

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

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, I am super excited for this conversation today. We are going to be talking to the incredible Dr. Marisa G. Franco. Don't get her confused with the other Dr. Marisa Franco, this is the OG that we have here. And we're going to be talking about an area that I think does not get enough attention, so I'm super excited that she's bringing all this attention to it and where not surprisingly her mindset impacts how you show up quite a bit, and that is friendship.

So I would love Dr. Franco, if you would tell us a little bit about yourself and tell us about the exciting news that you just got right before we got on this call.

Marisa: Yes, yeah, so I am a professor, a psychologist, a speaker and author of the book, *Platonic: How the Science of Attachment Can Help You Make and Keep Friends*, which as of yesterday has become a New York Times Bestseller.

Kara: I wish we had sound effects like a shock jock, so I could do a drumroll or confetti coming out, so exciting.

Marisa: Thank you. Thank you.

Kara: How long has the book been out?

Marisa: For a little over a week now.

Kara: Wow, nice work.

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Marisa: Yeah, first week. First week in.

Kara: She's cracked the mysterious code. Nobody knows exactly how to make something a bestseller because of all these crazy theories, so good. Anything else you want people to know about you before we kind of dive in? That is the most exciting part recently.

Marisa: Well, I could get into why I decided to write the book.

Kara: Yeah, so my first question's going to be how did you come to this work? So let's just do that origin story a bit.

Marisa: Let's get in there. Yeah, I mean I come writing this book from a place of repentance and regret for how I perceived friendship earlier in my life. I went through some breakups in my young 20s and felt kind of unlovable. And I decided to start this wellness group with my friends where we met up each week and we cooked, and we did yoga, and we meditated. And I felt so loved. And I thought about why I took these breakups so hard.

And I realized it was these ideas that I had that romantic love was the only love that made me lovable. It's the only love that really counts, the only love that's legitimate. And here I had all this love around me but I wasn't actually receiving it like it mattered at all. And it was like, wow, there's gold under my feet but I just see it as concrete. And I feel in such a lonely society, no one, whether within or outside a romantic partnership can really afford to throw even a morsal of love away.

So I wanted to just be part of a culture of leveling this hierarchy a bit, I think to all of our benefits. And that's what drove me to write Platonic.

Kara: I love that story because, I think I have talked about this on the podcast before, but, well, I'll say two things. So one is anecdotally one of

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

the things I see in coaching a lot, this is not a 100% rule, but 80% of the time. Well, some people have not too much attachment drama at all, everything's secure, fine. But for those of us with some attachment drama in one way or another, that often people will either sort of have like their romantic life is really challenging.

But friendship comes much more easily to them or vice versa which is I don't have data or a study to back that up because I'm a coach and not a researcher. But if I look at the thousands of women that I have coached I feel that there's something there. And that was certainly my experience. So I also had a much easier time with friendships, not that there is never any issue but I've had most of my friends for 30 to 40 years, able to form secure attachments. Didn't have a lot of drama about them. We didn't have lots of fights or anything.

My romantic life felt much more volatile. And the biggest breakthrough I ever had in my romantic life actually was ironically this same experience where I had been working, in coaching work on my dating life, and therapy, and everything else for years and years. And on my 40th, somebody broke up with me three weeks before my 40th birthday which was, actually we're good friends now, that's fine now. It was not the right, you know. And I was like, I kept constantly thinking that my problem was that I needed to be better at being alone.

And so I had that story about myself. And so I was like, okay, I guess this is a sign that I should spend my birthday weekend in, I don't know, silent contemplation alone, to be even better at being alone. And my mother had made this tribute video that I didn't know she was doing. She'd sent out this thing where people record videos of you. And so she sent it to me. And I went upstate, I watch this whole video of 20 people in my life telling me how much they loved me, and what they loved about me. And so I totally sobbed.

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

And then I had these friends from upstate reach out to me and be like, “It’s your birthday.” And I had, truly, I mean I’m often teaching those no big insight moment, coaching work is bit by bit. But this was a shocking moment where I was like, there’s all this love around me. I’d been so fixated on this one kind of love as if it’s a completely different kind as opposed to my life is full of love. And if I add a little extra and take a little away, it’s that little bit is not going to make the big difference.

And of course right after, I had already actually met my current partner but I’d only known him for a week or two. And I would never have been open to that relationship if I hadn’t done this work which is not to say that you should do work on friendship so you can find a romantic partner. That’s part of the whole problem. But just to say the more we’re fixated on it the harder it is to find and the more we’re ignoring all that love I think in the rest of our lives.

So I would love to hear, can you tell us a little bit about how, obviously on this podcast we talk a lot about your mindset, how it impacts the results you get. And so I would love to hear, I know you have some data to back up whatever, our theories about this I would love to hear.

Marisa: Oh gosh, so much, my goodness.

Kara: Is that too broad of a question?

Marisa: No, I will break it down because your attachment style is a series of predictions. It’s a series of mindsets, if A, then B.

Kara: Can you say that again and explain that more? I think that [crosstalk] have just gone through people’s heads like, sure, what, what?

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Marisa: Yeah. So if you're anxiously attached, the prediction is if I get close to you, you'll abandon me. If you're avoidantly attached, the big prediction is if I get close to you, you will sort of betray me, overpower me, or suffocate me. And if you're securely attached the assumption is, if I get close to you, we'll experience great and wonderful intimacy. And these predictions affect how we behave. So anxiously attached people, they're higher in something called rejection sensitivity which means, they assume they're being rejected when it's ambiguous.

So when they make that assumption, when they make that prediction, someone's like maybe in hungry, hangry, quieter than usual. What happens is because they assume that that means rejection, they start to reject. They become withdrawn. They become cold. They get rejected in return because they rejected first and they're not even realizing it's happening. And if they had a secure mindset which is like, maybe they're just tired or in a bad mood, they wouldn't reject and then they wouldn't receive the rejection in return.

So it's kind of like a lot of our beliefs about relationships are such self-fulfilling prophecies, I know Kara, I told you about research. One of the biggest tips I share on making friends being to assume people like you. And the research on that finds that when researchers told people to make this assumption, they go into this group and based on their personality profiles people would like them. It wasn't true. It was bogus, researchers, they see people all the time.

But they found that when they told people this, people were open, friendlier, warmer, and it was sort of like a self-fulfilling prophecy. So when you assume people like you, you make it more likely to be true because that mindset triggers a series of behaviors that make however you perceive the world, good or bad, more likely to happen.

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Kara: So you were singing our song, we talk about that all the time. When you imagine someone who has a million friends, you don't imagine their thought process is, well, everybody hates me and nobody wants to be around me. That kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. I also would love if you could talk a little bit about, I know that there are actually studies showing that, or at least a study showing that your beliefs about how friendship is supposed to come about, impacts your experience.

One of the things we talk about, I talk about a lot on the podcast in any kind of relationship setting, romantic or friendship is this idea that it's just supposed to happen magically to us, or all the different beliefs people have. Like you make all your friends when you're young or if people liked me they would just show up at my house for dinner or whatever unrealistic beliefs we have. So I'd love to hear kind of from the data perspective, what's been found.

Marisa: Yeah. So this, again, this assumption that friendship happens organically which is kind of outdated if you're an adult. Because when you're a kid you have repeated unplanned interaction and shared vulnerability in school, which Rebecca Adams, sociologist says is what fosters organic connection. You see people very day and you get vulnerable with them. But we don't have that as adults. I mean some workplaces maybe, but most workplaces, no. People are not vulnerable, even though they see each other every day.

Kara: And now everybody's working at home so much, I mean you're not even having that proximity a lot of the time.

Marisa: Exactly. I think the assumption has to be in adulthood that friendship does not happen organically. It happens based off of initiative and effort. And in fact a study looked at how these beliefs affect outcomes and it found that people that thought friendship happened based on luck

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

were more lonely over time. Whereas those that saw it as taking effort were less lonely over time.

Kara: Yeah. And then I think that stands for so much reason. Also if your belief is, well, in relationships, people should just completely understand each other magically and never have to explain, over time you probably end up feeling more lonely, more alienated, more misunderstood, all of that stuff. As opposed to if your belief is well, I have to communicate what I want. I have to be willing to be vulnerable. I have to be able to make those connections. And I think I coach a lot of women who feel like they have a lot of trouble making friendships as an adult.

But I do think it's a combination of things. Obviously there's probably anxious attachment, rejection stuff. So they're afraid to do that in the first place. But also just sort of not – I mean ruthless is the wrong word in a sense. But I sort of mean you have to be like, I'm going to go ask five people if they want to hang out. And then the one who says yes, if we like it, then I'll ask again. You have to actually make this concerted effort to develop and cultivate those friendships.

I had this experience earlier this year where I threw a housewarming party and I moved. And I invited my core circle and then I invited a bunch of acquaintances. And a bunch of people said they were coming and then at the end were just the core circle showed up and literally every acquaintance bailed. And I had maybe three hours of feeling sorry for myself and rejected. But thankfully I've done all this coaching work.

And then after that I was just like, "Wait a minute, I have not put the time into developing and nurturing these relationships, to create the kind of connection where people will show up when you invite them to something." I am getting out exactly what I put in which is, I sent you an evite and I

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

haven't seen you for six months. This is just math. If I want to have those relationships then I need to put in the effort and not take it personally.

So I think that was such a wakeup call for me, I think in my mind I had been like, well, your close friends take work, but then somehow you're supposed to magically have this extended social network that doesn't, loose ties shouldn't take any work. But even that's not true, even loose ties need to be watered once every six months or whatever it's going to be.

Marisa: Yeah. I think you're absolutely right. I sort of just see people say, "I want people to stick around enough, to jump over my walls, or I want people to reach out to me." But they don't turn these same questions on themselves. Am I reaching out to people? Am I making other people belong? And the truth is that it's unhealthy if someone tries to push through your walls. It's healthy when you see that someone's not reciprocating to move on and find people that will.

Kara: That's such a good point. Guys, when you are like, "I'm not going to do anything and I want them to prove they want to be my friend, jumping over my walls constantly." You're basically like I want a stalker. I want somebody with no boundaries, who's emotionally inappropriate.

Marisa: Doesn't have regard for themselves.

Kara: Yeah, who doesn't have any self-esteem and doesn't read any consensual signals to prove to me that they want to be my friend. That's so fucked up, that's not what you want.

Marisa: No, no, you don't want those types of friends.

Kara: I mean that's what classic dating advice from women about playing hard to get means. So you're just going to encourage basically men who

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

don't care about your consent or taking any signals you go off to pursue you. That is a recipe for disaster.

Marisa: Yeah, exactly.

Kara: Of course you want a guy who's like, I don't know, she never texts me first and she acts like a cold fish. I don't think I want that. I don't think she loves dating me. That's a healthy normal person, that's who you want.

Marisa: That's a secure person, exactly.

Kara: So good. I think one of the things we talk about on the podcast a lot is other people are not your emotional vending machines. I think one of the things that happens in any kind of relationship where we think we're having trouble is like, we're like, "I want that person to want to be my friend so I can feel good about myself. I'm not actually interested in shared vulnerability." As you're talking about. Or seeing them as a person or being there for them. I just want them to prove that I'm good enough.

Marisa: Yeah. In the book I call it dependency and not friendship. You are expecting this person to show up, to hear your crises, to kind of meet your needs at all times but you're not really thinking about meeting their needs. You don't really think about calling them in times of joy, only in times of crisis. And it's obviously, vulnerability is a part of friendship but it's a chapter and it's not the book.

And so when we're just cultivating these relationships where I'm just reaching out to you because I support and it's a time of crisis. That's not the full body of friendship. That creates more of a dependence type relationship than the reciprocity of two adults that we know is part of adult friendship.

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Kara: So a lot of your kind of work here is also about de-hierarchalizing is not the right word as such.

Marisa: [**Crosstalk**].

Kara: I keep trying to use that word. I've done two podcasts where I try to say de-hierarchalize and every time I'm like, "That's not a word." Taking away the hierarchy, evening out the hierarchy between romantic and platonic love. So listeners to this podcast know that I'm actually a huge fan of historical social context as helping our brains see that things are optional and not just the way they are.

So I'd love, I know you're an expert on this, if you could talk a little bit about as you talked in your TED Talk, what's the history of the romantic versus platonic love kind of value system and how it's maybe changed to now?

Marisa: Yeah. So Angela Chen has this book, *Ace*, that is awesome. In that it really differentiates between sexual and romantic love which we think coincide with each other but asexual communities really show us they do not. Romantic love, the sense of passion, yearning for you, thrill around you, idealizing someone. Yeah, desiring feelings, we see that even for people that we don't want to have sex with. And for a lot of female friendships in particular, ask a woman to talk about her best friend, you're going to hear something romantic.

Kara: Right. Being in love with best friend is a very common, I think, even for straight women, experience even if they're not sexually attracted to other straight women.

Marisa: Exactly. She's my soulmate, I think she's the greatest person in the world.

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Kara: I have a platonic soulmate, I tell my partner that he's my – I mean I do use romantic with him, sexual versus platonic, but same thing. I'm like, you too are, it's the same level of kind of investment in a way.

Marisa: Yeah, exactly. So throughout history we've actually found that romance was more a part of friendship than marriage. People did not get married for love. They got married for resources, for strategic decisions, to combine people's last names in the mid sort of 1800s and before. And people would turn to their friends for this romance because the assumption at the time was the genders are so distinct that you can only really access this profound intimacy with someone who shares your gender and shares your experiences.

So friends were holding hands, sharing beds, writing love letters, carving their names into trees. Friends would take each other on their honeymoons.

Kara: Really?

Marisa: Yeah.

Kara: Each person take a friend, is it a four person honeymoon?

Marisa: A whole community, you could take the whole community, yeah, it was so different. And there was just a lot more equality I think back then. And I think as we begin to idealize romantic, well, I don't even want to say romantic, spousal I guess, traditional spousal love and affection. Platonic love has fallen to the wayside, part of that intentionally I think. As women got more rights there was less of a drive for women to need to get married to access rights. So what are we going to do to make sure these women are still getting married?

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

We're going to make sure that they know that this is the only place they can find worth and deep, deep connection. And they cannot find it anywhere else. They cannot find it in their friendships. And so I think that narrative really played the role of trying to get people to stay in marriages when they didn't have as much of a legal reason to do it.

Kara: Yeah, I think that's so interesting to think about the different strands of, there's companionate relationship, romantic feeling, sexual feeling, economic necessity. And then just thinking about the ways that those kind of – it's like all different magnets match up in different ways over time. So now we've taken the romantic magnet but like, no, you're no longer attached to friend relationships. You are now attached to the sexual one. That's where you're supposed to find that.

But as you say, there's such a true diversity of lived experience that doesn't match those categories. So interesting and I think so helpful for when you are kind of fetishizing one form or the other. Certainly I also know people who have in the easy time in their romantic relationships and then they're like, "But I can't make a friend." And I'm like, "Well, are you friends with your partner?" I mean, probably, you can, it's the same thing, it's not where we treat them as these completely different kinds of relationship.

But if you know how to form any kind of intimate relationship then those skills are transferable one way or the other.

Marisa: Thank you, yes, Kara. I feel like when I tell people about what you need to do to make friends, you have to initiate, you have to try. They're like, "That sounds like so much work." And I'm like, "Would you ever say that if I told you it's what you need to do to find your spouse?" We have this script about friendship like it's not a relationship, it's easy, it's good vibes only. There should never be any issues or problems. But intimacy is

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

intimacy whether it is with a spouse or a friend, the same behaviors are going to drive those two relationships to be successful.

Affirming people, being vulnerable, spending time together, the same exact behaviors. And so I think we need to stop compartmentalizing so much what we think is appropriate in friendship versus what we think is appropriate with our spouse.

Kara: So interesting. As you're talking, I'm thinking, I haven't really thought this, this is a new thought. So I don't know if it's going to come out making sense. But it sort of feels like maybe part of that is because we use the word 'friendship' to mean this category of very different things. So if you go bowling with somebody once a week, maybe you are getting into super deep experiences in your relationships and vulnerability. But also you could probably do that for 10 years with someone and never really have a conflict or have to share any deep vulnerability or intimacy.

And yeah, that is a relationship where maybe you don't expect that you need to do all this deep emotional work. But we use the category friend to mean everything from activity partners, person from work you sometimes go to happy hour with, all the way up through deep intimate relationships. And I think there are people for whom they think that having a really deep emotionally intense friendship is weird or transgressive or is outside.

People will get married and then they're not supposed to have deep friendships with anyone else as if that's somehow impinging on the marriage relationship. So I feel maybe that's part of where some of our cultural confusion comes from is using the same word to mean basically every social relationship you have that is not with someone you're having sex with or someone you're actually related to. Those are kind of clear categories. And then friend is everything else.

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Marisa: Yeah. You're so right, Kara. We just don't have this clarity of terms. We don't have this clarity of love and it confuses us, and it depletes our connection. I wanted to speak to one point you made about the assumption that we get married and drop everyone else and shed them and then just focus on this one person. And how much the research shows that that's harmful for your romantic relationship.

One study found that when your partner makes a friend, they are not only less depressed, but you are less depressed too because there's higher rates of what's called concordance between you and your spouse. Meaning their mental health really affects yours. So things that benefit their mental health actually benefit your mental health. Other studies that find that when you get into conflict with your spouse, your stress hormone release pattern is whacky and it's harmful. But if you have quality support outside the marriage, that doesn't happen.

Other studies finding particularly for women in heterosexual marriages, if they have quality connection outside the marriage, they're more resilient to strife within the marriage. Whereas these people that just rely on their spouse what you see is that normal fluctuations in the relationship can be devastating. Because that's the only place they access support they're so impacted, they don't have resilience to it. And when you're so impacted by things going wrong in your romantic relationship, it's going to be harder for you to get back to normalcy.

Because how are you supposed to uplift this relationship when you're feeling so devastated? That friends give you the stabilizing force, this resource so you can come into your marriage in a stable place and a secure place. And so that it helps your marriage and your relationship with your spouse. It helps you thrive.

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Kara: That's like the whole stool versus three-legged chair. It's a lot easier to not go over when there's just one source of support. If that crumbles you're in trouble.

Marisa: I like that metaphor.

Kara: Yeah. Well, I think also especially for the way that straight men are socialized around friendship. It's so common that even if they have friends in the beginning, over time if they get into a long term romantic relationship their spouse becomes their only emotional outlet. And I do think this is maybe changing but at least even when I was growing up still. Straight men were mostly socialized to not talk about their feelings and not really have emotional intimacy outside of romantic relationships.

So it does not at all surprise me that having, for everybody, but especially I would imagine being somebody's only emotional support is obviously too much. And having that kind of, I think the irony is the more you encourage your partner to have friends, the better your relationship is going to be. And I think for some people we take that, I mean people who practice non-monogamy are taking that even farther into encouraging all kinds of romantic, and platonic, and in between, and sexual connections actually strengthens the relationship, doesn't detract from it.

Marisa: Exactly.

Kara: So let's talk a little bit about kind of concrete things people can start, and this is a sort of mindset, what you can work on podcast. And one of the things you talk about in your work, obviously we both talk about in our work is that women are conditioned to believe that they don't have worth without a romantic partner. I always say women are taught to believe their values, like the stock market, it's up or down depending on a survey of everybody's

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

opinions in the world, what the scale said, what your partner's doing, it's just up and down, up and down.

So I would just love to hear, my listeners have all heard all of my thoughts on what they can do. But from your kind of perspective, what do you think is a way that listeners can start to shift that belief and start to appreciate the love that is already kind of around them or appreciate their friendships in that way?

Marisa: Yeah. Rick Hanson, he's a psychologist. He has work on what's called Taking in the Good. So he sort of argues that our brains have this natural bias towards negativity. And if we're not intentional, that will continue to happen. So he has this practice, it's called Heal where you have a positive experience and you pause, and you savor it, and you let it stir something in you emotionally. And you picture it melting into your body. And he sort of says, what is state becomes trait, that the more you practice this, the more it becomes part of who you are.

So I think we can really do that and this is also one of my tips for becoming more securely attached, taking moments of social safety. Someone smiled at you, a friend texted you back, a friend congratulated you. A friend held the door for you. It doesn't have to be big at all. A friend posted a picture of you on social media. Actually receive those moments, be present for them, take them in.

I think our problem is when we have this mindset we don't actually register all the love from our friends and you have to be intentional in order to really register it and start feeling in an embodied way. In the way that your body responds to these different types of relationships that your body begins to value the love you get from friends just like the love you get from a romantic partner.

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Kara: Yeah, I love that, and/or vice versa, if you're somebody who finds friendship easy but struggles in this other way, that that's transferrable. Receiving is such a big, I think I love this with my current partner because in the mental space I was in before, I couldn't receive as a romantic love that was as accepting as my friendship love. And that's sort of like I think that I haven't really synthesized it into teaching about it yet. I love this tip of learning to receive in your physical body just in a moment of what that feels like.

Because if our mindset is, people don't like me, I get rejected, my friends don't like me as much as I like them, whatever your thought pattern is. Your brain will just skip over it because it's inconsonant with your self-image, it's cognitive dissonance and so your brain is like, well, I'm going to ignore the 10 texts they just did send me back and forth. And I'm going to fixate on the fact that that I sent the 11th and they didn't respond. So that 10 don't count, this 11th I didn't get, that is what I'm going to be on.

So that practice of pausing and receiving physically is a really great way to start rewiring your nervous system.

Marisa: Yeah, and Kara, you are exactly right about if you have low self-worth, it's very hard to receive others' positive intentions for you. It's called self-verification theory in the research that we look for people that verify our sense of self. So you see in the research that people with low self-esteem prefer to interact with someone who views them negatively rather than someone that views them positively, not because they don't want to be loved like the rest of us. But because when someone views them positively they don't believe it, they think they're being manipulated.

And when someone views them negatively, they're sort of like, "Okay, yeah, that's right." That's predictable to me, that's coherent with my sense of reality. You who value me, you're creating an identity crisis. This is

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

foreign to me, this doesn't match my sense of who we are. And there is this way that I think, there's such a reciprocity between the work we do in ourselves and how our relationships show up. And the more positive relationships are, the more positive our sense of self.

But sometimes if you have a poor sense of self it's just harder to even take in healthy relationships even when they're at your doorstep. So that's why I think it's really important to not question when other people express love for you unless you have a reason to. Assume that it's tender and real, and authentic, and [**crosstalk**].

Kara: It is so wild, I definitely thought my partner was love bombing, just because I was not, you know, this is an internet phenomenon. But I was so suspicious in the beginning because I just was not used to it. And then I was like, "There must be something wrong." I'd be like, "He's deranged or there's something weird happening." And now two years in or whatever I'm like, "I think he actually just liked me a lot." That's just a normal thing that can happen.

But I love that term. I imbued it into myself just like so I can type it, I didn't forget self-verification theory because it's just such a nice term for something that I talk and teach about a lot. But I think this is exactly what you're saying, is why I'm always telling all of you listening that it doesn't work, if you aren't changing your thought processes about yourself, you can work your ass off trying to get the validation from someone else. And the minute it comes in, your brain is like, does not compute, no, let me dismiss it. Let me find a reason it doesn't really count.

You'll try so hard to get someone to like you and then the minute they indicate they like you, you'll think they're just being polite. They didn't really like me. It will not land if you haven't basically done at least a little work to soften the landing space to be able to plant itself.

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Marisa: Absolutely, yes.

Kara: Is there anything that I didn't ask you that you think I should have or that you want to share from your work?

Marisa: Well, since we struggle with making predictions of our social world I wanted to share some research with your audience that shows that people like us more than we think they do and the world is actually safer than we think because of our negativity bias.

Kara: I love that.

Marisa: Yeah. So research on something called The Liking Gap, when strangers interact and predict how liked they are by the other person, they underestimate how liked they are. And the more critical they are of themselves, the more pronounced this underestimation is. So we think our mean thoughts are the truth when in fact they really distort the truth.

Kara: Pause on that. That's so important because I coach women all the time, where I'm not being self-critical, I just know that I'm lazy, and stupid, and bad at my job. **[Crosstalk]**. And I'm constantly being like, "That's not self-awareness." But I think this is so important, so many women who come through coaching with me, or come through The Clutch are like, "I had no idea that I was so negative towards myself. I just thought I was objectively discussing with myself, my self-awareness of my real terribleness."

This is so important, constantly your brain is underestimating how much other people like you and the more self-critical you are, the more that you are just looking for evidence of that.

Marisa: Exactly, yeah. And we find that this is true across the board, that when you predict how happy someone would be to receive a text from you,

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

to reconnect with them, you underestimate that. When you predict whether people will value the affection that you share, you predict that it comes off as more awkward than it does and underestimate just how much they'll enjoy it.

When you predict how your vulnerability will land with people, you view it as coming off more negatively than it actually will and underestimate how positively people perceive you as authentic and genuine. So in general people are loving you more than you think.

Kara: I love that. And if you can update your brain to match that, then you actually get to enjoy it.

Marisa: Exactly, it keeps happening.

Kara: [**Crosstalk**] better, and better, and better.

Marisa: Yeah, because you show up better.

Kara: Yeah. I've used this before and this is not even about liking, but it's just such a good example that I did a lot of body image work when I first started coaching. And so before I did body image work, any time anyone looked at me in public I assumed they were thinking that I was too fat, or I was gross, or I shouldn't be wearing that or whatever. I just assumed, it was all negative thoughts. And then having post done the work I now just assume it's always positive, not even on purpose.

I'm just like, "I look hot today." And probably in reality it was a mix both times, but it doesn't matter, my experience now is so much better. I was definitely underestimating it before. And I think it all ties back to that, one of the reasons that I talk so much about developing your relationship with yourself where you're not rejecting yourself is that. So much of this is just,

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

when you think about, what is the worst thing that's going to happen if I put myself out there and someone doesn't like me, or if I was right?

The worst thing that's going to happen is you will feel rejection. And so that is the thing that we are like, I am going to hunker down in a little ball and never speak to anyone again so that I don't have to have this feeling. But if you can get comfortable having that feeling because you are not going to then internalize it and make it mean something about you. You can go out there and get 20 amazing friends and also feel rejected twice. Or you can think, I feel rejected zero times but also have zero friends.

Marisa: Exactly. And I think we also need to reframe rejection, if you really want to curate the beautiful social community that you really want, rejection is part of that trajectory.

Kara: Totally. And you're going to reject people also, we never think about when we're rejecting. It happens in dating all the time, people come in and be like, "Well, I'm always getting rejected", when they make their dating history. And I'm like, "You broke up with 15 people." And it's like they don't count, all of those people who rejected me, count.

Marisa: So true, so true.

Kara: So good. Alright, everybody, go buy Platonic, it's already a bestseller, but make it a – well, is there a double, is there a platinum bestseller?

Marisa: The Washington, yes, [**crosstalk**], Wall Street Journal.

Kara: [**Crosstalk**] Washington Post Bestseller, everybody should buy the book. Where can people find you other than finding the book if they want to learn more?

UFYB 271: Attachment and Friendship in Adulthood: A Conversation with Dr. Marisa G. Franco

Marisa: Yeah. So I share research backed tips on friendship on my Instagram @drmarisagfranco, that's D-R-M-A-R-I-S-A-G-F-R-A-N-C-O. And on my website, drmarisagfranco.com. You can take a quiz that assesses your strengths and weaknesses as a friend or hire me to speak on connection and belonging.

Kara: Awesome. We will put all that in the show notes. Thank you so much for coming on.

Marisa: It was my pleasure, this was so fun.