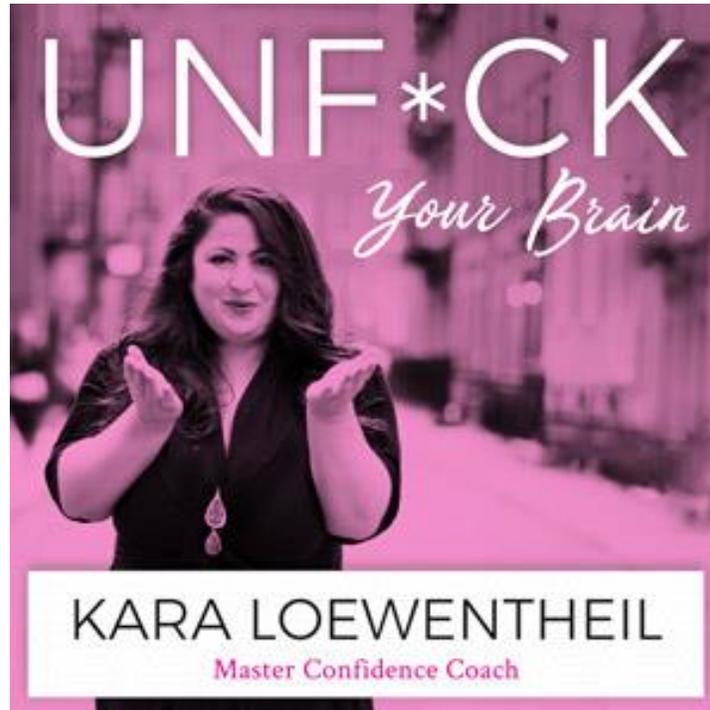


# UFYB 266: Personalization: Getting it Wrong v. Being Wrong



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

[UnF\\*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](#)

## **UFYB 266: Personalization: Getting it Wrong v. Being Wrong**

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? I'm feeling pretty good. My brain is tired but I've been on the road for about 10 days and my body was very confused and didn't really want to sleep. And so my sleep schedule's all whacky. And it was actually super interesting because I love to find places in my life where I notice that one version of something I have so many thoughts about. And then another version of something I'm totally chill about. And to see that contrast is always so helpful for me because it just shows me how optional my thoughts are.

So I've talked on the podcast before about having chronic pain and doing thought work around chronic pain. And I've come a long way in my thoughts around chronic pain stuff but I still do tend to have a more kind of fraught relationship with those symptoms, let's say. Where I've had to really train myself to not jump straight to trying to fix things, not regard symptoms as a problem, to take down the fear and stress response in response to pain symptoms. So that's something I sort of actively work on.

Let me just say in advance, no need to DM me with your thoughts about whatever I'm about to say. I have my own medical care providers I consult as needed. So my sleep has been very wonky for the last few weeks. And it's been tied to also some physical movement stuff I have been doing. And so some of it has been sore muscles. Some of it has potentially been having been sick, then I was travelling, then I was jetlagged.

But the point is that for a while, maybe three or four weeks, I am historically somebody who can just – my partner always laughs. I can just lie down, go to sleep immediately wherever I am. And that has not been the case so I

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would get tired really early and then go to bed at nine and then wake up at 3:00am. Or then I was travelling and then I was completely wonky and I would wake up. Anyway I just have not been having good sleep. And the wild thing to watch my brain is that I have just been completely chill about that.

And from coaching and just being a human I know that sleep is actually something that a lot of people have a lot of drama about. Not being able to sleep, not sleeping well when they have insomnia, when they can't sleep, when they wake up. They have all this drama about it. They see it as a problem, they want to fix it. They are buying different things like lavender oils or different earplugs, or facemasks or whatever, I mean eye masks. This is a thing that people get very bent out of shape about.

So it's just kind of fascinating to me, it's not that one is better or worse obviously because like I said, I historically have gotten very bent out of shape about pain symptoms and I've done a lot of work on that. But it's kind of fascinating to look at this and be like, "Oh, okay, I'm not really sleeping that much or normally and it's been weeks." And I actually feel pretty fine. I have to take more naps but I certainly have appreciated the life that I have created where I can work when I want. And so that certainly is part of it.

But even so I have coached self-employed entrepreneurs who have sleep problems that are freaking out about it. So I'm telling you all of this just to say, these are the kinds of things you sort of realize and see are helpful when you can be curious about your brain. And specifically trying to pick something, it can be very instructive to look at a place that you have a lot of trouble managing your mind. And then to look at places in your life where you know that other people have trouble managing their mind about that circumstance but you don't. And kind of see, what are your thoughts.

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In the sleep area my thought is that it's just going to resolve itself. That really has been my thought this whole time. I think this is temporary and it's just going to eventually go away. But my thought about my chronic pain has historically not been that chill. And so seeing that thought has been really helpful. When I see this as just something that's happening that I think will pass and of course there are certain physical symptoms you could experience where you'd want to seek medical health.

It's not like I think that about everything but with this I just had this sense of this thought of I think this is going to pass. I think it's temporary. I think of myself as someone who sleeps well and so that's almost my – I have this identity of that and so this is in contrast. And I'm like, I'm sure this will pass versus the way I think about kind of other things in my life. It's very instructive but you have to be able to be curious, that's what allows for this.

So that's not really the main topic today although that could have been its own whole topic. I feel like my podcast is sometimes a two minute introduction and that's an entire podcast topic. So here's what I really want to share with you today which actually works perfectly because this lesson I'm going to share with you is actually quite short but I think lifechanging. So I could say it in one sentence and if you actually heard it and implemented it, it would change your life.

So part of why I was travelling was I went to a mastermind meeting which is the group of women that I have been masterminding with for – well, I've known most of them since I started coaching. I did my coach certification with two of them. And then I did my master coach training with another one or two of them. And we've been meeting in this mastermind format for four years maybe now. I would not be sane without them.

So anyway I went to this mastermind meeting and one of the participants is a friend of mine who we coach each other all the time. And I coached her

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on this concept that I have been working with a lot lately because I am finding that it's so powerful and I actually talked about it in the Claim Your Authority Challenge a little bit And I'm just seeing so often that it is the difference between coming paralyzed and being able to take action or being able to tolerate failure or change and not being able to.

And I'm seeing so much how the work I've done in this area even though I hadn't framed it this way has been so lifechanging. And I'm going to take a term that actually I think is actually a psychological term with its own definition and I'm just going to use it in my way here because I just want to have a word for this. So I'm going to call it personalization.

But I want to talk about it in this very specific way which is the difference between having a thought or having a feeling and acknowledging that thought or feeling versus making it mean something about yourself and relating it to yourself in a more holistic way. So I'm going to give you two examples of this that you probably have experienced. But the first one is the one that I started with and that is that I was coaching my friend on the idea that there is a difference between I did something wrong and something is wrong with me.

So let's say that again, there is a difference between I did something wrong versus something is wrong with me. I also need to say that of course the idea that you did something wrong is not a circumstance. That's an optional thought that you have about yourself. But what I was coaching her on was the idea that there can be the math of something wrong, having gone wrong versus the drama of making it mean something emotional, or moral, or value, or character about yourself.

So if you try to achieve something, so this, my friend is a businessowner, let's say you try to launch something and it doesn't sell. I have launched various things this year that didn't sell the way I wanted them to. I have

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really not had a ton of emotional drama about any of it. Of course I have a little bit of a freak out each time which is kind of normal and human but it's kind of over in a few hours and then I just move on. And we're still going to do great this year. And we're still a multiple seven figure business. Everybody's still getting their profit share this year. Everything's been fine.

The difference is when I try something it fails, my thought sometimes is, well, I did that wrong, I sold that wrong, I planned that wrong, whatever. What I mean by wrong is simply that was not apparently what I needed to do to get the result that I wanted. It's as if I did the math problem wrong. I thought that doing that training and sending those emails was going to result in this outcome in the business and that's not what happened. So I guess I did that wrong. Wrong doesn't mean anything moral there, it's not a value based thing. It's not a comment on my character.

It's literally, I just did the math wrong, I had that wrong. It's like being wrong about a fact. It's like thinking you know what year a state was founded. That it turns out you have the wrong year. It's just math, it's just a fact that you had wrong. My prediction about what I needed to do to accomplish this outcome, to create this result was just incorrect. That amount or type of effort did not produce that outcome. That is very different from making a failure mean there's something wrong with you.

So when somebody is struggling with taking risks and failing in business it's often because they're not seeing it as just I had the math wrong. I thought people would want this and either they didn't want it, or I didn't sell it right, or I didn't make an appealing offer. Maybe the pricing was wrong or whatever versus there's something wrong with me. I can't market. I can't sell. Nobody wants what I have. Nobody wants to work with me. My ideas are bad.

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These are all ways of making it mean that something's wrong with us, something's wrong with me as a person. After I coached my friend on this and then I started using it more, I started to see this is a conflation that people are making all the time. This idea that having done something wrong, i.e., something failed, it didn't work, you didn't get the result you wanted, somebody else was upset by what you said, whatever. Means that there's something wrong with them.

And I actually want to take this another step further which is this is true even if you believe that you did something morally wrong. If you have a value of let's say not lying to people and for whatever reason you lie to someone. You're living in your model, you have a thought that leads you to have a feeling that leads you to take the action of lying. And you feel later that was a not in alignment, that was not in integrity, that was wrong of you. Now, that's obviously a thought, it's not a circumstance. We wouldn't all agree, you can't get a ruling from the universe on it.

But it's a thought you have that you did something wrong. You can actually keep that thought and still not believe there's something wrong with you as a person on some moral irredeemable level. I think sometimes that a lot of coaching, I've talked about this before and I talk about this so much in the advanced certification in feminist coaching is that people learn to coach in this way where they think that they need to coach people on to thinking, well, you never do anything wrong, you never did anything wrong.

If you feel bad about something we'll just change your thoughts that you don't feel bad about yourself ever. That's one approach, I'm not saying that that's wrong ironically. But I think the deeper level is you can acknowledge when you did something wrong by which we mean just not aligned with your values, not in integrity with yourself. You spoke out of anger. You lied because you felt scared or whatever. You just did something that isn't what

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you wish you would have done from your highest self or your non-triggered self or whatever.

And you can actually understand that you did that thing, that in your own moral framework you did something 'wrong' without making that mean that there is something wrong with you as a person. Because when we mean there's something wrong with us as a person we're talking about some essential and inherent wrongness. There is something, Shakespeare would say, rotten in the state of Denmark. That we are an apple that is rotten at the core. It's like we mean that we are somehow less worthy as humans.

And that is such an important difference. The difference between I did something wrong meaning either I was just factually wrong and I didn't get the result I wanted, the outcome I wanted. Or I had a fact wrong. Or even I did something wrong in my own moral compass. And the difference between those two things and there's something wrong with me as a person, that difference is everything. That difference is compassion, that difference is forgiveness, that difference is acceptance of your essential worth and value as a human.

It's actually not super destructive or problematic to believe that you did something wrong even within your own moral compass when you don't make that mean that you are essentially and inherently wrong as a person. That you are bad as a person, that your value or worth is diminished or was never really there. That's what is shame filled and paralyzing. And that is what so often is keeping us small and holding us back and preventing us from going after what we want, ironically.

It can prevent us from making amends if we do something that we do believe is kind of wrong in our own value framework. Ironically if we believe that means there's something wrong with us as a person we're actually less likely to try to repair or make amends because we're so shamed and we

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want to avoid that whole thing. Whereas if we were able to be like, I'm whole and lovable still as a person and I just snapped because I was angry and that's not how I want to behave, so let me apologize. That's actually quite simple.

It's when we make it mean something bad about our essential selves that we run into trouble. I'm going to give you one more example, I'm sure there are millions of examples and you can come up with your own. But another one that came to me when I was coaching this weekend was the difference between I'm disappointed, actually I can't remember if I said this or somebody in my mastermind said this. So if you're in my mastermind and you're listening to this being like, "I'm the one who said that." You are, sorry, I can't remember if this was me or someone else.

But the difference between I'm disappointed versus I'm disappointed in myself. So this is another thing, it's another way of personalizing it. Something happens, so let's say we don't get a result we want. We can feel disappointed. There's nothing wrong with feeling disappointed. That's just a human emotion like your toddler feels disappointed when their ice-cream falls on the ground, that's okay. Versus I am disappointed in myself, that is shame. That is whatever result I got that wasn't what I wanted, that means I let myself down, I did something wrong. I'm not morally acceptable.

And I think this is also true for other people, one of the things that I did a lot of work on when I was working on dating and my romantic relationships. Was that I noticed that I had this pattern where I would think everything was great with someone and then the first time I felt disappointed I would freak out. And I would make it mean that there was something wrong with them and the relationship wasn't going to work and now it was all crumbling.

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Because what happened was I felt a feeling of disappointment which I believed at the time because I didn't have thought work when I was doing this, was caused by the other person. And then I generalized it, I kind of personalized it to them or I generalized it to the relationship as a whole as opposed to I'm just having a feeling right now. I'm feeling disappointed. So you can feel disappointed when something doesn't go well for you, you don't get the outcome you want, you don't get the result you want, or someone else doesn't behave the way you want.

You can feel disappointed, which is created by your thoughts. That's very different from then telling yourself, well, I'm disappointed in myself. There's something wrong with me as a person. Or I'm disappointed I them, think about this with your kids if you have kids. Your kid does something and you feel disappointed because that's not how you want them to be. It's so different to say, I'm disappointed because I had thoughts and expectations for how you should behave. And those weren't met so I have a thought that causes disappointment for me.

Versus I'm disappointed in you, as if your inherent personhood is not good enough and is disappointing to me. That is so shame filled. So that's is what I want to offer you today, notice how often, if you don't get the result you want, or you're wrong about something, or you act in a way you don't like. When you are sort of making it mean that there's something wrong with you as a person. Or you're telling yourself you're disappointed in yourself, or whatever other version of this you do. And see how you can kind of separate that out and back than up.

Okay, I did the math wrong. I was wrong about how this would work. I didn't get the result that I wanted. So I was wrong about what steps would produce it. I was wrong about a matter of fact, or even I did something that doesn't align with my values or isn't really who I want to be so I was sort of

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wrong in that sense in my own moral universe. But I don't have to make that mean that there is something wrong with me on a fundamental level.

If I accept my full personhood, my full personness, my full worth and value then I can see that when I'm wrong about an outcome, or even to get an action that I don't like, that that is so much easier to address, repair, fix and move on. Whereas when I make it mean that there's something wrong with me as a person, that's when I get filled with shame and paralyzed. And that is what keeps me from going after what I want. Alright my chickens, that's what I have for you this week. Have a beautiful week. I'll talk to you soon.

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