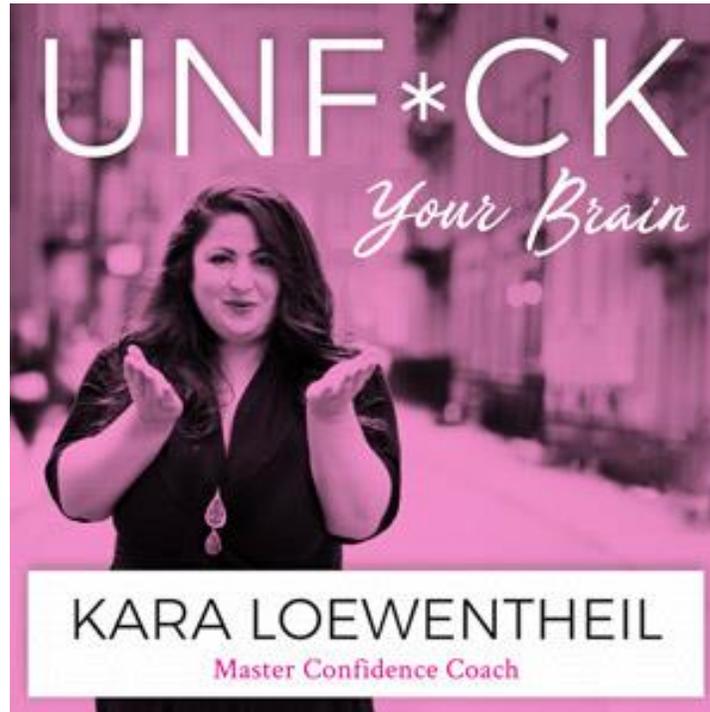


**UFYB 219: No Gods No Gurus
- The Model is Just a Thought**



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. There's a way in which I think today's episode could be the most important episode I've ever recorded, even though it's kind of not about anything in particular, but it is about everything at the same time. How's that for a sales pitch? I'm a good salesperson.

So we were having this conversation recently inside The Clutch Facebook group. The Clutch is my feminist coaching program and as part of that, we have a Facebook group for community and discussions separate from our amazing membership site where all the lessons and the audios and workbooks and stuff are.

So we have the Facebook group for kind of community discussion. And even though obviously everyone is there to discuss thought work and what I'm teaching and their own self-coaching they're working through and to get support, there's a real variety of opinions of course about the world and everything in it.

And there was this one particular conversation that was going on that was so interesting to me where some people were saying, yes, the model explains everything in this way, the coaching model that I teach, and then some people were like, really it's trauma that explains everything, and then other people were like, no, it's this thing that explains everything.

And then there were people saying I hope it's okay to say I have this question, or I'm not sure I agree with this. And it was just such an interesting reflection to me of the way in which our brains want there to be one answer to everything.

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We want there to be certainty, we want there to be an answer. We want there to be one true creed above them all that will explain everything about being a human to our satisfaction.

And it's such a natural, normal human desire because life is overwhelming and being a person is a lot. And most of us are not taught how to deal with it. And so it's so common of course, but it also is so stifling in ways that we don't even realize.

So I titled this episode No Gods No Gurus - The Model is Just a Thought because that is one of the creeds that I live by. One of the creeds I live by is no gods no gurus. And to me, that means nothing is above questioning, nothing is above disagreement. Nothing and no one has the one singular answer to everything in the world that can be proven to be true.

No one is my guru in the sense that I have many teachers and many coaches. And there are amazing things I have learned from them, and there's shit I disagree with them about or questions I have that I sometimes feel they can't answer.

And that is not a problem. That does not mean they are not an incredible, honored teacher of mine and someone whose teachings and even lineage I am proud to be a part of. But no one is a god and no one is a guru to me.

No one is more of an authority ultimately in what I'm going to decide to believe than myself. Now, I choose to decide what I'm going to believe on a range of factors that I think are sensible and wise.

But I never claim that I have objective truth because I don't believe that you can make that claim when you understand the way the human mind works and the way that even just the process of articulating our experience of

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trying to use human language and one specific human language even to describe what is happening shapes our experience of it, shapes what we see as possible, shapes how we understand the world.

Humans throughout time have had different ways of understanding what the fuck is going on with being a human. What is happening, why are we here, what are we supposed to be doing with our lives, what is the good life, what is the purpose of our life, who should we be, how should we act, what should we think?

These are the questions that humans have struggled with since they developed consciousness. And for all I know, dolphins are struggling with them right now. We may not be the only ones struggling with these questions.

So there are no gods, there are no gurus, and that is true of me and that is true of what I teach too. And it might be easier to build a giant business or make more money or whatever by claiming that I have the one answer to the universe and the world.

But that's not in integrity with how I teach and what I believe. That's not in alignment with my mission, which is to empower every single one of you to claim authority in your own life. That doesn't mean that you never listen to anyone else.

We all make decisions based on what we have learned from other people, what we have heard, what makes sense to us. I really believe people when they tell me that gravity exists and that if I jump out the window, I'm going to fall and die.

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I've never tried it but I believe it. And that applies to many things in my life where I do take the opinions of experts in their areas into account and I believe them. But when it comes to questions that have no objective answer, like who am I meant to be in the world? What should a person's life be like? What's important? Who do I want to be? How do I want to operate? What can I accomplish? What do I want to think and feel? What is this weird cognitive philosophical emotional mystical experience of being a human like? No one has the answer to that objectively.

No one has that final answer to that. And I think one of the ways I see that people hold themselves back is that they learn something life-changing like the coaching model I teach, which changed the fuck out of my life. It's as close to an orthodoxy as I have.

But even that, I am always very careful to not try to make the only answer to everything in a way that closes me off from other perspectives, learning other things, learning other tools, or just acknowledging that somebody else might not find it resonant, or it might not make sense to them or appeal to them or work for them and that that's fine too.

So one of the super interesting things about this experience I have had of becoming a public teacher and experiencing this blow up growth in my platform, which I did not plan on or expect originally is that it doesn't matter how often I say that everyone has to decide things for themselves and that I don't make a claim to objective truth and that my mind is as badly managed some days as everybody else's.

There's still this desire from other people, from my listeners, from my students to believe that I have it all figured out, I have a totally managed mind, I know what is right and true and good in some objective sense, and that what I'm teaching is an orthodoxy, a dogma, a closed system of belief

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that will explain anything, a religion you can subscribe to and know that someone has the answer.

And again, if I were willing to exploit that, I'm sure that I could start a cult if I wanted to. But that's not what I'm teaching and that's not what I'm doing and that's not what we're here doing together.

Empowering women to learn to decide what to think and feel and believe and do for themselves inherently means that I don't have all the answers. And no one else does either.

So yes, of course, on this podcast I mostly talk about ideas that I think are useful. And in The Clutch, we mostly talk about thought work because that's what we're all there to learn and use. But that doesn't mean that anything is a creed to which we should all give blind devotion and allegiance.

When I teach the coaching model that I learned from my teacher, we have a line that is the circumstance, which is as objective as we can get because we're still using human language to describe the world, which is inherently subjective.

But it's as neutral a description of a thing that happened as we can get, and then we have a thought. And thoughts are all optional and all subjective. Well, the whole idea that this coaching model works and makes sense is just a thought.

I don't have a certificate from the universe that declares this is the one true faith. It's just a thought. And like any other thought, I like the results I get when I believe this thought. Before I believed in my coaching model, my life

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felt extremely unmanageable and distressing and I was living a life that wasn't what I wanted.

When I chose to believe that this coaching model was useful and to use it and that it explained maybe not 100% of my life but 90% to 95% maybe, my life changed and got much better and I liked the results I was getting. But it's all still just thoughts. It's all still optional.

So you can believe whatever you want to believe. You can believe that the coaching model I teach is what makes the most sense. That's what I believe mostly. You can believe that polyvagal theory explains everything in the world. You can believe that scientology explains everything in the world.

You can believe whatever you want. You have to take on that responsibility, and that is what is so frightening to us because humans in general and especially women and especially people socialized into any marginalized identity and even more so if there's more than one marginalized identity, all of our socialization is about not trusting ourselves and trusting some authority outside of us.

We are always taught that authority is somewhere else. And that it is one or 12 rungs up the ladder from us, depending on how many marginalized identities we live in and how we were socialized and how we were taught.

And so we don't want to claim our own authority because we are so afraid of what happens if we're wrong. We are so conditioned to believe that someone outside of us has the answer. That we can find a god, that we can find a guru.

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So when I say no gods no gurus, I don't mean you have to be an atheist. People believe on god, of course, you believe in god. Obviously the whole theme of this podcast, I'm not trying to talk you out of that. It means no human gods.

No gods no gurus to me means I'm not going to put anyone or any system of belief in the position of having to be perfect, explain everything about my experience and reality, and become an orthodoxy or a dogma that makes me rigid or inflexible or unable to contemplate other conceptions of things.

And I really want to encourage you, whether it's thought work or it's scientology or it's polyvagal theory or it's trauma or it's whatever else, whatever lens you are using to understand the world, don't make it your god and don't make it your guru.

Don't make it something that has to explain everything. Don't make it the only lens through which you can understand experience. Don't make it something that has to bear the weight of perfection in the sense of being able to explain all of the world and your experience and everyone else perfectly.

Because no way of understanding human experience can do that. There's just too many variables and too many different ways of understanding it and too many different schools of thoughts and philosophies and sciences and art and so many different ways of understanding and processing and metabolizing what it is to be a weird sack of jello electricity in a meat suit wandering around this planet.

It's extremely bizarre and absurd the more you think about what we are and what we're doing here. I always think about this poem that Elizabeth Bishop wrote called In the Waiting Room where she describes this sensation that I have often had of that moment when the unreality or bizarreness of the

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daily human world that we take for granted kind of hits you all at once and you sort of feel like you're sliding off the edge of the world and consciousness because you suddenly become so aware in a meta sense of how bizarre it all is that we are humans that live in buildings that we built and drive cars and have ideas and all of this is all human culture and all made up.

That can be disorienting. So we want to cling to certainty. But I want to encourage you to lean into that disorientation. Don't just have one lens that you look through. Yes, this podcast, mostly about my lens because that's what I'm an expert on, that's what I teach, that's what I'm here doing.

These are the lenses I have found was helpful, although if you pay attention, you'll see that even my lens is actually several lenses combined. I learned life coaching tools, but then I took my lens of feminist theory and I've taken my lens of my experience being socialized as a woman in this time and of being Jewish and of being a fat person in a fatphobic society.

I've taken all those lenses and combined them to create my work. And then you have to take all your lenses and combine them to understand what's going on for you.

But just make sure that you are - you want it to be like at the eye doctor where they keep flipping the lenses in front of you. In that case, it's like some of them are fuzzier, some of them are clearer. That might be true here too.

Some of them are better explanations for what you experience, some of them don't seem as strong, but you just want to make sure that you're not being myopic, that you are not making any system of belief or any person a god or a guru to you in that way, that you don't question, that you don't think critically, that you don't integrate.

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And that doesn't mean having to be adversarial towards that belief system or that person or that idea. It doesn't mean there has to be hostility. It just means understanding that we are all just trying to explain what it is to be a human and help each other through that experience.

And we all have some parts of the way we do that that maybe are closer to what is true, if there's any such thing, or farther away, that resonate more for you or don't. And all of that is okay. Let your mind be flexible about it.

Notice when you really want there to be a right answer and why it's so uncomfortable to think that there might not be one. The coaching model I teach, everything I say on this podcast, it's all just thoughts. They're my thoughts. I find them helpful.

I've interrogated them and I've chosen to keep them. You get to make your own decision. It's all just thoughts. No gods, no gurus. Just you and choosing the thoughts that you want to think. Have a very confusing week, my chickens. That's how it should be. I'll see you next week.

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. That's www.unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch. I can't wait to see you there.