, then those resolutions are often just big old shoulds, right? They're just ways that we think we should be or things that we think we should do in order to feel good about ourselves.

And so over the years, I've done a few episodes on New Year's resolutions and that's why we are sharing some of them here today that appeared on other podcasts. So that are brand new to this podcast, but conversations that I had on other podcasts all about what goes wrong when we set New Year's resolutions.

And in particular, I love this interview that we are releasing today for the first time on this podcast with the author of *The F*ck It Diet*, Caroline Dooner. *The F*ck It Diet* is a book that I completely recommend to anybody who is trying to deprogram themselves from diet mentality.

It's one of the couple of core books that I give my coaches in my Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching program. Before they start, I send them a couple books that are foundational, like bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, and like *The F*ck It Diet*.

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And then we have a couple of others too, but point is The F*ck It Diet is an amazing resource for those of you who are trying to question diet culture. And I think that's so relevant around the holidays because it's a time that even those of us who have done a bunch of work maybe on our body image, on our diet mentality, on our thoughts around making food and exercise a moral issue, and all of the associated nonsense, I think that this time of year can be really hard.

Even if you have been doing that work, there's just a lot of factors that bring it up. Everybody else is fucking talking about their diets. People who even maybe normally don't talk so much about food and diets are now making comments about got to do the turkey trot to run off the Thanksgiving pie, and next year I really got to get serious about getting in shape.

There's all of that kind of talk. Many of us are spending more time with our families, which is often where we learned our original diet culture thinking. And so we may most of the year be able to hang out with people we have chosen who don't comment on bodies, don't comment on food.

But then at the holidays, we may be sort of thrown into lots of interactions with people who don't share our values about that, maybe commenting on our bodies, may just be commenting on their own bodies. But it can bring up a lot of the kind of things that we've had to work on.

So I think this time of year is just a time that everybody needs some extra support with body positivity, with health at any size, with dealing with that little voice in your brain that tells you that you should really make another New Year's resolution to lose weight, it'll be different this year.

And so in this conversation with Caroline Dooner, we talk about what is wrong with the way that most of us try to set New Year's resolutions. What happens when we are trying to motivate ourselves from self-loathing, from

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self-rejection, from shame, from should, why that doesn't work, and what I recommend you do instead.

So I think that if you've ever been a person who's set a New Year's resolution, which is pretty much all of us, you're going to find this conversation super helpful. So without ado, let's get into it.

—

Kara: I'm so thrilled about your book because it's the perfect thing to recommend to my clients for all the stuff I'm always trying to teach them in bits and pieces, and now I can be like, oh my God, just go read this.

Caroline: That makes me so happy. I always love hearing that. It always blows my mind. I'm like, really?

Kara: Yeah, because it was like, otherwise I was having to be like, I guess read this 1970s book called Intuitive Eating, and then also check out this website that also looks like it's from 1992 about health at any size. Like needed a modern, put-together version of it.

Caroline: I'm so glad. That makes me really happy. So we'll just get into it. Does that sound good?

Kara: Sounds good.

Caroline: Will you introduce yourself to the listeners and let them know who you are, what you do, and sort of how you got into the work you do?

Kara: Sure, although it might be kind of fun to just be an anonymous guest. Let people try to figure it out. I am a master certified coach. I'm a former social justice lawyer, now a master certified coach. I used to be a

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reproductive rights lawyers, and so the point in which is only that I'm basically a professional feminist.

And now what I do is I basically am a feminist mindset coach, by which I mean that I teach women how to identify the ways that internalized socialization has impacted their thought patterns, meaning what we learn about what women are supposed to be like or look like or what their value is or what the purpose of their life is, all of society's messages, explicit and implicit about being a woman, what those are.

Anybody who gets socialized as a woman. And then I teach them how to identify those, how those are impacting them, and then how to actually change their thought patterns kind of piece by piece. I am very practical and analytical and no bullshit.

And so I really focus a lot on how do we approach thought change, habit change, whatever it is, in a very concrete, methodical way. And so I do that now through my podcast, which is called *Unf*ck Your Brain*, and through The Clutch, which is my feminist coaching community.

Caroline: I love it. I love that so much. Professional feminist, that's so great. And yeah, that's the place where when people write to me all the time saying, okay, I get it, I'm eating more food, I'm feeling more normal around food, I feel that physical switch, but I'm so stuck on my body, I'm so stuck on wanting to be accepted.

And that's really, really, really hard stuff. But that mental piece, those beliefs, that's always what I come back to. We have these beliefs and we have to become aware of them. But even with that, once you become aware, people are like, okay, so?

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Kara: A lot of my clients are like, okay, I went to therapy and now I know all of my terrible thoughts, are we - this is how I felt too. Sort of like, are we going to do something about them or are we just going to watch them keep playing in our minds?

I think that thought piece is the most important. And the irony is - of course people on the podcast can't see me but I'm a fat woman and I'm a plus-size coach and I'm a body love and health at any size advocate, although health is problematic in its own way. Anyway, but body love no matter your health, but also health at any size, or health as it's available to you. So anyway...

Caroline: Health habits.

Kara: I ironically came to this work when I was still trying to lose weight. So it was actually, hilariously, my teacher and coach who's a dear friend of mine, but I met her because she was doing a weight loss coaching program and I took it, it was the last thing I tried to do to lose weight before I kind of had my awakening.

And she was teaching some stuff - she was teaching what was actually kind of similar to intuitive eating in some ways actually. But then also this thought work component of your thoughts are what cause your feelings, and your feelings cause your actions, and changing your weight is not going to change how you feel about yourself. You have to do this internal work.

And I was like, well, wait a minute. If changing my thoughts is going to solve my confidence and self-esteem and self-hatred, who cares - I don't need to lose weight, right? I don't need this other part, why do we have this other part in this program?

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Caroline: That's so interesting because I think a lot of people would be like, almost the opposite. I don't need to accept myself at the weight that I am now. I need...

Kara: That is such a misunderstanding of the human brain. You can't be like, every day I walk with my right foot forward, but then when I reach this certain point, I'm all of a sudden going to walk with my left foot forward, or I'm going to write with my right hand, and then after 100 pages, all of a sudden, I'll magically switch to my left hand.

Your thought patterns are like muscle memory. You can't teach yourself to reject your body all the way down the scale. And be like, at 126 I'm still going to reject myself but when I get to 125, all of a sudden, I'm going to wake up and love my body. That's not how your brain works.

Caroline: Exactly. The way that I kind of put it sometimes is the way that we seek out the goal is the way we're going to experience the goal.

Kara: I call that the destination always feels like the journey did.

Caroline: Yes. And it really fucking does.

Kara: Yeah, it is not a joke. What happens is - this is true in any area of your life. It's like, making money, dating, finding love, whatever, it's like people want to hate dating and then love being in a relationship. Like no, that's not going to work.

If you told yourself it's terrible, then when you end up in a relationship, your brain is still stuck in it's terrible mode. And same with your body, same with making money, whatever it is. The destination will always feel like the journey because every day on the journey you're practicing how you think and feel about this part of your life.

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You're teaching your brain to think and feel a certain way about it. And if that's negative, then achieving the object of your desire will do nothing for you. And we see this, of course, people lose weight, temporarily usually, and then it's like, then they fixate on something else. All you've done is teach your brain how to hate your body.

Caroline: Fixate on something else, but your body or - and it usually is your body, you're still fixating on your body, but even if you temporarily - sometimes there is that honeymoon high before you start panicking about it going away. But then you're fixating on something else. There's always something else to micromanage and improve. It's just never-ending.

Kara: If you white-knuckle through - let's say you drink too much and you white-knuckle your way to stopping but you don't ever deal with any of the emotional stuff that was causing it, now you're just a compulsive online shopper instead. You just switch it to the next thing.

Caroline: Yes. And that's the other piece. That's what I think of as the emotional piece of if you don't - they are obviously very intertwined. But the emotions that we push down with whatever vice, whatever distraction, they're going to be there if you abstain from that vice, you're just going to go to another vice.

Kara: Yeah. Because it's not the action. It's the motivation behind it. It's that fuel. You're still creating the thing that was fueling the action, so you're just letting it out a different way.

Caroline: Okay, well this is maybe a perfect segue into what I want to talk about with you today, which is the horrible time of year where everyone...

Kara: This is 2020 so this could be any time of year you're describing.

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Caroline: The horrible time of year of the most horrible year.

Kara: It's like we're just going to reach a zenith maybe then we'll just come out the other side like a wormhole. That would be amazing.

Caroline: Wouldn't it be? I know. I keep trying to remind myself like, 2020, when it turns January 1st...

Kara: I know, we totally all have magical thinking about that. It's the same thing. It's like the scale switching over. We're all like, man, 2020, but it's almost over. In 2021 we're going to wake up and be like, oh, it was all a dream.

Caroline: I know, God, I wish.

Kara: Time is a human illusion.

Caroline: It is. But this is a time of year where everyone is sure that they are going to turn their lives around and become new amazing, impressive, responsible versions of themselves on January 1st. And everywhere you look online and in the fucking mail, I can't believe people still mail me things. I still get...

Kara: You're getting resolution mail? That is horrifying.

Caroline: You know, like gyms in the area. Everywhere you look, people are talking about new year, new you. So I would love to hear your take and your approach to resolutions, to New Year's resolutions, or anti-resolutions. However, you approach it.

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Kara: So much to say. I do have a lot of thoughts about it. So number one, just new year, new you is a terrible concept. Number one, we were just joking time is a human construct, but that's true. We made all this up.

There's nothing magic about January 1st. And I think what's so delusional about the way most people try to do New Year's resolutions, which I will say doesn't only happen on New Year's. It's like any time you make this vow to start on Monday of anything.

Caroline: It's that mindset dynamic of I'm changing my life around.

Kara: Yeah. And it's like we think we're going to become totally different people. But we have no explanation for what's the mechanism that's going to make that happen. If it's December and you haven't done yoga for nine months, why do you think it's reasonable to think that you'll wake up on January 1st and you're going to do yoga every day?

December 31st to January 1st, those are just made-up words. I don't know, my cat does not have a concept of time. It's not like on December 31st he'd be like, tomorrow, I'm going to wake up and I'm going to run marathons around the apartment, which I've never done before. It's all just made up.

There's two levels of this going on. It's completely unrealistic the way that we think about it. We just are somehow like, well, I hope future me has a totally different set of motivation and skills and whatever to execute this project.

And it's one of the whole reasons that it doesn't work is that - there's multiple reasons it doesn't work. One is that you don't understand how to operate your brain to make habit change happen. So we'll talk about that in a minute, how you actually can change your habits if you want to.

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But actually, the most important question first is why are you even doing that. What is the motivation? If your motivation is because you just somehow from living where and when you live you've gotten the idea that you should be doing yoga, that it's somehow a moral good for you to do it or mean something about you or whatever, so many of our goals and resolutions are motivated - especially resolutions, not so much goals always but especially personal care.

It's basically food, movement, home related. Things that are about our bodies, our habits, our immediate environment, our processes as a human. A lot of the goals we set around those are shame-based. They're like, I think that I should be this different kind of person, I think I would feel better about myself if I were this different kind of person.

And so I'm going to try to act my way into feeling better about myself. And then that always fails because number one, it doesn't work, and two, you haven't built the mental infrastructure to actually create habit change.

Caroline: Right. And a lot of times it's an arbitrary idea of what we should be doing.

Kara: It's so random. What about people before yoga came to the West? No Americans were trying to do yoga on January 1st. I think it can be fun to - I like to really play it like - people take brain stuff very seriously sometimes. I just like to play around with it to just see how culturally contingent it is. Imagine it was 1901 and you were resolving to wake up every morning and take that cocaine tonic your doctor prescribed to make you healthier.

Caroline: I wish that was what my doctor gave me.

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Kara: I know. They're all like, vegetables and movement. You're like, where's the cocaine tonic? But that sounds ridiculous to us now, right? That you would be like my New Year's resolution is to take my cocaine every morning. That's what's going to promote my good health and good moral status.

But that was totally a thing. It's all made up and it just is the meaning that we give it. Why do you want to do yoga every day? Why do you want to have a - the wellness and coaching world is chock full of people talking about their morning routines.

I think it's 100% the same energy that people used to have when they were designing temple sacrifice rituals. It's just like, magical sequence of things I'm going to do that's just going to make me feel happy forever and make every day amazing.

Caroline: All before you eat, right?

Kara: Yeah. That's the other thing that's so interesting about the food stuff is humans have such a long history of ritualization around food. So anthropologically, it's very compelling to us. Food was a very important thing, it used to be scarcer, it used to be more dangerous. There's a part of us that is very drawn to rituals and rules around food for safety. But it doesn't actually work.

Caroline: Especially now.

Kara: Especially now, when you really don't need to worry about - your food has been pasteurized. It's safe to eat. And so I think we have to acknowledge - I never want it to sound like I'm saying everybody's being stupid just because you're all dumb.

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Obviously, that's not what I'm saying. We all do this because we live in a society, especially if we're socialized as women, that tells us that we should be constantly trying to improve ourselves and be better so that we can be worthy enough.

We're taught that our bodies, what our bodies look like and what other people think of them is what determines our value and worth in the world. And we have this mix of puritanism and Christianity and capitalism in this particular - the US at least, culturally, that just makes us really fixated on constant attempts to improve ourselves and better ourselves through work and effort.

Caroline: Yes. And it's so tied in with morality and whether we think we're good people or not.

Kara: Yeah. Sometimes I think growing up Jewish gave me a slightly different perspective on this, but it's still obviously the culture around me. It's not like I don't have these issues too and have to work on them.

But I do think we're all kind of - that concept of original sin that you're born sinful, we all think that we're just somehow wanting. Every single client I have thinks there's something undefinable but definitely wrong about them. Some essential wrongness or brokenness.

And I'm always joking with them like, okay, well, there's a lot of other women here, so what are the odds that almost everybody else in the world is fine and I just got the several hundred of you that are broken?

Caroline: That's what I was going to say. Without coming together and talking about it, we're all sure that we are the broken ones. They're okay, they don't have to do that, there really is something wrong with me and it's this secret that a lot of us have with ourselves.

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Kara: And also, if there's something truly secretly intrinsically and morally wrong with you, which of course there isn't, I don't see how doing yoga five times a week is going to help that.

Caroline: Sorry, my mail is being delivered and my dog...

Kara: Sometimes my cat comes in and screams just because it's not dinnertime yet and he thinks it should be.

Caroline: Alright, I think we're in the clear. Molly, it's just the mailman, it's okay. We're going to be safe. We're going to survive this probably.

Kara: One hopes. One never knows until it's over.

Caroline: One never knows, especially Molly. Everything is a threat. So wait, where were we?

Kara: That everybody thinks there's something intrinsically secretly wrong with them, but even if that were true, if you were truly just fatally flawed in some way, then how would eating kale and going to yoga really solve your problem anyway?

Caroline: I know. And yet we're all - somehow. And it is in the marketing too, of if you just do this one thing you're going to have this energy. You're tired? What you need, you need supplements, you need more exercise, you need to wake up earlier.

Kara: Right. As opposed to like, sometimes human bodies are tired.

Caroline: Go to sleep.

Kara: My cat sleeps 23 hours a day.

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Caroline: It's a dream.

Kara: I know. I mean, I want to be up for eight. But we have such a distorted idea. Because so many of us don't - because of industrialization and electric lighting and all these factors that are very recent to the history of humans, we have a very unrealistic idea about how productive we should be. Again, it's that productivity and capitalism piece. How productive we should be, how consistent we should be. There's something...

Caroline: Huge piece. Sorry, what happened?

Kara: I was trying to remember, keep going, it'll come back to me.

Caroline: No, that's such a huge piece and I think it's so - it runs so parallel the way we approach both of these things. They're obviously interconnected. But the way we approach productivity and laziness, like oh, there's something wrong with me, I'm so tired, I'm so tired, I just need to do more, I just need to be better, I just need to be less lazy, I just need to have a better routine.

When what most of us need is more rest and more true downtime that we don't even know how to take. We don't even know that we're allowed to take it. When we finally have the chance to, we're like, my God.

Kara: And we're staring at our phones the whole time because we have these little devices that have been engineered to keep us addicted to them. And it's not restful. The human eye only started seeing screens 30 years ago. That is not actually downtime for your nervous system.

Caroline: It's so, so true. But that kind of belief system runs parallel to the diet culture of there's something wrong with me, why am I so hungry, so why am I so tired, why am I so hungry?

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The answer we assume is we have to work harder to be less hungry somehow and we have to work harder to be less tired somehow. When the answer for most people in most circumstances, especially in our culture, is you need to eat more and you need to allow it, and you need to rest more and you need to allow it.

Kara: And they also circle around. I think sometimes the food and body positivity movement gets trapped in this corner where it's as though people are saying or seem to be saying there's no such thing as people ever using food the way we know people use booze or drugs or shopping or anything else.

And of course there is that, but that all still comes from the same thing. If you are punishing yourself and not letting yourself rest and not actually relaxing, and you're creating these stressed-out conditions for yourself, and so of course you're going to turn to something for comfort.

And for some people that's food. And so even if you are eating for not true physical hunger, which is number one, morally totally fine, number two, totally normal, but number three, even if you were doing it at some extreme like all day every day or something, never sleeping, staying awake, just eat cake throughout the night continuously. The answer would still be rest and softness and compassion for yourself. Not driving yourself harder.

Caroline: Exactly. So, so true.

Kara: We can have a 17-hour conversation. What were we talking about? Oh, habits. How to create real habits. This is one important thing for listeners to know because some of y'all are going to try to do resolutions anyway and you're going to pretend you're doing them because you love yourself.

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Maybe you are. I don't know. If your plan is to give up your morning cocaine, I'm with you. That's probably a good idea. Wait until the afternoon at least.

So the thing that - here's how you know, I teach this thing, I call it perfectionist fantasy, which I think is highly correlated with diet culture. So people - I can pretty much guarantee that 99% of the people listening to this podcast have this problem without knowing anything else about them.

Caroline: I'm sure I do.

Kara: Me too. How did I come up with it? Watch my own brain. That's the thing you have to understand about coaches. We're not saying - I'm far from having it all figured out. Everything I teach I pretty much learned from watching my own brain.

It relates to this fantasy of okay, I've never gone to yoga in nine months, but starting on Monday I'm going to go five times a week religiously. And so that's the perfectionist fantasy is this fantasy that at some undetermined point in the future, or sometimes you determine the point. It's like Monday, you're going to be this completely different person with a completely different set of habits, a completely perfect motivation, it's going to feel amazing.

And you create these elaborate fantasies because that's the only time that you stop criticizing and shaming yourself. The whole reason we develop this tendency is because we are constantly internally berating ourselves for how we eat or how we move or what we do or what we don't do.

And so the only relief we know how to find is in creating a fantasy about how we're going to be better tomorrow. We're going to be perfect tomorrow or Monday or whatever.

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And it turns into this vicious cycle where we get so used to doing that that we have zero integrity with ourselves about actual habit change. We already know - after a few years of this, by the time you're in your 30s at least, after a decade or two of it, you're kind of onto the deal. You know you're not actually going to do that thing.

You know the odds are pretty low that you're actually going to do it. But you still feel compelled to create the fantasy because it's the only way you know to quiet your own self-criticism.

So that's why you have to do that self-love part, the thought part, the what are you making it mean about you and your worth. You have to do all of that because you have to - you're right that you need relief from that self-criticism, but a perfectionist fantasy is not the answer.

And in fact, the opposite is true. The things that will actually change your habits and your life are things that perfectionists hate, like a 10-minute walk, or working on your business for half an hour.

It's basically like, I say the way to pick a goal is to pick something that's - for perfectionists - is to pick something that's so small that your brain says it's not worth it, it'll never work. That's how you know you're onto something.

Caroline: I love that so much.

Kara: What is the most baseline dumbest amount of thing you can do? It's not really dumb but you know what I mean. What sounds so basic that you know you can actually do it, and of course your brain's going to be like, that's stupid, Nancy in accounting has such a great ass because she goes to yoga five times a week and does 90 minutes of ashtanga, and you're going to go for a walk once a week.

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But that is actually how you change habits. It's like vowing to yourself that on Monday you're going to wake up and speak Italian fluently. If you don't speak Italian now, that's not going to happen. Yeah, it is painstaking and annoying to learn a language word by word and that's how it happens. If you've ever watched a child learn a language, that's how it goes.

Caroline: They have one word for a while.

Kara: Everything is baba for like six months. And then it's like, and now there's a dada too. Now we have two words. A child, just like you, there does come a point where the scale tips and now there's rapid development. You have to earn that. The same is true with you and habits.

So if you want to move your body more, of course there are some reasons to do that that could feel good to you. A friend of mine, Amber, she's a fat yoga teacher, calls it pushing lymph. The lymph needs to move through your body.

Caroline: I love that. That is one of the things I say, to breathe deeper, to circulate your blood, to help your lymphatic system.

Kara: So every time I move a little, I'm like, alright, it's lymph pushing, I'm doing it right now. I'm doing a little shimmy with my shoulders. Obviously, humans, we love in animal bodies, and there are some benefits to us for movement.

But you have to, number one, have done the work on motivation, and then number two, pick a goal that is so small that it seems pointless. And you have to think about the long term. Humans really overestimate how much we can get done in short periods of time, like a day or a week.

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Anybody who's ever been like, I will finish this entire to-do list today, it's like, definitely not. But we underestimate how much we can get done in a longer period of time, like a year. Our brains are just not that good at thinking that way naturally.

So if you actually - we all know what's going to happen if you vow to never eat carbs again starting January 1st. You're going to be face down in a pizza by January 4th. It's a natural process. If your resolution is I'm going to take a 10-minute walk twice a week, seems so pointless, right?

Caroline: But it's doable and you're going to do it.

Kara: It's doable, and at the end of the year you will have gone on 104 walks that you wouldn't have if you hadn't done that.

Caroline: I love this. And it really does remind me - wow, the snow is really coming down right now. Sorry, I just looked out the window.

Kara: I'm jealous. I'm waiting for our snow to arrive.

Caroline: It's exciting but it is going to turn to rain here so I'm kind of depressed.

Kara: That's rude, I don't approve of that.

Caroline: Very rude. But so the tools that are in my book, what I find is that people are like, I don't need to do them, those are so simple. Like they're too...

Kara: Exactly. We're all like, hey, I can't keep a habit to save my life but I'm sure I'm too sophisticated to do any of these simple tools.

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Caroline: To do the 10-minute lie down, or the stream of consciousness writing for 20 minutes. And people are like, so what do I do? What do I really do? What do I really do?

Kara: You're like, I just told you what to do.

Caroline: It is allowed to be that simple. And often the most profound things for us are really the most obvious and the most simple. We know the answer to most things and we're like, no, I can't do that.

Kara: This happens in thought work all the time. People are like, I think this really complicated thing is going on in my brain and I'm like, I think you just aren't having a feeling. I think that you should just allow that emotion. And they're like, no, I already did that, it didn't work.

So I read these three books and I've constructed this elaborate theory, and I'm like, or you could just feel sad. I think that maybe is just what needs to happen, you just need to feel sad. Your body actually knows how to do that. That's really all that's going on.

Caroline: I know. It's so hard to be a human and at the same time, it could be so simple if we...

Kara: But that's exactly it. It's like, this is the irony. We make it so hard by trying to run away from it all the time. It's like, we're so unwilling and so untrained in just being on the floor with ourselves for 10 minutes. Or actually looking at our thoughts for 10 minutes.

So we're constantly racing and I think technology and that fragmentation of attention and time isn't helping with this. We're constantly looking for novel stimuli and we have to really learn how to slow down. And I know, I sound like such a goddamn hippie.

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Be with ourselves in our bodies. But that's what all of this, the food and the restriction and the binging and the purging and the exercising and all of it is such a desperate attempt to get away from your own humanness in your own body.

Caroline: It's so true. And it is so annoying that it's that simple. Because it's uncomfortable, especially if you've been avoiding it for such a long time. It's uncomfortable to be with it and to - one of the things that I say and have noticed myself is that there's a lot waiting there if you've been avoiding it and it's going to feel like too much and it's going to feel like it's going to be too much forever. But it's just that we have to start somewhere.

Kara: Yeah, I always say most of us don't actually know what allowing an emotion is like because we've never done it. What we have experienced is what it feels like to desperately resist an emotion and try to climb out of your own body.

Caroline: And it's a horrible feeling to do that.

Kara: Which is horrible, right. So when I say allow the sadness, people think I'm saying you're going to feel like that. No, 90% of that suffering is you trying to get away. Really just imagine, imagine your skeleton is trying to exit your body. That's crazy. Of course that feels terrible, something being inside something it can't get out of. But 90% of it is that.

If you just are willing to be there, it's not nearly as intense. And also I think people think there's something wrong with them about this. It's 100% a skill. We are socialized out of experiencing our emotions as they happen. We are taught to stop doing that. And a lot of us grew up in families where there was an additional layer of that's not okay, that's not allowed. You're not allowed to feel...

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Caroline: Or just get over it.

Kara: Yeah, stiff upper lip, just get over it, you're so sensitive. The story in my household growing up was I was just so sensitive.

Caroline: Same.

Kara: So it's not you. It's society and socialization and your family and whatever else. It really is just a skill you can learn. When people join The Clutch and start working with me, it's literally the first thing we teach you is how do you process an emotion? It's not a mystical thing.

It's an actual skill you can learn. But a lot of us were not taught how to allow and self-regulate as children. And our parents didn't know how either. We just didn't get that draw of the luck.

Caroline: Do you feel like we are sort of the first generation where we're like, oh, we do go to therapy? Most of us do - it's not really that stigmatized anymore. Of course it is a little bit for some people, depending on where you're from. But I do feel like we may be the first generation where we're like, feeling might be okay.

Kara: Where it's so normalized, at least in some communities. You're right. Not everywhere obviously. But I do think more for our parents it was more like, something is really wrong, that's why you go to therapy. As opposed to like, people are always asking what's the difference between a coach and a therapist and a teacher and this and that.

I'm just like, humans have had a hard time being humans since humans existed. There's always been sages and wise people and elders and the village priest and the teacher and the philosopher in ancient Greece.

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There's just always been people who are trying - there have always been people who are like, there's got to be an easier way to be a human. This is very intense and I need some help. There have always been people trying to be like, okay, here's what we've learned.

And a lot of it is pretty consistent. It's like, thinking about yourself in a really negative way. What is God is love? What does that really mean? It means loving yourself. Using love, your ego is telling you lies, believing all your thoughts is not a good idea.

Caroline: It's pretty consistent if you look at most of the religions. It's different ways of trying to tell the same story.

Kara: Totally. You read the Greek stoics and you read Buddha and there is some overlap.

Caroline: For sure. This is so great. So any last thoughts on resolutions? I think the big takeaway is if you're going to be making resolutions, which is fine...

Kara: We will not come to your house and yell at you. You are allowed.

Caroline: Is to make them so mundane that you think that it's not worth it.

Kara: Yeah. You think about compound interest. It's a concept most people don't understand because we're not taught it, which is like, we have a human bias towards basically thinking big things are dramatic. Big numbers, big whatever.

And compound interest is the way financially that little bits of money exponentially increase themselves and add up over time. And people

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routinely if given a choice of do you want \$100 today or one penny with compound interest for 10 days, they'd pick the \$100.

I'm actually not doing the math right. So, now, whatever it is, but you can Google it. It's like, picking the one dollar with compound interest would actually get you way more in the end. It's little habits are what add up to the things that you can then do effortlessly, just like how you learned to walk.

Stumble, stumble, fall, fall, now you can walk with ease. So I think the takeaway is - I would say it's a two-step thing. One is like, before you pick a resolution, make sure you understand and like your reason for picking it. Is it to make you more worthy? Is it to make someone else change their thoughts about you? Is it to whatever.

And I'm not saying, listen, we're humans, sometimes I still do shit for that reason. But at least I'm watching myself and working on it. So know your reason, and then okay, if this really is something you want to do that's not just coming from shame, pick something concrete and small.

Also, it's almost a perfect - they go together because if your motivation is shame, you will not be willing to pick something small and incremental. Because you're in such a rush. Because the rush is not actually about the yoga practice. It's about getting away from the shame.

So you're like, I can't be feeling this way and just doing a little bit every day, I need to get there immediately. Whereas if it's actually about building the skill, like I decided to start weightlifting and it wasn't shame-based. I wasn't like, okay, I need to deadlift 500 pounds tomorrow.

I was like, this is going to happen gradually, totally fine, I'm excited for that because it's about the actual experience. Not a destination where I think shame will be gone.

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Caroline: Yes. I think that's such, such good advice. Kara, thank you so much for talking to me about this. I know people are going to love this. I can just tell.

Kara: My pleasure. I felt like reading your book I was like, I'm going to make that lady be my friend.

Caroline: Yes. While we were talking, I followed you on Instagram.

Kara: Perfect.

Caroline: Can't believe I hadn't already. Will you tell everybody where they can find you on the internet and otherwise?

Kara: Otherwise, come to my house. Don't come here, they're drilling a lot. *Unf*ck Your Brain* is my podcast, you can find it anywhere you find your podcasts. I always say that's the best place to start. But if you listen to this and you're like, yeah, I got to - if you're having a perfectionist fantasy about thought work and you want to get to that right away, you can go to unfuckyourbrain.com and you can learn about The Clutch, which is my feminist coaching community.

Caroline: Amazing. Thank you so much. I'll link to all of those things in the show notes as well.

Kara: Perfect. Thanks for having me, this was a blast.

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