

# UFYB 274: Three Myths About Love



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Kara Loewentheil**

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

## UFYB 274: Three Myths About Love

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. Before we get to the main episode for today, I need to remind you about the Love Hacks private podcast because we all could use a little more love in our lives even if it's just for ourselves. And I think this time of year can be a real drag if you don't know how to create and feel love when you want to.

So, don't forget to subscribe. This is a private podcast which means it's a special, limited series. It is brand new episodes from me but it is not showing up in this podcast feed. You have to subscribe to get it to show up, and we give you all the instructions when you subscribe. And it's time limited so if you're hearing this, get to it, all right? Episodes begin dropping on Saturday, February 4<sup>th</sup> and you're not going to want to miss that. But I already preloaded a little bonus trailer starter episode for you to teach you something now, give you something to be practicing until we get there.

So there's truly no reason to delay and in fact, it's high risk, low reward if you delay and you forget. So go to [unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks), all one word, or text your email address to +1 347 997 1784, and the codeword is love hacks, two words.

I'm going to be talking about self-love, family love, friend love, romantic love, misconceptions about love, and even throwing in a bonus episode about work love because I just got so fired up when I was creating these. They're so good, I don't want you to miss out. Like 3-7 minutes a day for a few days in a row can really change your mindset about your whole life. That's happened to me when I've learned something lifechanging. Practice makes perfect of course, but a real lightening bolt moment when you learn something that changes the way you think about relationships forever is

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possible for you. And I want that for you, so I want you to come listen to this podcast.

Alright, again that's [unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks), all one word, or text your email to +1 347 997 1784 and the codeword is love hacks, two words.

Hello, my chickens. How are you doing? How are we? I am tired but excited. I'm wrapping up the first draft of my book manuscript which has been a very big learning curve as you can imagine. And I don't know about the rest of you but I think kind of every big project I ever undertake I have the same phases which is in the beginning, I'm super excited and I think that it's going to be easy, it's no big deal. It's going to be fine. I totally got this.

And then there is a crater in the middle when I realize this is actually more complicated than I thought it was. This is actually hard and I have to learn these new things or whatever it is. And then I sort of start climbing up the other side of okay, I can do this, I'm practicing my thoughts. I'm going to figure this out. Okay, I see, we're going, we're getting there. So if that is how you experience things that is completely normal or at least it's normal as far as I'm concerned.

So that has been quite an experience and I've learned a lot. And I know I'm going to keep learning so much as we edit since this was just the first draft but it was a big endeavor. And so I'm getting ready to finally take some time off once the book is in. I didn't really take time off over the holidays because I was writing because my deadline was the end of January.

And so the gentleman consort and I are going to Morocco and Madrid in February which is exciting, which is very soon. And we're also going to be moving into a beautiful new apartment which I'm really excited about. It feels very kind of a great combination of big and grand, and beautiful. The top floor has all of this original crown molding from the turn of the century

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and huge high ceilings. So no old, old brownstone in New York. But then the second floor, the bedroom floor is actually the original sort of garden apartment floor.

And so it's sort of cozy and more modern and just very livable which I feel like we were talking about and it's kind of a good mix of us. We can clean up nice but fundamentally we're just not that fancy at the very bottom. But my word for 2023 was elevate and I feel like it's definitely an elevation. And I've never had sexual feelings about crown molding before but I think I might now. I always loved it but this was a whole new level.

So if you want to see behind the scenes of all of those adventures by the way, you're going to want to follow me on Instagram, it's @karaloewentheil, all one word. I share teaching and concepts obviously on my main feed. But in my stories, I share a lot of behind the scenes of my life. So yesterday we went over to the house with a designer and I took a bunch of pictures. I shared those on my stories. You see me, you see the gentleman consort. You see our adventures. You'll see pictures of Morocco and Madrid. So if you're into that sort of thing, and if you're not that's cool too.

There are some people that I listen to and learn from I do follow on social media and some I don't. So either way though I want everybody to have an amazing February. So I have put together something amazing for all of you as well because I feel like February can be a really hard month in a lot of ways. The high of the holidays is over and if you live somewhere with a cold dark winter, you're kind of in the thick of it and I think it can feel dreary.

And there's so much hoopla around Valentine's Day which I think ends up being a holiday that nobody actually likes, other than candy manufacturers and maybe kids in first grade who get Valentines with lots of candy in them. Although I remember Valentine's drama from elementary school too. But if you're single and unhappy about it then I think society is in your face for

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weeks and weeks glorifying relationships. And then if you're in a relationship, most people don't have Hallmark channel holidays.

So most of our partners are not secretly event planners on the side who are putting together Valentine's Day surprise adventures. And I don't do well with surprises anyway even if mine did. So I think it's actually just sort of Valentine's Day is a reflection of our thoughts about ourselves and our relationships. If you are happily single or you're happily partnered and don't care about sort of external artificial markers of validation then you're fine on Valentine's Day like on any day.

But if you're unhappy about being single or you're unhappy about your relationship you're in or you're not necessarily unhappy in your relationship but you have a lot of thoughts about what it should look like versus what it does look like or how your partner should be compared to the idea in your head. It just reflects all of that stuff back to us.

And I think it's kind of a perfect example of this thing so that's much of my teaching centers around which is when your initial socialization conflicts with your higher level thinking, especially around kind of gender and women's socialization. Because I think intellectually most of us realize that Valentine's Day is fucking made up. It's commercialized. It's ridiculous. It's just a day, it really has nothing to do with anything.

And so intellectually we get that but the socialization around women's worth being reflected in having a certain kind of relationship and society being built around the valorization of that heterosexual couple. And all of the kind of gender socialization, heteronormative socialization, all of that still impacts our brains. And so we still have this problem where we've been socialized to elevate traditional romantic norms and even though we intellectually understand that they are stupid, are non-existent, are actively harmful. We still feel upset or lonely or whatever else.

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So I think it just is such a perfect example of that disconnect. So much of my work is about bridging that disconnect. And if you're listening to this and you are single and happy about it or in a relationship and happy about it and you literally don't care one way or the other and have never had negative thoughts about Valentine's Day, that's fine and awesome. But even if that's true, you're a human and I'm going to bet that there are some relationships in your life that could use a little more love. And maybe that's just your relationship with yourself. So what I've created is for you too.

So here's what I have done. I have created from scratch, brand new, a special limited edition podcast. This is the first time I've ever done this. When I thought of the idea I just couldn't believe I hadn't thought of it before because it's honestly so perfect for you my podcast listeners who like listening to the podcast. So here's what it's going to be, we're doing this as a special limited edition podcast. It's going to be called The Love Hacks.

So I'm going to give you concrete actionable teachings and practices that you can use immediately to create more love in romantic relationships, family relationships, friendships or with yourself. All these relationships are reflections of your relationship with yourself. So it is totally free but here's how to get it, this is important. It's not being released on this podcast feed. It's not just going to show up in your normal podcast feed. It is a special limited series we're releasing separately. So the people who want it can get it and other people don't have to listen to it.

So you need to opt in to get it if you want it. So here's how you do that, you go to [unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks), all one word, [unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks), all one word. Or you can text your email to +1347 997 1784 and the codeword is love hacks, it's two words. So [unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks), one word because URLs are always one word, or text your email to +1347 997 1784 and then spell it like you normally would, love hacks, two words.

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So to kick it off, this episode and the next episode here on the main podcast feed are going to be myths about love. So everybody's getting a little podcast love about love. The first one today is going to be three myths about love. And then the second one next week will be three myths about self-love. And we're going to break down all of our misconceptions about love and self-love. And then in the private podcast series, I'm going to teach you how to think about love in a more helpful way and how to start creating more of it right away using your brain.

So the two episodes here on the main feed are going to be kind of myth busting and then if this is something you want to work on actively with yourself then you can opt-in to get the private podcast. And then I'm going to release several short episodes where I break down concrete tools you can use to change the way you're thinking to create more love for yourself, for someone else in any relationship. Because I love all of you and I want February to be an amazing month for you.

Okay, so let's get started on the three myths about love. I mean there's so many myths about love but we're just going to start with these three. So here's myth number one. The first myth about love is that love is just something that happens to you caused by the other person. And we've all these kinds of sayings in the English language and probably in others that kind of perpetuate that idea like we fell in love or we fell out of love like it's accidental. It's like you fall down.

Or we love at first sight as though you can develop an entire love feeling for somebody when you just see them and don't know them. Or the heart wants what the heart wants, or you can't help who you love. All of these ideas that love is this feeling that's beyond our control. And I think even sometimes once we start to learn, well, actually emotions don't come from nowhere, we're creating them. We sort of think maybe love is a little bit different, maybe it's an exception.

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It's like, yeah, I create anger with my thoughts, but love is created by the other person. And we talk about it and it's like love is like a weather system that moves in or moves out. Or we talk about how someone else makes us love them or makes it hard to love them. But other people don't create our feelings, even love. Our love for someone is caused by the thoughts that we think about them. That's why someone can be loved and hated by different people.

Your partner who you love so much, their ex may have hated them. And many of us have been in situations where we started out loving someone and then later we did not love them. Or we started out, not loving someone and then we came to love them. That person did not fundamentally change so drastically as to make them lovable or not lovable, your thoughts about them changed. Of course, sometimes people have taken actions that we have different thoughts about.

Sometimes people's actions change and we keep thinking positive thoughts about them and still love them, that happens. Think about couples where there's been an infidelity and they healed it and moved on or people who have forgiven someone who killed one of their loved ones. It isn't the actions that cause your reactions to them. It's your thoughts about it and we know that because people have such different reactions to similar or the same circumstances, people and actions that those people take.

Or think about we believe that love especially, maybe parental love happens because of the hormones that we have, especially if you are the person who just dates and births the baby. But we know that adopted parents love their children deeply and we know that people have felt love for children they thought were theirs who it turned out wasn't theirs because of their thoughts, especially before we had paternity tests.

So I'm not saying that sort of there's never any hormonal bonding involved especially among parents and children, and probably particularly



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gestational parents. But there are plenty of people in the world who don't really love their kids. And there may be moments that you don't feel a lot of love for your kid even if you generally do because for anybody love is not a state of being that you just arrive at and stay at. It's not like being in a certain time zone.

Love is just a feeling that is created by our thoughts. And I think some of the confusion comes from using the term love to describe a relationship with someone that consists of many different moments in which you have many different emotions. And we use love to basically describe all of that and to sort of mean something like I have some sort of emotional bond with this person.

Even though if I took a week or even just a day of interaction with this person who I say that I love, there are moments I feel deep love for them and there are moments I feel deep irritation for them. And there are moments that I am angry. And there are moments I am bored. And there are moments I feel blissful. I have a lot of different feelings throughout that course of the day. So we have to really think about what are we talking about when we say that we love someone.

And I really want to encourage you to think about love as just one of many emotions that you have for someone when you are thinking certain thoughts about them. And to not kind of think of it as this destination that you arrive at or this summation of your whole set of feelings about someone. Because when we make it this really big vague abstract thing that's when we feel like we don't have any control over it.

When we understand that love is an emotion that we can feel in our body when we think certain thoughts about the person if we want to, then we have a lot more control over what our day-to-day experience of the relationship is like. If we want to create love for someone we can do that

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with our thinking. And if we want to stop feeling love for someone we can also really slow it down or stop it with our thinking.

And that brings me to the second myth which is that loving someone else does something for them or that someone else can feel our love. So your love is an emotion in your body created by your thoughts. Someone else can't feel your love. That's why you can have a misunderstanding with someone where they're feeling great love for you, their subjective experience is that they love you so much.

And they may be even feeling the physical warm positive emotion of love at the moment that they say or do the thing that you have a thought about that makes you feel terrible. Because your thought is you would never do that if you truly loved me. And then you don't believe they love you. And then you feel sad and lonely and rejected and unloved. And the flip side is you can feel deeply loved when someone else is not thinking about you at all, unfortunately, or is phoning or feels some other emotion.

If your thought is when my partner takes out the trash that's their love language, it means they love me. You feel loved when you see your partner take out the trash even though your partner could at that moment literally be thinking about how much they hate you and you don't know. Plenty of romantic relationships break up because one partner feels like they're trying everything they can think of to show the other person that they love them. And the other person thinks you're not trying at all. I don't feel loved.

Other people don't cause us to feel loved. We can't feel their love and they can't feel our love. And I could spend an hour on the podcast giving examples and you can probably think of several in your own life. I think this comes up with parents and children all the time. It comes up in friendships etc. You can't feel someone's love. When you feel loved it's because you have a thought that someone loves you and that creates a feeling in your body. And no one else can feel your love.

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So this is important for a couple of reasons because one, it means you can stop trying to take responsibility for making someone else in your life feel loved or believe that you love them. You can't control that. You can create love for them if you want to and you'll show up a certain way based on who you are and how you act when you have that feeling. But you can't control how they're going to perceive that.

Two, you can actually decide if you want to feel love for someone outside of this matrix or thought pattern of whether they deserve it or have earned it. Because part of what happens is we actually maybe have thoughts that feel positive about someone or make us feel love for them. And then we want to withhold those thoughts because we don't want the other person to feel loved because we're mad at them. Or we think they don't deserve it or they haven't earned it, or they've done something where they should lose it. But your love is not a benefit to them, they don't feel it.

You might take actions because of your love that they benefit from or that they like. And we're going to talk about actions in a minute. But they don't actually feel just the feeling that you're having. So often we prevent ourselves from feeling a positive emotion of love because we think loving someone else is like a gift to them. And if they haven't earned it or deserved it we want to withhold it. Or we're feeling hurt and so we want to retreat and withhold our love. But loving someone is just an emotional experience that we get to have, they don't feel it.

So you can decide whether to love someone based on whether you want to feel love, not based on whether you want them to get to have positive emotion or feel loved. You are not the good-feeling fairy who's giving that to them. Now, I want to be really clear, you are not required to love anyone. You are not a better person or more moral or more virtuous if you decide to love someone. That's my belief. You may have your own belief about this.

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But society teaches us that love is always the more moral, the higher, more evolved way. But if you notice that's mostly aimed at women. Society benefits from women believing that we need to love and be nice to everyone. And this is a way that we police ourselves and guilt ourselves and shame ourselves and micromanage our own feelings and tell ourselves that we should love someone. And that's used to tell people that, especially women that you're not allowed to be angry if someone did something to you that crosses a boundary for you or that you don't want to be around or that you don't want be part of.

You're not allowed to be angry. You're not allowed to set boundaries because you're just supposed to love everybody and forgive them. And there is religious ideology behind that for certain religions but it's also I think gender-based socialization. I think that women are given that message way more than men. And I think that's partly because we are also taught myth number three which is that if we love someone then we have to do things for them.

And since society operates on women's kind of socialized and uncompensated emotional and physical labor, taking care of other people. I think this all ties together that we are taught that we should always love someone and that's the good and right thing to do. And we are a good person if we're selfless and love everyone and do a bunch of service for everyone. And obviously, if you do love someone and you like to take care of them that can be a beautiful human experience and people of every gender can do that.

That's very different from this socialization around the idea that women are the caretakers because women are naturally loving. And so loving everyone and forgiving everyone is always the most moral thing to do so you keep taking care of everyone around you. That's the socialization I think is a problem because the idea that you need to do certain things for someone if you love them is a myth.

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That's myth number three, that loving someone means that your actions have to be a certain way or that there are certain consequences in your actions like you have to let them be in your life. And you have to interact with them or you have to give them time or attention or money or effort, or support. Well, if I loved them then I would do this for them. If I loved them then I would have a relationship with them. If I love them then I have to be nice to them. I have to give them my time or my energy or my money, or my effort, or my support or my emotional space or my intellectual space or whatever else.

If I love them I have to interact with them in a certain way, I have to take their opinion into consideration. If I love them I have to care what they think about my decisions or what I should do, or I have to have the kind of relationship that they want with me if I love them. It's like if I love someone then I have to do what they would want me to do because then I have to try to make them happy. If I love them I have to care about their happiness and try to make them happy. And there's so many more versions of this but you get the idea.

The idea is if I have a feeling of love in my body for someone then I have to do all these things. And this is another good example of why using love as a term for a sort of big complex effective emotional relational bond is not helpful. So I think one of the reasons that we're so reticent to create more love in our lives or to love people who we maybe don't want to be around all the time, is that we think it means all these things. We think that love is obligation.

If you love someone then you are obligated to do x, y, z and behave in this way and talk to them in this way and have this kind of relationship with them and care about what they think, and change your actions based on their opinions. We basically think it means that the person then gets to control our happiness or control the relationship. If we love them then they get to be in charge of how the relationship is.

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So we think that if we have a feeling about someone if we just think a thought that creates love in our body for someone that then we basically become disempowered because that's how women are socialized. Women are socialized that love is disempowering. When you love someone you have to take care of them. Put their needs above your own. Care more about them than about yourself. That is this gender-based socialization that women get about love. And I think men get some of this but not as much.

Women are the ones who are really taught that their love is sort of, you know, I think men are more taught that to love somebody means you take care of them and you protect them. And it has its own issues but that's not what we're talking about in this podcast. Women are taught that to love someone means to put them above yourself and take care of yourself last and do what they want, and take care of them and try to make them happy. And so of course we don't want to feel love for a lot of people because that's fucking exhausting.

And so if somebody isn't someone that we want to spend a lot of time with, talk to a lot, have a relationship on their terms, whatever it is. Then we think, okay if I don't want to do that shit then I need to make sure I don't love them and I need to be angry at them or sad about them, or disappointed by them, whatever. We need to create some negative emotion to give us a justification or an excuse for not doing shit for them. So that's really what I want you to understand. You don't have to do that.

Now, you don't have to love them either. Again, I don't think it's any better. I don't think you're a better person if you love someone rather than hate them, you're totally allowed to hate people, be angry at people, think negative thoughts about people, 100% allowed. I mean you don't need my permission. But I don't think, it's not any better to love someone else.

But some of us find that when we are creating a lot of anger, a lot of resentment, a lot of rumination about how someone's done us wrong that it

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becomes this real, time and energy suck on us that we wish we could get out of. But we sort of don't know how to and I think subconsciously it's like if somebody does something in a relationship that is boundary violation for you. And then you end the relationship.

It's like we don't know how to, for instance, if we want to forgive the person and feel love about them by changing our thoughts without then regretting the decision, or thinking we did something wrong, or thinking we shouldn't have ended it, or thinking that now we have to restart it. We don't know how to separate those things. That's the main thing I want you to take away from this podcast. Love is a feeling created by your thoughts and you're the one who gets to feel the benefit of it.

It just literally feels good in your body and no one else gets to feel that, it's just you. And there's no necessary set of actions that it entails. You can love someone and never speak to them again. You can love someone and only spend time with them under the very specific circumstances that you enjoy doing that. You can love someone and still be happy even if they don't want a relationship with you. This one's really hard for people.

We think that if we love someone, whether it's a child or a family member or a friend or a romantic partner, that that person doesn't want to have the same kind of relationship with us that we want to have with them, then we can't be happy and we can't love them and be happy but we can. You can love someone and be happy even if they don't want to have a relationship with you because they're not in charge of your feelings.

When you take responsibility for your own emotions and you stop trying to create other people's emotions or believe that they create yours, then your feelings don't have any necessary specific action or outcome that has to follow. You get to choose to feel love if and when you want to just because of how it makes you feel.

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I had a coaching colleague who always would say, “I love you but no”, or, “I love you and no. I love you and I don’t want to have an active relationship with you right now.” Or, “I love you and these are the only circumstances under which I want to interact.” Or, “I love you and I’m not coming home for thanksgiving.” Or, “I love you and I don’t want to be in a relationship with you anymore”, or whatever else it is. But women are so socialized to think that love means putting yourself last, that we don’t know that we can love someone and still put ourselves first, or at least equal to their desires.

What results is your own feeling, again, you don’t have to love anybody. I’m not abdicating for that. I’m not saying you should. Any time I teach this I get a lot of, “Are you saying that if somebody does this terrible, abusive thing to me I have to love them?” No, you don’t have to love anybody. You totally get to decide whether or not you want to love somebody and it’s not better to love someone than to hate them in terms of any moral anything. And anger and negative emotions are a normal necessary part of life and sometimes very appropriate reactions.

But it’s also not true that you have to be angry at and hate someone. You get to decide how you want to feel. And it’s just so important to understand that nobody else feels your love and it’s not a reward for them. It’s just a feeling you get to have. So you get to decide how you want to feel for you. And when you separate that from believing that other people cause your love or don’t. So when you know that you cause it, when you separate it from believing that it impacts them in some way. And you know this, just what feeling do I want to have?

And three, you know that you can if you want, feel love for someone and still decide exactly how you want to interact with them if at all. Then you’re really able to make the choice from a free place. That’s what it’s really about. If you understand these three principles then you can make a clear choice about what emotion you want to have about somebody where it’s really just based on the emotion and how it feels for you and whether it feels necessary or true or useful or whatever to you.



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Versus basing the decision on all the consequences you think have to follow from it. So this work and these three principles, these myths, they're not about telling you that you should love everybody. They're about taking away the myths about it so that you can make a really clear decision for yourself that's not based on these myths but is based on you empowering yourself to decide how you want to feel about someone. And that is when you can decide whether you want to love someone else or not from a really clear clean place.

Alright my chickens, that is it for today, but don't forget. If you were listening at the beginning of the episode, and you were like "I'll do that after the episode. I'll sign up for the Love Hacks private podcast at the end" that's now. Do that now. Remember that is a private podcast that you have to opt in to. It's totally free but the episodes aren't going to show up on this feed. You've got to opt in and then it will show up for you. You'll get all the instructions on where to find it. It's very easy. You're going to be able to listen to it just like you listen to any other podcast.

It is bonus episodes on self-love, family love, friend love, romantic love, loving your job or your business, whatever kind of work you do. It is just really the best way you can a few minutes of your day every day for a few days.

So episodes begin dropping on February 4<sup>th</sup>, Saturday. I'm going to be releasing just a few episodes on this podcast and they won't be around forever so you want to opt in now. Go to [unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks](http://unfuckyourbrain.com/lovehacks), all one word. Or text your email address to +1 347 997 1784 and the codeword is love hacks, two words. All right, go. Go sign up. I want to see you there. Bye now.