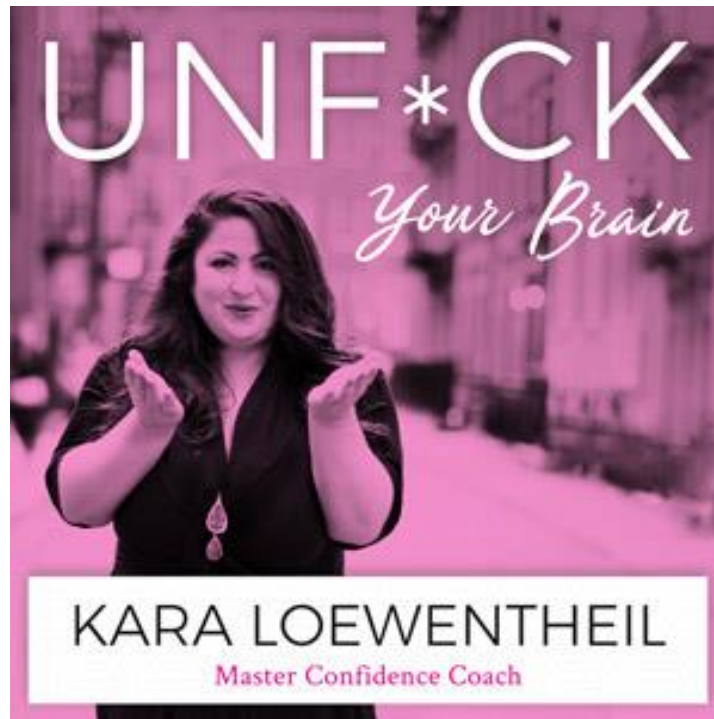


UFYB 236: Thoughts Are Temporary



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. So I don't know about you, but I'm feeling just the teensiest burnt out or have been, at least. There's so many amazing things happening in my life, in my business. And yet the world is really a lot right now. And I have definitely had a few days over the course of the past few months when I felt like I was kind of one step toe away from breaking down and weeping and losing my mind.

And that's how I feel as somebody who manages their mind professionally. So I know that some of you are feeling that way and so much worse. It has just been a real couple of years. And then a real couple of months we've had the pandemic. We've had the war on Ukraine. Gas prices are up. Inflation might be going up.

Now we have the leaked Supreme Court draft, potentially overturning *Roe v Wade*. There's just a lot of shit going on in the world and it can be exhausting to try to handle all that. And our fears about the future and our own fucking lives, right? And making sure that the kids get to school on time and everybody has their lunches.

And we ate a vegetable today and we got some sleep and we remembered to say something nice to our partner. And we went and did our jobs. And maybe we took care of our parents and everything else that we're dealing with. Because of all of that, I have been putting together a special offering for all of you, a special solution, and it is called the 2022 Burnout Breakthrough.

And this is going to be a five-day, short-lived, punchy, to-the-point, incredibly effective and powerful training that I am going to be doing on all

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about how to heal, repair, and prevent burnout. So we're going to heal the burnout you have and help you create more resilience now and help you create an emotional life where you don't have to fear burnout in the future. You know how to handle it if it ever comes up, but you can really even prevent it from happening.

So we're just putting the finishing touches on it. It's not ready for you to sign up quite yet, but I know that some of you are going to want first dibs. So here's how you can get on the list. Go to unfuckyourbrain.com/breakthrough.

Or you can, that's all one word, breakthrough, or you can text your email to +1 347 997 1784. Text your email to +1 347 997 1784. And then the code word is breakthrough, all one word, and you will be able to get on the waitlist to be the first to hear about it. I'm really excited about this.

I am putting together all new material on what burnout is, what causes burnout, how we can address burnout, how we can prevent burnout. We're going to have live training and teaching every day for a week. You're going to have the opportunity to get coaching and get access to live coaching calls, to work on implementing what I teach.

There's going to be a pop-up Facebook group, just for the challenge where I'm going to be in there, my community team, our coaches, are going to be in there helping you out, supporting you, helping you apply everything I teach. It's going to really be the strongest, most powerful, most simple practices you can use because if you're already burnt out, you really don't have a lot of time and bandwidth for a lot more.

So really, really excited about it. I cannot wait to share it with you all as soon as it is ready. So if you want to be the first to know unfuckyourbrain.com/breakthrough or text your email to +1 347 997 1784. And you will be first up to hear about the 2022 Burnout Breakthrough.

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In addition to all of that, I just got back from a week in Texas and I was there to speak at the huge mastermind that was held by my life coaching school, The Life Coach School. And then I also had a meeting with my small mastermind of a few other coaches who are all at seven figures in their businesses. And we had people in the room creating revenue everywhere from one million to almost 20 million. So, it's an amazing room to be in.

And I love being in that room because I am sort of right in the middle where I feel I have useful support to offer everybody emotionally. But business wise to the people who are making a little less than me. But I'm also learning so much from the people who are making quite a bit more than me and who are growing their businesses quite a bit more. Anyway, that's not the point of this story.

At the meeting a lot of stuff came up around how other people in our lives were reacting to our successes. And I think this is something that really varies by who you are, who your family is, what the expectations were for you growing up, what your socio, educational, economic status was at different phases in your life. But it was really interesting to see that people at so many different levels of business also were all having the same stuff come up.

And it's sort of common to think that it's unique to us or it's unique to our level of success, or people who are really successful, don't deal with this. Or people who aren't as successful don't have to deal with this. And again, success is such a – what does that word mean? It's all however we identify it. But it was interesting to see how many kind of thoughts we had in the room both about how other people react to our success and then about whether anyone else struggles with that.

And it's all subjective. So, the same person might have some family members and friends who are totally thrilled about their success. And then

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some who resent it, some who feel insecure about it, some who praise it, some who criticize it, some who are too into it. And so, I was coaching one of my colleagues about this. And I was coaching her about this idea that someone in her family had negative thoughts about her making money. And the way she had been coaching herself about it.

And this is such a good example of why everybody needs a coach, why everybody needs coaching. Because this is a master coach, an incredible coach, this is a friend of mine who I get coaching from all the time and she completely coaches me brilliantly. But when you're in your own stuff you can't see it. And so, she was trying really hard to convince herself that her family member did not have those negative thoughts, or at least we couldn't know for sure if they had those thoughts.

That is 100% true, 100% it's possible a family member doesn't have the thoughts, we don't know for sure they had the thoughts, they didn't offer them, they didn't tell her those thoughts. And if that coaching approach had been working for her, great. But it wasn't working. And there are times when people do offer us, our thoughts, we had somebody else in the room who had had somebody offer them very explicit negative thoughts about their success.

So, I was coaching her and I shared with her and kind of the group since everybody was going through this, this thought that I use all the time. And then I realized I had never taught it to you guys. And I was like, oh, they need to know this. So, this is the thought that I want to offer you that you can adopt. And I'm going to explain what I mean because it sounds obvious but if you really let it sink in like so many things with coaching, sounds simple, will blow your mind if you truly take it in. So here is the thought.

The thought is thoughts are temporary. And this is true for us and it's true for other people. So, here's how I mean this. When we think about our own thoughts, we can call that meta cognition. It's cognition about our own

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cognition, thinking about our own thinking. That sounds complicated but we all do it. We have a thought and then we think, I don't want to think that, or I'm a bad person for thinking that. Or I wish I didn't think that. That's meta cognition. It's just you thinking about your own thoughts.

What we know is that human brains are predictive machines. They like to predict what's going to happen. They like to generalize from one instance to a pattern. Your brain just always wants to believe it knows how things are, it knows what's going to happen, it can predict the future. And our brains assume that kind of everything we encounter is just permanent and all-encompassing.

So, if for instance you have a family member who has a negative thought about the money you make, you think of that as sort of a constant state of affairs. You think about it as with this permanence. With this sort of all-encompassing, all-consuming way of being. You think about it as like a permanent part of their identity. My family member doesn't like that I make a lot of money. And we think of that as sort of almost a way of being, as a definition of the relationship. It sort of becomes this omnipresent all-encompassing emotional and mental state that we think of them as being in.

Or if you have a friend who you think judges your body, you think of that as this constant state of affairs, it's a permanent part of the relationship, it's always happening. My friend thinks I need to lose weight, or my friend thinks that I don't look good in a bathing suit or whatever. If your friend is in this constant permanent state of thinking about your weight and that thought about your weight makes up some part of her identity. So, when we think about it this way we give a thought or an opinion so much more weight.

We transform it into this state of being. But when someone else has a thought about you that thought only takes a few seconds. It's over in an

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instant. It is just a sentence that darts through their mind. It's like a squirrel running through the frame of a camera. And maybe they have that thought again later or maybe they don't. But even if they have it once a day or 10 times a day, it's just one thought that goes through their mind one or a couple of times.

It's just a squirrel running across a screen once or even 10 times, if a camera's on for 24 hours and a squirrel runs across the screen even 10 times, the squirrel is not on the screen the whole time. The video is not of the squirrel all the time. It is just a momentary flash in 24 hours of video about a million other things. Yeah, the squirrel ran through the screen 10 times and also a robin hopped through it 20 times, and also this twig was shaking the whole time. And also, the sun rose and set, and also it rained, and also a million other things happened on the video.

Your family member or friend is not thinking that 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. It's just a thought. It's not a state of being or a permanent identity. Your family member or your friend even if they have a negative thought about you several times a day or even just a thought, you think it's negative. They may just think it's an observation or whatever. But even if they have a thought several times a day, they also have to pee several times a day. But you don't think of them as constantly peeing.

You don't think of peeing as an all-consuming identity, that they are constantly inhabiting. Even though you know for a fact that they probably pee several times a day that doesn't become some kind of system that they live in that you think of them with. That doesn't become an identity. That doesn't become the dominant thing in the relationship or a constant state of being in your mind. The fact that they have to pee sometimes is just a thing they occasionally do with their body and that's all thoughts are too, it's just a thing that a brain occasionally does.

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So, think about something you don't like to eat. I don't like capers. Whenever I see a caper I do have the thought that I don't like it. That goes through my brain. But not liking capers is not a state of being. It's not all-consuming. It's not an identity. It's not something I think about all the time. The same is true for when other people have thoughts about you, even negative thoughts, even if they tell them to you. They're still just thoughts. They are not all-encompassing constant states of being. They're just temporary passing sentences in someone's mind.

And unlike me and capers, I really only think about capers when they come by. Your family or friends have lots of thoughts about you and some of them are amazing, amazing thoughts. Some of them maybe less amazing thoughts just like you have about them. Think about something that you don't like, or you don't approve of, or you don't understand about a friend, or a partner, or a family member. When that thing comes to mind, when you're reminded of it, you do have a negative thought about it. But you also have a lot of other thoughts.

You have other thoughts about that person. And you have other thoughts about lots of things. That same hour that you have a negative thought about someone in your life you also think about like sandwiches, and geopolitics, and where you left your keys. And you probably have lots of different thoughts about that person at other times too. And all that is because thoughts are temporary. Thoughts are not states of being, they're not permanent.

Think about the things that when you were 14 years old, the thoughts you had about your parents, and who was the love of your life, and who you were going to be best friends with forever, and what was cool and what wasn't cool. Those thoughts seemed so true and real. And they defined your relationships with people. And now they don't and you probably can't even remember what they were.

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You can think about your own thoughts that you have now and that other people have now about you the same way you think about the thoughts you had when you were 14 which is like, aww, that's cute. I thought I knew everything and I thought I knew exactly what it was and everybody else was. And I thought everything was permanent and forever. And none of that was true.

When we think about it, we think, my mom thinks I'm a failure as an opera singer for not making it to The Met. And we ruminate on that and we think about it as though that is our mother's entire mental state about us. As if that is the sum total of what your mom thinks about you and she's thinking it 24/7. But even if your mom does have that thought, I can almost guarantee you that this is more like what her mental landscape sounds like.

Where am I supposed to turn left, oh it's up there at the church? I should turn on some music. It's really too bad that Kathleen failed to make it to The Met stage. She has so much singing potential. Wow, she was such a cute baby. I loved her little fat rolls. Oh, rolls, I'm hungry. I could have a sandwich. Where shall I go for lunch? And then her brain is off to think 10,000 more thoughts by sundown, most of them equally meaningless like we all do.

And not only that, other people's thoughts about us are often totally contradictory because they are not a reasoned verdict on our worth. Other people's thoughts about us, they are not rational beings who sit down to do some kind of objective scorecard. Their thoughts are just electrical signals being sent through sacs of jelly in your brain. Your parents can be disappointed you got divorced and simultaneously proud of you for leaving a marriage where you weren't happy? Does that make any sense rationally? Not really.

But have you met a human brain? They don't make sense a lot of the time. So, people have temporary thoughts about you. Those thoughts can be

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totally contradictory. And our thoughts about people change over time also. Something we used to hate we can come to love or not even notice. So, the point of all this is that thoughts are transitory and they are contradictory. And they don't always mean something. They are not a statement of a state of being or a summation of an entire relationship.

Does your boss maybe think that you took too long with that assignment you sent in today? Maybe that thought ran across their brain like a squirrel ran across the frame. But then also the other day they probably had the thought that you're good in meetings and that was the squirrel that day. And then right after they were trying to remember who won the 1972 World Series and that was the squirrel at that moment. Other people's opinions about you are just thoughts. They're transitory, they're temporary, they're contradictory, they're changeable. They just don't mean that much.

So, in some meditative traditions you'll hear the idea of trying to see your thoughts as clouds moving across the sky. That the goal is to watch them without attaching to them, without making them mean something permanent. Other people's thoughts about you they're just clouds in the sky. Or in my example, a squirrel running across a frame because I think squirrels are funny. And our brains often feel like they're moving at a speed of squirrel, not a speed of cloud.

But one specific cloud that goes across the sky at one moment in time does not define the sky forever. It's not static. And the same is true about other people's thought about you. And it's also true about your thoughts about yourself. We are attached to our own thoughts about ourselves just as much as our thoughts about other people. We start to identify with our thoughts. And if we have a thought often enough we start to tell ourselves a whole story about even having that thought because again, the brain likes to be predictive.

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So, once we've had a thought a few times our brain decides, that's the thought. We're the kind of person who has that thought. And so, we develop a whole story about it. It's not just, I had a squirrel thought about being insecure. And I also had squirrel thoughts about what to have for lunch, and the TV show from last night. And that I should Google whether lamas are legal house pets. Those are all the squirrels I had today. Instead, our brain makes a story. Now the story is that I'm an insecure person and that becomes an identity.

I just had an insecure thought. I had it a few times. I had a lot of them. So now I make it mean that as a person I'm insecure and it becomes my whole identity. The same way that we make someone else's thoughts about us, perceived or real become the identity of the whole relationship in this kind of sum of all their thoughts about us in our own minds. And so, we assume that if someone else has a thought about us, it's an all-encompassing state of being that occupies their whole relationship with us.

And if we've thought about ourselves, we create an all-encompassing story and identity around it as well. And the real kicker is sometimes we call that being self-aware or being sensitive to others, being empathic, knowing what they're thinking. But having a story about yourself is not the same thing as being self-aware. I've got to say that again. I like, some of you, we've got to tattoo this on our faces. Having a story about yourself is not the same thing as being self-aware. Because the brain wants to make your stories come true.

So, if your story about yourself is that you're insecure, it's not just that your brain will notice insecure thoughts that might arise. It will actually produce more insecure thoughts. That's why I recommend that you not identify with your thoughts too much. If you were going to create a positive identity with intentional thoughts, okay, that's one thing. But when it comes to your unintentional thoughts, remember that they are temporary. And when it comes to other people's thoughts, they're temporary too.

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Even if someone tells you their thought about you, it's not the whole of the relationship. It's not the whole of their identity. It's not their whole idea about you. It's not something they're thinking about all the time. It's just a sentence that sometimes goes through their mind. It's just a brief electrical signal in their brain. Of course, if someone is acting towards you in a way that does not align with the way you want to experience the relationship you can set whatever boundary you want about that. I have episodes about boundaries.

Coaching yourself though is about thoughts and feelings. It's not about a specific set of right or wrong actions. But in the context of a relationship that you value and you want to maintain, and there isn't abuse happening, you don't run into boundary violation. You're just hurt or upset about what you make other people's thoughts mean about you. Just let their thoughts be their thoughts is the solution. They have thoughts about you. You have thoughts about them.

When we think someone else shouldn't have a thought about us, what are we doing? We're having a thought about how they should be different. We don't want other people to have thoughts about how we should be different, and then we have thoughts about how they should be different. Just let their thoughts be thoughts. They have thoughts about you. You have thoughts about them. You both have thoughts about a million other things, some thoughts meaningful, some thoughts meaningless, lots of them just random brain chatter.

Let the thoughts float by and just be free. And if you want more freedom, don't forget to go sign up for the 2022 Burnout Breakthrough. We are going to be doing five days of live training, and Q&A, and coaching. We're going to have a private popup Facebook group where my team will be there and help support you through the process. I'm going to be teaching you how to understand burnout, how to heal it, how to repair it, how to prevent it from happening again. This is such powerful work. I'm so excited to share it with you. And it is the most successful way to work with me.

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So, if you want to sign up for that which you absolutely should, go to unfuckyourbrain.com/breakthrough to sign up or you can text your email to +1 347 997 1784. And the code word to send is breakthrough when you are prompted. I will see you all there.

If you're loving what you're learning in the podcast, you have got to come check out The Clutch. The Clutch is the podcast community for all things Unf*ck 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 unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch. I can't wait to see you there.