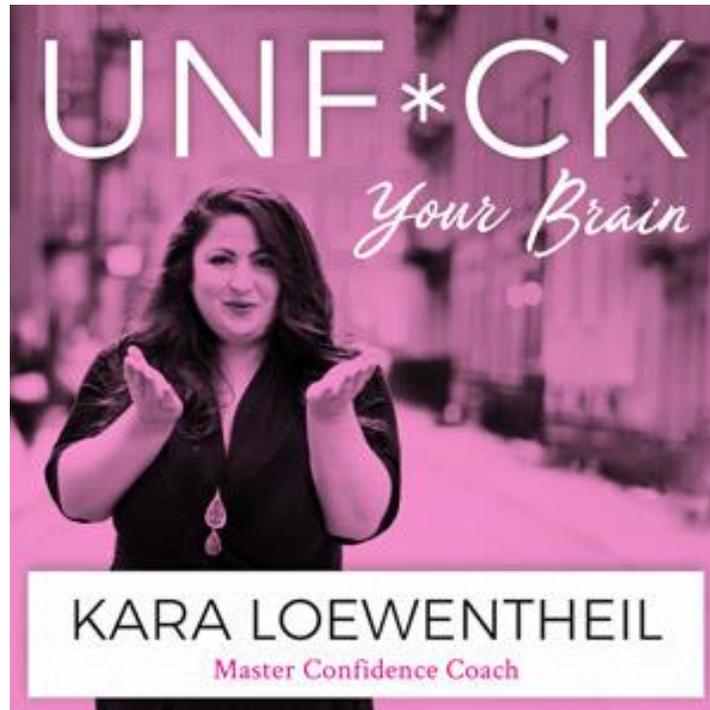


**UFYB 240: Burnout, Productivity, Parenthood & Patriarchy:
A Conversation with Ali Ryan and Marissa McKool**



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.

Alright my friends, if you have been feeling burnt the fuck out then this is for you. So, here's how to know if you're feeling burnt out. Do you feel like you wake up in the morning and you are already tired? Do you feel like you are at the edge of your rope and about one small mishap away from completely losing your shit? Spill the coffee and that's it, you'd rather just lay down on the floor and die. Am I right?

Do you feel like you are snapping at your kids and your partner, or your parents, or your coworkers more than you mean to, you keep telling yourself that you'd like to stop doing that and be better about it and feel nicer? But then the next minute there you are snapping again. You just don't have a lot of emotional energy, you're overwhelmed, you're exhausted, you take a vacation you still don't really feel any better. The weekend feels like it's over before it began and you feel like you didn't get anything done but you also didn't rest.

These are all signs of burnout. So, if you're feeling this way you are not alone. I feel like we are in a global burnout right now between years of the pandemic, inflation, prices are rising. The global warming is continuing to accelerate. There is a war in Ukraine. And every time you turn on the news something else terrible seems to be happening. And you're tired and your kids have been in and out of school because of COVID and you've been working from home or you're back at the office and no one is wearing their mask, whatever is going on you're not alone in feeling this way.

But here's the other thing I want you to know. Even though it really feels like burnout is created by the world, which is why so many of us are feeling it right now, there is actually a lot you can do in your own brain to heal and

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prevent burnout. So, to heal the burnout you're already having, to create more energy, to create more resilience, to create more ability to feel rested, and happy and enjoy your life even in these circumstances and to prevent future burnout from happening.

Because the world is always going to be coming up with new shit that we need to deal with. But we can have so much more control than we think over how we think and feel in response to it. So that is why I have created the 2022 Burnout Breakthrough because I know that so many of you are suffering and your suffering is not necessary. It doesn't need to be this way.

You actually can take control of your own thought process and learn how to process and get through your emotions in a cleaner faster way, how to experience whatever's going on without feeling so exhausted and overwhelmed. And how to refill your own cup and I promise the solution is not a bubble bath. If you follow me on social media, you know I love a fucking good bubble bath. I pick hotel rooms for their bathtubs. A bath is not the solution to burnout.

Working with your brain and your nervous system to create resilience, that is the solution to burnout. And that is what I'm going to be teaching in the 2022 Burnout Breakthrough. So, I want to invite you to come check it out. We are open for registration for this. This is all going to start on June 6th. So, you've got a couple of days to get signed up and get ready. This is the most cutting edge, most effective simplest techniques that I have ever put together and taught on burnout and on how to break through it, and overcome it, and prevent it.

So, here's how you can find out more. Go to unfuckyourbrain.com/breakthrough, all one word. Or text your email to +1347 997 1784 and when you get prompted for the code word send the code word 'breakthrough'. And we will send you the link. It's going to be five days of training and live Q&A. And there's going to be even

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opportunities for live coaching which usually you can only get if you're inside *The Clutch*. But we are going to do some in the Burnout Breakthrough.

So, five days starting on June 6th. There is going to be an exclusive popup Facebook group where you can get answers to your questions. I'm going to be in there. We're going to have *The Clutch* coaches in there. So, there's going to be other Clutch members in there who are also really great at using these tools. It's not *The Clutch* Facebook group. It is a popup group that'll be up just for the duration of the Burnout Breakthrough week. But it's a place you can ask questions, share what you're working on, get help as you're applying what I'm teaching.

We're going to have live training every day. We are going to have live Q&A, live coaching. You're also going to get a chance to join *The Clutch* and enjoy exclusive bonus coaching calls inside before we open *The Clutch* to the public again. We haven't been open for six months. But if you're in the challenge, you get a chance to join before everyone else and get bonus coaching calls. And we're going to be teaching a bonus masterclass.

The fifth day of training is actually going to be an even longer Burnout Breakthrough masterclass, a full hour where I'm going to kind of go over what I've taught you before and then take it to the next level even deeper and give you an even better sense of how you can use this work going forward. So that the next time or now that things seem overwhelming you have the tools to kind of cut burnout off before it really sets in. It's noticing that first sniffle and taking that vitamin C and zinc so that you never develop the full cold. That's what we really want for you.

So, all of that is the Burnout Breakthrough. It is all of that, the five days of training and live Q&A, the live coaching, the popup Facebook group with support there. The Burnout Breakthrough Solution which is a workbook that you can only get through this challenge that has these exercises that I'm

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going to be teaching on how to create more resilience, and heal burnout, and prevent it from happening again. Only available as part of the challenge as well. All of that is – drumroll - \$37 which is the most affordable, most accessible way to work with me.

If \$37 is truly not affordable to you, you can always email us and we will help you out. The link is on that same information page that you can get with the text that I'm going to tell you about again in a minute. And when you get that chance to join *The Clutch* early, you're going to get that chance to apply your Burnout Breakthrough investment to your first month of *The Clutch*. So, it's truly a win/win.

Go to unfuckyourbrain.com/breakthrough, all one word. Or text your email to +1347 997 1784 and when you're prompted for the code word you send the word 'breakthrough', all one word. And we will send you the link to sign up. So, I cannot wait to see you there. And I cannot tell you how much this training is going to change your life. It's changed mine just putting it together. I cannot wait to share it with you. I will see you guys there.

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Kara: Hello, my chickens, we are continuing this theme of talking about burnout because I feel like pretty much literally everyone in the world is burnt out right now. So, it's a theme that needed more than one podcast episode. So, I am here today with two more of my advanced certification and feminist coaching students, Marissa and Ali. And Marissa is a coach for people in public health who experience quite a lot of burnout.

And Ali is a coach who works with people on their parenting and on kind of conscious parenting, and thought work and parenting which is another thing that burns people out sometimes. I feel like we have both, we have the big public health picture and then we have the what's happening in your house that's stressing you out. And so, we're going to be able to have a

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great conversation about one of the things really that I'm teaching in this Burnout Breakthrough next week which is the kind of internal versus external burnout, different causes of burnout.

So why don't you guys introduce yourselves a little, tell us a bit more about you, what you do, who you coach, who you help, that kind of thing. Do you want to start us off Marissa?

Marissa: Sure. My name's Marissa and I work with folks who are in public health and help them eliminate their burnout without having to quit their job. Often when you're in a helping profession you kind of just hear the advice that find a new job, get paid more. And I help folks really eliminate their burnout without that. And then of course they want to leave, and make more money, and get a new job, that's all great. But to really be able to build the skill of eliminating their burnout and preventing it long term.

Kara: I think that's such a good point because you hear both that people are burnt out because they don't make enough money, then people are burnt out because they have to work too hard to make too much money. And it's almost like money doesn't cause burnout. It might be the case that the amount of money you make is not what's causing your burnout. What about you, Ali?

Ali: Hi. My name is Ali. I'm a feminist certified coach. I specialize in family dynamics and conscious parenting. I really help people, parents particularly, stop hating their kids. I think oftentimes people will - when they're unhappy, they resent and blame their kids. And then they also are ashamed of those thoughts. And so, getting really clear on that is a big part of what I do and letting them be honest about how they feel because there's nothing wrong with feeling any kind of way.

Kara: I just love that you even said that. I feel like all your marketing should be stop hating your kids. Parenthesis, it's okay, I know you do sometimes, I

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do too. There isn't enough of even just that language of yeah, sometimes your kids are assholes, just like anybody else, here is how to not hate them.

Ali: Absolutely. And so much of motherhood is really just wrought with a ton of insecurity because so many of, not just moms but parents in general are just really afraid to talk about how they feel because being vulnerable with other parents means they're afraid of judgment. So, there is a lot of just quiet suffering that I see and that I did a lot myself. And then also this victimhood and martyrdom that comes into it because we're doing this very noble thing. And that's the thoughts that they tell themselves.

And so yeah, just getting honest on yeah, it's okay. It's okay to feel that way, is really hard for people. But yeah, so I do that a lot by getting clear on that, seeing where they are pressing themselves. And mostly it's because it's of a lot of sneaky or not so sneaky patriarchal norms, really, really seeing the illusion of perfectionism. And really working to discover their inner power to see where they do have control. I also have three kids ranging from ages eight to 16. So, I do have just a tiny bit of experience in this particular subject.

Kara: I know where if I speak with these feelings.

Ali: I know where I stand.

Kara: So good. Alright, so I would love to hear from each of you how you, even let's back up and define burnout because people use burned out all the time to mean a whole variety of emotional states I think. So, I'd love to hear how each of you define it, what you think it means.

Marissa: Yeah, I can start. I have been asked this a lot recently and I don't think we have a universal definition but I'll share a few that people might go to. One is sometimes the physical presenting that might go to the extreme

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of someone being hospitalized for dehydration, or exhaustion, or high stress. That can happen. But that's not the only example of burnout. That is something that I think people think of in the extreme.

And then there's kind of in the book, *Burnout* by Emily and Amelia Nagoski, they talk about getting stuck in the stress cycle. So, the physiological stress cycle your body goes into which is very natural and normal, and getting stuck in that and not closing that loop and getting space. But what I also think about and the folks I work with mostly is it's on an emotional and mental level. So sometimes the way which we talk about burnout in society talks about the actions. You're working too much. You're working too long. You're doing too much.

But I actually think where we can identify it and I do think it's on an individual level is emotionally and mentally how you're feeling. Because one person could be working 12 hours a day and not be burned out. And someone else could be working eight hours a day and feeling burnout.

Kara: Or four hours a day and feeling burned out.

Marissa: Yeah. And that really has to do with what's going on mentally and emotionally. So, for me I hit burnout way before the pandemic when I was really doing this work on myself. And what I was stuck in emotionally was resentment. And mentally I was stuck in blaming everyone else for my problems. And so therefore I couldn't find a solution to feel better or feel more rested. And so that I think is how I think about burnout. And it is kind of individual how it presents in each person that I have seen.

And that's why I think it can be tricky talking about socially is because we try to fit it into this box of how it feels, or what it should look like, or how we diagnose it and I don't know if it's that simple.

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Kara: I think that's such a good point, that's sort of like maybe the feature of burnout that's the same throughout is that it is whatever the emotional state is that constantly depletes you in this way that you can't get refilled sort of. You don't ever feel resilient. I have not, and as I've been putting together the stuff that I am teaching in the 2022 Burnout Breakthrough next week. I had not been thinking about resentment for instance because that wasn't one of the things that I have dealt with. It's not the top of mind for me.

But what I have been thinking about and preparing talking about is whatever the emotion is I think it's so characterized by there's no reset. I can take time off. I can reduce my hours. I can leave the kids at home for a day and go to the spa. I can sleep. I can do whatever. Take these actions but it's like my cup doesn't get refilled. It's like the cup is leaky. There is a hole in the bottom of the cup and it just never gets refilled. And that's how you end up with that, your emotional resilience tank is so low.

I know I'm burnt out if I stub my toe and I'm like, "That's it, I just will lie here and die", or I burst into tears. It's like there's no capacity to deal with even a small challenge then.

Marissa: Yeah, I love in the book, Burnout that I talked about earlier, they have this quote that has always stuck with me where they say, "Exhaustion is being stuck in an emotion." And I do think that can describe it. And we kind of try to action our way out of it. That doesn't work. So that's not the way to get out of being stuck in an emotion. And for me when I was in burnout I realized it because I'd get an email on nights or weekends, even a non-urgent email I did not have to reply to and I would burst into tears.

And that was the emotional reaction to that email was much higher and it was just constant, being stuck in that resentment. So yeah, you're totally right.

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Kara: Yeah. It seems like bursting into tears for some of us is the key sign. What about you, Ali, how do you think about it?

Ali: Yeah. So, one thing that I see as a signature is often it's, again, just build on it more as I said, it's the emotional and the physical symptoms but the thoughts that parents have often before they even become parents kind of begin this track. So, some common things that I hear from parents are basically they think of it as almost a life sentence that they cannot get away from, a punishment. They also say things like, "I'll work on me once my kids are grown." Which is really just their way of putting themselves at the very bottom of the list.

Once these responsibilities are complete then I can take care of me which that thought just sounds terrible. I can't ever do anything alone. So, it's a lot of the thoughts that then create, like you said, these things that happen where again it's just like losing patience, not having the bandwidth to get through the day necessarily and then this judgment that comes on top of it. I know for me there is a lot of regret that I felt at times. There was shame. There was just constantly feeling like I didn't have enough.

And it was not just enough time, it was I'm not patient enough. I'm not giving enough. I'm not loving enough. I'm not enough is really where that burnout really capped out for me.

Kara: I love that point you make that oftentimes the thought pattern begins before parenting. You know that the person is like, "I'll work on me after the kids are grown." Is the same person who was like, "Okay, well, I'll work on me after this big project is up for work, or after I get promoted, or after the wedding, or after the whatever."

That same thought pattern is coming up and that's somebody who's liable to have thought patterns of being a martyr for their kids, probably had thought patterns before about being a martyr for their job, or their family of

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origin, or their partner, or that one friend, or the whatever. It's sort of similar to all the teaching at the beginning of the pandemic that was like, yes, it's craziness, what's happening in your brain is reacting to it. And also, if you get past the initial panic you'll see that your brain is recycling it's favorite old songs, it's just dressed up in pandemic garb now, wearing a different hat.

Ali: 100%, I mean I even know for me when suddenly the kids were home and I still had to work. I was working full-time in nurse administration leadership position. Those old tracks came back of "I have to do this, I have to do that." This obligation and this burden around parenting and schooling at home. And I just had to remind myself, I don't have to do anything, I choose to. But again, those old patternings are very much ingrained and getting clear on them can be really challenging because it's uncomfortable obviously to want to shift our thoughts but I won't skip ahead.

Kara: Don't tell anyone they can change their thoughts, Ali, that's a secret on the podcast.

Ali: Not yet, we'll wait until closer to the end of the hour.

Kara: No one's ever heard that before. So, you two came up with this proposal on the context of the advanced certification in feminist coaching, we were obviously talking a lot about patriarchal socialization, how people are socialized based on gender. So, I'd love to hear kind of from both of you in your different kind of areas of expertise how you see socialization, sexist socialization or gender based socialization kind of creating or contributing to burnout.

Marissa: Yeah, I can start. And one thing when Ali and I were talking, I think the thing is a lot of the thought patterns that burn you out in parenting burn you out in work. And a lot of my clients I work with half the time what we're talking about is the thoughts that are burning them out at home too

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because it's very, very similar. So, chasing a to-do list, or productivity to try to feel good, believing that they have to do it all. This can be at work, believing if I don't do the work everyone's going to die from COVID.

Or at home if I don't do this my kid's graduation's going to be ruined then they're going to hate me forever. And I think when you think about the patriarchy and being socialized as a woman there's a lot of messages that your role is to put yourself last and take care of everyone else related to you or not. And that if you don't do it, I especially see this in public health, then no one's going to do it. And in some ways for folks who work in helping professions, maybe they're naturally drawn to it or maybe they're socialized to believe that that's a role. I don't know, probably a mix of both.

There's this idea that well, this is really important and if I don't do it, no one will. And the everyone's fucked. And then I'm going to be an asshole to myself and everyone's going to hate me. And I think that shows up in both spaces of just believing we have to do it all, that's our role, that's our value, our worth. And if we don't, not only are we not worthy but everyone else is going to hate us and they're all going to be screwed, and it's all going to be our fault.

Kara: Yeah, it's over-responsibility, taking too much responsibility. Who's going to do it if we don't do it? Certainly not the men, that's not an option, or our kids, or our colleagues, or whoever else. What about you, Ali, where do you see this?

Ali: Yeah, definitely, just to build on what Marissa said, I think one of the biggest things is that chasing the checklists and it's never ending, or overscheduling and not only for themselves but for their kids and their family. So that sometimes there's no downtime. This time optimism that I see a lot of times that I know I've struggled with where it's like I can just get all of this done. And thinking that everything just literally takes five minutes

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or that it will take forever, the rest of my life to do this one thing, and so avoiding.

Again, thinking it's all up to the parent to do it, particularly moms. One thing that I see a lot too that I've also grown from being able to see is when I became a mom I kind of took on this manual that was handed down from my mom who she got from her grandma, who she got from her mom. Generations is what I'm trying to say.

Kara: Sure, all the way down from the top to the bottom.

Ali: Exactly. And so, so much, particularly in my family, so much helplessness, this victimhood, the burden that women take on and then are pissed off at everybody about because they have to do this thing. Like I said earlier, the noble deed of parenting and managing the home. And that's such an area of just, again, when we're so helpless and we create that for ourselves our brains just double down on how we have no options especially when that's what we tell ourselves.

Yeah, so getting that generational handbook I think is a huge thing that I see of just I have to do it this way or else I'm going to disappoint my family, or my kids. It's a very interesting type of mindset that they have, that they can't change the way that it's always been done. Even if they know it's not working, it's still like, it might be dysfunctional but I'm still going to do it this way. And I'm going to be unhappy and so is everyone else.

Another thing that I see a lot is we tell ourselves that it's not like it used to be. And so sometimes it's just like this dream, this fantasy of how it used to be which I think can happen probably with men and women but especially in parenting. It's almost this like forgetting that time goes by either way. And forgetting that there were challenges and very real things that had happened before parenting. But it's like this glaze over the eyes of now it's so hard and before it used to be so amazing when I was so free.

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But they forget that there was stress, or there was resentment, or there was all these feelings that we talk about that very much happened before they became a parent.

Kara: Yeah. As you're talking I'm thinking of one of the kind of hallmarks of at least what I am calling internal burnout, which is the burnout created by our own thinking and about ourselves is this feeling of obligation. If somebody's working 16 hours a day on their passion project that they're super excited about and they feel amazing about, they're not burnt out. And we all know people like that. But you can work an hour a day on something that you have a lot of emotional drama about and you will feel very burnt out.

So, it's not the amount of things you're doing but I think this feeling, the sort of what particularly burns you out, burnouting-ness creating what burns you out is that sense of being trapped in obligation. It's sort of I have to do this even though I don't want to do it. But I have to and so I'm going to do it but I'm going to resent it which gets to what Marissa was saying of the resentment aspect of burnout, that can be so exhausting.

Ali: There is this other thing that I notice a lot too of this compare and despair that I notice a lot of parents do and something that I used to do a lot too. And again, this is not just particular specific to parents. But oftentimes it's tied in with this perfectionism fantasy of like, it's kind of weird too. It's like, well, if my house looks as good as the neighbor's then I will be less stressed. If my house is clean like this other person's house that I go to then my life will be perfect. If I have it this way, whereas again we are not really being honest as parents about how challenging it is in a lot of ways.

And so, no one's really being honest about the challenges that come with this and so it's just like we're all walking around wishing to be like everyone else who's going through the exact same thing. And we're all just humans doing our best, trying to raise little humans that are autonomous, have their

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agency, are doing their own thing. And thinking that we are responsible, that basically we think that their results are a sign of if we're doing well or not. And I think that is such a huge pressure that parents put on themselves. It's so unfair to do to themselves.

But again, we don't really talk about this thought much about how fucked up that is.

Kara: I mean Marissa, how do you see perfectionism coming up and kind of burnout? Because I would imagine that you also see that.

Marissa: Yeah. The fantasy piece that Ali's talking about shows up a lot in work especially this idea of once I get this promotion, once I make this much money, once I achieve this milestone then I'll feel good. It's the fantasy that something outside of you will make you feel better than you feel right now. And so, you keep chasing that. And in public health even before the pandemic but even more so now, there is the dialog internally in the workforce of the difficulty of it.

But what I find that burns folks out and keeps them stuck is that that's all that they turn to, that's the sole reason. There is nothing they can do about it, it's the lack of funding. It's the lack of staff. And then they get stuck there with no solution. And I think, when you think about the patriarchy and how folks socialized as women have absorbed this idea that they have to be perfect, that they have to prove their worth or value in certain ways. When we believe that and internalize that and then we chase checklists, or believe external things will make us feel good.

As a result, it benefits the patriarchy because we're too exhausted to go after big goals, make more money, show up authentically, we're mean to ourselves. And so, when you look at it that way it also helps you see how this thinking we have absorbed is somewhat by design by systems of oppression so we keep ourselves small and are burnt out. And not only

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can't have the energy to undo our own internalization, let alone especially in public health, fight to tear down the system and improve it.

Because in public health itself we might fight racism, and sexism, and environmental justice externally but that shit's happening internally in our workforce too and we're too exhausted to dismantle that and do something about it.

Ali: One thing that Marissa said is that burnout is an outcome of the patriarchy. They want us to be exhausted. "They."

Kara: The 10 men who make all the patriarchy [**crosstalk 26:49**].

Ali: Yes, of course, they, they want us to be tired and exhausted so that we're not dreaming big, changing things in our lives. We're too exhausted to do that.

Kara: Yeah. I mean I think one of the things that is coming out here is this relationship between perfectionism and burnout which makes sense. Because if you're constantly trying to do the impossible thing then you're always going to be burned out. If you're constantly trying to... I'm feeling, I have the image of being on a gerbil wheel. And you're constantly running because you never get there. So of course, you're always tired. You're constantly hustling for your own worth and your own value.

And so of course you feel burnt out because you also can't ever refill your cup because you're always trying to get to that place where you're finally going to feel good enough.

Marissa: Yeah, sometimes I describe it with clients. I'm like, "You think you're running to a destination where you'll feel good but you're actually on a treadmill going nowhere. But if you got off the treadmill you'd realize

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you're at a relaxing beach." And that's not to romanticize any kind of challenges we face.

But to say there is an ability where you are now to feel better right now without having to run a race trying to get somewhere external where you think magically you'll be perfect, and valuable, and worthy, and feel good. You've just got to get off the treadmill and then we'll work on it there.

Kara: I think one of the other things that's coming up for me as we're talking is the ways in which burnout, we keep talking about burnout like it's bad. But there is this way in which it becomes a badge of honor because we care so much and are doing. So, I think about coming from the profession of lawyers, everybody's always burnt out. There's this way in which it can become a version of the busy Olympics which is sort of I am so burnt.

And I think having been a social justice lawyer particularly it's like if you care you're burnt out. It's like that kind of belief system that if you manage to be resilient and happy that must mean that you don't really care about what's going on in the world. Which I feel is a way that current social justice discourse has taken a hard left in the wrong direction. So, I think there is this way in which we all act like we want to get rid of burnout, just like people who are in a martyr space think that they don't want to feel that way.

But there's actually a lot of ego investment, and identity investment in feeling that way, in being burnt out as a sign of either how much you're working, how much you care, how busy you are. And that is all the patriarchy productivity complex. Why do you think that you need to signal how overworked you are? Because you think that working so hard is what makes you a good enough person so you actually can't get off the treadmill even if you think you want to because how would you feel good about yourself if you were off the treadmill?

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Marissa: Yeah. And then I also think when I did this work I got to the place where I held boundaries. I left at five, I didn't respond to emails. And what would happen, my colleagues would be like, "Well, that's great, I want that but I can't have that." It's like this idea that that's a special snowflake. And part of it is you're swimming in the pool where everyone's overworking and you do have challenging circumstances. I mean you don't have the funding that maybe tech has. And you have a public health crisis. But I think we use those and latch onto those in a way that's super disempowering.

Kara: Well, yeah, especially when everybody around you shares your thoughts. I mean I used to go to law firm associates and yeah, it's definitely a circumstance that they're working however many hours a day compared to maybe some other jobs. But I totally knew lawyers, a minority, who set boundaries and managed to have a life and all of that. In law it was like, well, everybody went through law school and got trained to think in this way that's really not helpful. Now everybody in the profession thinks this way.

So, nobody, it's like everybody's a fish in the same pond, nobody can tell that there's another way to do things.

Ali: That absolutely happens in parenting too especially everyone being in the pool about how tired they are and how much they're doing for their kids. And how they're not ever taking a nap. And I remember once telling a friend about taking a nap and they were just like, oh God, I wish I could do that. And it's like, you can, you actually can.

Kara: Right. But it's like this badge of honor of I wish I could do that. Thinking of our suffering as a badge of honor, is I feel so contributes to burnout because we don't realize it but we now have a psychic investment in continuing it because we are getting some kind of weird ego ratification from it, not weirdness as in there's something wrong with us, we're socialized to do that. And unnoticed, we really believe ourselves that we

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want it to be different and that we don't want to work so much. And we don't want to answer emails on the weekend.

And we don't want to rush our kids to 12 baseball activities a day. We believe that that's what we want but on a deeper level it's like the – I think I did a podcast episode called Unconscious Commitments. It's like we think we want that but we have an unconscious commitment to this is what a good mother does. This is what someone in public health does who really cares about their issue, this is what a good coach does, a good CEO does.

Ali: All these manuals.

Kara: Yeah, those unconscious commitments are driving it. It's way stronger than your superficial conscious belief that you want to work less.

Marissa: I also think when you're socialized as a woman to believe that that's your role, and that's how you contribute and have to be worthy and valuable. And then our society is set up so folks who work in helping professions don't get good pay, have a lot of challenges. There's not good child support or maternity leave. Then it's almost like, okay, we're doing this work, we've been told we have to do to be valuable and worthy. And then we don't get the support. So, we're almost attached to that badge as a way to try to validate. And it doesn't serve us and kind of keeps us stuck.

Kara: Well, and especially because I think people socialized as women are socialized to believe that whatever value they have comes not only from other people's opinion of them but when it comes to whatever they're doing, it's always the effort and the amount of time. It's never the brilliance and the talent. So, any time I coach a woman who's having trouble taking time off or is scared to have kids because they don't want to take maternity leave or whatever else. Yeah, sometimes they're dealing with a workplace that may not be friendly too.

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But underneath that also is always if I ask them, “What do you think makes you good at your job?” I mean I would have made gazillion dollars if I’d bet a million dollars every time that what they were going to say is, “That I work hard.” It’s not that I’m brilliant, that I’m an asset to this practice, that they need my genius contributions. Because if you were thinking that then you would be like, yeah, they’ll deal with the three months, if you were believing that you bring that intellectual value but instead women are taught, well, it’s because you work hard.

Brilliance is for men but women work hard and help other people and that’s how you get ahead, that’s how you be a good little girl. And so that’s another thing where you can say that you want to work less or do less. But if you believe that your value as a mother is based on all the things you do for your children, not the presence with which you show up or any other kind of ineffable personality thing, but just working hard.

And the same for work then, you can tell yourself you want to work less all you want but you’re going to be answering emails on a weekend because that’s what you believe you have to do to be valuable.

Ali: Absolutely. There’s one thing I wanted to add about perfectionism before we move to the antidotes as I wrote down. One thing that I was thinking about when I was preparing for this podcast is the perfectionism is so toxic because it creates this notion that once we achieve that certain thing, whatever that is. We can finally tell ourselves that we’re a good parent. So, it’s like our brain is just so focused on telling ourselves how we just fucked up and we’re not good enough. And we’re just a really shitty parent.

And so suddenly we have this fantasy that once we do that thing we can finally tell ourselves are a good parent. But really that just does the very opposite because we’re not being present with ourselves. We’re not being present with our kids. We’re not being present with our families. And really

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we're just being present with how we want this perfectionist fantasy so that then we can feel all the things that are actually just right in front of us all along.

Kara: Yeah, 100%, and of course your brain never spits that out. I mean it's only practiced spitting out the other answer this whole time. It never is like, I have that program, I just wasn't running it. Sure, now I'll run it.

Ali: Absolutely.

Kara: So, I think one of the things that's coming out as we're talking in terms of how people can start to deal with this is the deep work of – it's almost like we're going to go deep to shallow. On the deepest level it's figuring out what those unconscious commitments are. Where are you sort of invested in or identified in like overworking, worrying about your kids all the time to prove that you love them and care about them.

Being attached to trying to control their experience, trying to justify or sort of validate yourself through 'caring so much' and how is that contributing to burnout or whatever your thought pattern is, working all the time to prove that you're valuable, so unearthing that. But I almost now want to zoom back out, how do you suggest that people who are feeling burnt out start to work on trying to change that?

Marissa: Yeah. So, one thing I'll say is because the patterns, the brain patterns that contribute to burnout are the same no matter if you're talking about work or parenting.

Kara: Or anything else we should say.

Marissa: Or anything else, yes, anything, a hobby.

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Kara: Dating burnout, people get very burnt out about dating because of their thoughts.

Marissa: Yeah, dating. So, when I was doing this and feeling burnout at work actually what I worked on deeply was the thought patterns at home around my to-do lists and chores. And it was the same thought patterns. So, the first thing I would say is you can pick one area and I know you talk about this a lot, Kara, and work on that. And it will help you with others. So, if you feel burned out in a lot of areas, you don't have to think you have to do them all at once. You can focus on one area. And then the other thing I'll say is...

Kara: Which is so important because when you're burnt out you're like, "I have to fix all myself all at once. I don't have time." No, just look at your thought about this one thing.

Marissa: Which is part of the thought that got you to burnout, thinking you have to do it all.

Kara: Of course, yeah, I've got to do it all, all at once perfectly.

Marissa: Yeah. The other thing that I talk a lot about is about rest because the way our society has now, especially since the industrialized revolution have really thought about rest. Is rest is just a short period of recovery rather than rest is a complete part of the human experience that is equal to exertion.

Kara: If you think about the complete part of a balanced breakfast or something, rest is not just the emergency snack you eat when your blood sugar has hit bottom and you're about to pass out.

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Marissa: Oh my gosh, that's such a good metaphor, it's so true. It's so true. And so, what I talk a lot about with folks is, if you are overworking, if you are burning out, of course when you go to try to read or actually take your lunch hour it's not going to feel good. Your brain's going to be like, "What are we doing? We shouldn't be doing this." It's going to keep doing that. And often what happens is you want to react to that and just give in to the part of your brain that says, "Get back to work", or even check Facebook.

So, I think one of the first steps is expect for it to be uncomfortable, and that it maybe not feel good or easy, but you still stick with that process and you allow it to be. And that's actually where you can access some of your thinking. But I would just say, don't expect it to feel good. Actually, expect at first when you're trying to rest, or set boundaries, or take breaks, to feel really terrible and that's okay.

Kara: Yeah, that's such a good point, just like other things that can feel good for you like if you haven't been doing aerobic exercise and you start trying to do it. Your body's like, "What the fuck are you doing? I want to die." It doesn't feel good right away, yeah. What about you, Ali, what do you think?

Ali: Yeah. So, a couple of things that I see often are really just allowing feelings. So, like I said earlier, so often we do blame our kids for how we feel. And so, there's so much pent up and repressed frustration, anger that really is aimed at our kids but it should be at the patriarchy. And so, a lot of it is just getting honest, allowing feelings. There's usually a well of just stuff that we have to dig out. And once we do that then we're able to really deconstruct the thoughts that we have.

And like Marissa mentioned, they're often not just in parenting. It can be in how we deal with other family members, how we deal with work, how we treat ourselves. And so, once we're able to start thinking on purpose, I call it parenting on purpose, really deciding how you want to show up as a

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parent. How do you want to feel during this? If you know that something is not going to happen, if something unexpected is going to happen as it always does, how do you want to feel during that?

Sort of again, just this intentional thinking instead of just reacting to every single thing that's coming your way.

Kara: Let's pause, I think that's really important because a lot of what happens with burnout I think is you get into an unintentional thought pattern that creates exhaustion and burnout. And then your brain's like, "Great, I know what tune to play" and just keeps playing it. And because we so believe that it's the circumstances burning is out then we just keep doing the same thing and thinking the same thing and wanting that to somehow magically change. And there's that irony of when you're burnt out you feel too overwhelmed to do anything.

And so, I think just even that magic of just changing a little bit of the way you think, just choosing how you want to think about whatever's going on will help shift it for you.

Ali: Absolutely. And actually, this reminds me of one of the podcasts that I listened to of yours a few years ago called This is the Part Where. And it was particularly when one of my children and I were having, every single morning was this battle of brushing teeth, clean clothes, getting out the door, me needing to get to work on time. And it was just like we had this cycle going on. And I remember listening to that podcast and just thinking, because I would lose my patience pretty quickly.

And also, it was just this track of every single morning we're going to have this fight and every single morning we're going to feel really shitty as I drop you off because I yelled at you and I didn't mean to. And now I'm running late for work. And just slowing down and just thinking, does it have to be this way? Does it really have to go this way? Is there something else that's

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going on here that maybe I can be a little bit more present to? What is so important, can I choose my battles?

And I remember one of the things that we decided to do. She would always wear these particular pants. And so, I just bought three of the same pairs of pants so that we could rotate them out.

Kara: It's so funny how some problems are so easily solved like that. But if you're in the mindset of, no, this means I'm a bad parent. There's something wrong with my kid, and I have to get them to do something differently. And I have to blah, blah, blah, as opposed to these pants are \$15 at Target, I will get enough for every day of the week and then we just never have to fight about this again.

Ali: Yes, you want tie-dyed pants, okay, I'm going to get you so many that you never want to wear them again. And I think parents, I know for me this is something that I still struggle with. My brain will sometimes just go to something happens, circumstance outside of me, kid does something and that makes it mean that I'm a bad parent. And it's still just so ingrained of just this pattern and this thought that I have told myself over and over again that I have to catch myself and I'm getting a lot better. But yeah, it's still practice.

And I think another thing is, just letting ourselves be human and make a mistake. I know for a long time if I made a mistake or I did something wrong, I made that mean that I'm going to fuck my kids up. And again, this is something I'm working on a lot too. It's like no, we are human ecosystems, I got that word from you. I love that podcast. Kids are also human ecosystems.

And so, if we can just give ourselves a little bit of a break, our kids, our partners, our families are also going to be getting a little bit of a break

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because usually that criticism or how mean we are to ourselves is very much extending to everyone else.

Kara: Yeah, I love that. Alright, so if you've been listening to this episode and you're like, "Yeah, I am burnt out", either you're new coming in or you discovered in this episode you were burnt out. I want you to go to unfuckyourbrain.com/breakthrough or you can text your email to +1347 997 1784 and the code word is breakthrough. Because starting very soon, this podcast comes out on a Thursday, what is it, June 1st? Do I know the days of the week? Possibly not. Thursday, it's June 2nd.

This podcast comes out Thursday June 2nd, and starting Monday June 6th, I am teaching the 2022 Burnout Breakthrough which is five days of live training, live Q&A, coaching. We are going to be all things burnout. I'm going to be teaching about the difference between what I call internal burnout and external burnout. We talked a lot on this episode, well, about both, but we talked a lot about thought patterns and internal burnout. I'm going to be teaching about how to address those, giving you ideas for thoughts to think.

I know it's hard sometimes when you're starting out to be like, "Great, how am I supposed to think about the fact that my department has no funding and people have hepatitis C, and my kid threw up in the car this morning. What thought do you suggest, Kara, about this? I'm going to be teaching you how to do that. And we're also going to be talking a little more in depth about what I call external burnout, meaning when the news is a horror show, what do you do about your brain? Because I think we deal with both things.

So come check it out, unfuckyourbrain.com/breakthrough. And I would love for you two to tell people when they can find more from you if they are in public health and need help with parenting or just like your style, if they want to hear more.

[UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/breakthrough)

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Marissa: Yeah, I just want to say, I will be at that burnout, whatever especially because, yeah, we talked a lot about the internal but I will say, I often say this is not to deny that racism exists, or discrimination in the workplace or anything like that. This is in the face of those challenges, how do you want to think, feel and act. So that external piece is really important.

So, I have a podcast called Redefining Rest, I talk a lot about rest and that is kind of an antidote to burnout and how to do that, and how to implement that, and sustain that, and all that good stuff. You can also find me on Instagram @thepublichealthcoach. Or on LinkedIn, I know folks in public health are on LinkedIn, Marissa McKool. I'm very, very active there and yeah, love to connect with everyone.

Kara: I always forget LinkedIn exists. It's good to have people come on and remind me, that is a thing. What about you, Ali?

Ali: Yeah. My website is www.aliryancoaching.com.

Kara: Ryan is spelled R-Y-A-N, yes?

Ali: Yeah, A-L-I R-Y-A-N. And then same for Instagram ali_ryan_coaching. And then Twitter, twitter.com/thinklovebelove.

Kara: Took a turn there. And we will put all of this in the show notes.

Ali: That's what I'm all about.

Kara: Don't hate your kids, I mean think love, be love. Honestly, stop hating your kids, it's so much more compelling to me. Stop hating your kids, it's so much more compelling to me. I was like, if I see think love, be, I'm like, why, yeah, blah, blah, blah. Stop hating your kids, I'm not even a parent but click, I want to know. Marissa agrees with me, we've rebranded you.

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Marissa: I have already told Ali this, Kara.

Ali: Yeah, she has.

Marissa: She's now [**crosstalk 45:38**], you have to say that.

Ali: Okay, well, two people that I respect are telling me, so it's going to happen, you're going to see.

Kara: There you go. I want your certification project to be a module on how to stop hating your kids.

Ali: Actually, it is.

Kara: And go to unfuckyourbrain.com/breakthrough. You still have a couple of days to sign up for the 2022 Burnout Breakthrough. Alright, thanks for coming on.

Ali: Thank you so much.

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