

# Ep #251: Thought Work & Somatics: Taking Back Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Victoria Albina, NP, MPH**

## Ep #251: Thought Work & Somatics: Taking Back Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil

This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine expert, and life coach, Victoria Albina. I'll show you how to get unstuck, drop the anxiety, perfectionism, and codependency so you can live from your beautiful heart. Welcome, my love, let's get started.

Hello, my darlings. We're about to dive in with a proper intro. We're going to get to it in just a second. I just want to tell you that my beloved friend Kara is on the show this week. I'm not going to call her a cuss-bucket, though I'm often a cuss-bucket, and we don't swear massively, but we do. So, if you are in a car with people you don't want to hear swearing, or you just don't like hearing it yourself, there's probably a solid four or five expletives used in this episode. So, choose your own adventure.

Victoria Albina: Hello, hello, my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. I am joined today by one of my most beloveds, amazing... Oh, look at her blushing... the incredible life coach, Kara Loewentheil. She's so much more than a life coach. Kara, would you just introduce yourself? Because you are so many magical words.

Kara Loewentheil: I'm so many un-magical words, because I have a human brain.

Victoria: Well, there's that, but...

Kara: I'm very happy to be here. I'm Kara Loewentheil. I am the host of the *Unf\*ck Your Brain* podcast, and I am the author of *Take Back Your Brain*, which is coming out in May 2024. But it's available right now for pre-order, with amazing bonuses, which we'll get to later. So, I'm a podcaster. I'm an author. I am a life coach, a former reproductive rights litigator and academic, turned life coach; called the Ivy League to life coach pipeline.

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Victoria: You and I both love to talk about, in my case, my immigrant parents, and your Jewish parents, were both like, “¿Que?” “What?” “Wait, what? Law and medicine, and now...”

Kara: We knew each other before we made these transitions, too.

Victoria: Yeah, yeah.

Kara: So, I'm a bad influence.

Victoria: You're a horrifyingly bad influence, and I am so grateful each and every day. Because Lord knows what would have become of me if I hadn't had you yelling at me for years.

Kara: Just trading services for Snickers. That was just an inside joke for us. Anyway, to the rest of you...

Victoria: Every time we hang out, I think about 97.64-65% of the time is spent just chortling.

Kara: Yeah. The gentleman consort is like, “You vigorously wind each other up. You're not usually that wind-up-able. But once Vic gets going...”

Victoria: We're off to the races off. They're really good races, so off we go. I'm so excited about your book. Wait, first, what does it mean to unfuck your brain?

Kara: To take back your brain. Yes, the podcast is called *Unf\*ck Your Brain*, the book is called *Take Back Your Brain*, but the concept is similar. So, what I do is I teach women how to identify the ways that society has taught them to think about themselves, and how to change this thought pattern.

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When I became a coach, what I really saw was that coaching was really focused on evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology, and talk therapy was very focused on your family of origin, your childhood, all that. Both of those kinds of camps are big influences on how we think. But a huge element was missing.

Which is the impact of the social messaging we get, that kind of teaches us what matters about us, what we're good at, how to think about ourselves and our purpose and our role and our value. I don't think it's a coincidence. Because most of coaching and therapy, like a lot of service helping fields are predominantly women in execution.

But the theory is predominantly from white men from 100 years ago, or 50 years ago. And so, those people didn't spend a lot of time thinking about, "What did society teach me to think about myself, as a white, male, master of the universe?" Because they just thought they were the default.

So, this whole piece was missing from coaching, and when I started doing this work nobody in the coaching world was talking about it. That's really been my expertise and specialty ever since.

Victoria: For the past couple of years, here on *Feminist Wellness*, we've really been focused on somatics, on body-based practices, on Polyvagal Theory with thought work sort of looped in but not made explicit. So, oh goddess of thought work that thou art... and that is not Ted from Cincinnati, that's someone else entirely. Kara, please, would you teach the good people what the thought work is and why it matters? Well, we've said why it matters. That's clear.

Kara: When I use the phrase 'thought work,' what I really mean is the practice of working with your thoughts. Meaning, essentially, become aware of what you're thinking. And changing what you're thinking, if you want to, on purpose to think something different.

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It is a cognitive based modality, although your emotions are always part of that. So, there's no way, in my mind, to teach people how to become aware of and change their thinking, without also teaching them about how to become more aware of and change their relationship to their emotions.

Because your emotions are the barometer for like, what's your thinking and how to come up with a new thought. If your nervous system is very activated, it decreases your ability to access your prefrontal cortex, which impacts whether you can change your thinking. So, you can't separate these things really, they all go together.

But essentially, I went through life, like most people, just assuming that if I'm having a thought, who knows where it came from? Probably true. That's what I'm thinking. And nothing to do about that, that's just in my brain now. So, unless I want a pickaxe lobotomy, that's kind of it.

So, when I learned that most of the things you think aren't true, they are just thoughts that someone taught you to think along the way. And number two, your thoughts create your feelings. The reason I felt shitty about myself all the time was not actually because I was a helpless, pathetic loser. But in fact, because of how I was thinking about myself.

And then three, that you could change that shit on purpose. I was like, "Hold the fucking phone! Did everybody know this? I didn't know. Why am I 31 years old, or 32 years old, learning this from a podcast on the internet? What?!" I went to so much school.

Victoria: So much school.

Kara: I went through from preschool through law school. I went to two Ivy League schools. Nobody ever mentioned any of this.

Victoria: No one mentioned it.

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Kara: When I learned that it was like a bomb went off my brain. I mean, that was just so unbelievable to me. I've now elaborated on that in many ways. And I've created an intersectional feminist version of it, all of that. But fundamentally, it's the mind blowing this up. "When I think like this, I feel like this. And then, I act in a whole bunch of ways that aren't doing me any good. I can actually change that on purpose."

So, the process of becoming aware and changing how your thinking is what I mean by thought work.

Victoria: It's a beautiful process. Yeah, that whole moment of realizing that my thoughts weren't facts. "What? But I thought it!"

Kara: The way I describe it is, I used to wake up and it was just sort of like, "God knows what today will bring." Sort of fatalistic, but more in the sense of like... I don't know how you felt, but before I knew how to change how I felt on purpose, I just was like, "I hope today doesn't feel terrible." It was like you sort of had no way of knowing.

It was like, you're going to go through your day and just hope that you don't feel like shit all day. It was like, I don't know where this bus is going to drop me off today. Am I going to look in the mirror and feel good about how I look? Am I going to feel smart at work? Or am I going to have one of those days where I hate how everything fits and I don't like my body, and I feel dumb at work and I feel like everybody hates me.

It was like playing Russian roulette every morning. I just had no idea which of those days I was going to get. In the beginning, you can't redirect the whole bus. You're like, "I can just turn the bus one degree. I can put the temperature up or down a little bit, on the bus"

But that goes back to what you were saying about that's how you create the big change. The way you get the bus to go to Miami instead of

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Montreal, or something, is with these tiny changes. First, I had to learn how to change the oil, then I had to learn how to set the GPS; bit by bit.

Victoria: Yeah, we call that “kitten steps” around here. Because a baby step is way too big.

Kara: Oh, interesting. I see.

Victoria: Kitten steps, teeny, teeny, teeny, tiny steps.

Kara: I have very small feet. So, I feel like I’m just a little baby [inaudible].

Victoria: So, now we're actually going to call it “Kara-sized steps” instead of kitten.

Kara: Yeah, that’s right. One of the things I teach is what I call the “infinite 1%.” As in the idea of everybody thinks the big difference is between doing a little and doing a lot. But in fact, the biggest difference is between doing nothing and doing something very small. That 1% is the infinite difference. And so, that’s absolutely true for your thought work, as well.

Victoria: Yeah, and my nerds... Because I get a lot of emails about the science I talk about, so... I do want to make note that your thoughts do directly influence your feelings. And yes, story follows state. So, the narrative that you have access to, that thought, original thought, is influenced by your nervous system. But that was also influenced by the thought before it, and the feeling that was created before it, that led you into that nervous system state.

So, before you come at me about where does this start, it starts at the Big Bang and it ends at never. And, just intersect where you want to for your own growth.

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Kara: Also, I mean, this is maybe not going to be a popular statement on this podcast. But well, I'm just like, you know what? Humans have been having a lot of different ways to describe and understand scientifically, philosophically, religiously, what it's like to be a human since the beginning of time. And despite the fact that my whole family are doctors, I'm just kind of like, "Which one's working for you? Let's go with that one." One hundred percent.

And I think it's another example of where people want it to be all one or all the other. It's like, "No, the thought comes first. No, the emotion comes first." Right? And it's like, "Well, you were born and then a bunch of shit happened. And since then, you've been having cognitive activity and somatic activity and nervous system activity, and they all influence each other."

Of course, sometimes I obviously experience being cranky when I'm hungry. But there's also still usually some thought in there, and that is something that maybe normally I'm not as reactive to, and now I am. It's all combination.

And you said, most of us have a lot of thoughts about how we're feeling. So, then we have a sensation in our body, then we have a thought about it, then we have another sensation in our body that comes from that thought. So, it's just all of it is trying to undo all the socialization. All of this, to me, is just, what's useful?

Victoria: Exactly my point. Yeah, yeah. Hop in where it's cozy.

Kara: Wherever you can intervene, is a useful place to intervene. And some people maybe feel they can intervene somatically more effectively than they can intervene cognitively. To them, it is going to really feel that physical state or sensation is the origin. Some people are going to feel like they can intervene cognitively better. And that's good for, the thought is the origin.



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Really, it's just it's not about the origin. Really, it's about where are you able to intervene to change your experience? That's what matters.

Victoria: Part and parcel of that, is recognizing that thought work as a tool is a tool. And, it's really beautiful work. And, it needs to happen. Because the reason I bring in both the societal aspect, that my team calls the Oberlin of It All. Which is the most amazing shorthand. You know what I mean? They're like, "Oh, the Oberlin." I'm like, yes, the influence of the patriarchy, white settler colonialism, and late-stage capitalism on everything we do.

For me, that plus somatics, bringing in the nervous system aspect, has been the thing that's led to the most change. Because it's helped me to release blame and shame.

Because one of the things that was problematic for me in just trying to apply the thought work model in its original form, was that it could very easily go to, "I am the one having a shitty thought. So, I'm the problem," and not, "This negative thought about me, this challenging thought about me, it was put into my brain by the patriarchy." It was written into my nervous system as part of developmental survival.

And both of the lenses we bring are just so pivotal in releasing all of that shame, right? It's not you, it's the machine. So, then you can take personal responsibility.

Kara: Yeah. The way that I think about it, it's less a flaw in kind of the model thought work, or the original model, it's more that if the way you've been socialized is to always blame yourself for things, then you'll blame yourself for whatever. It's like, the model is a tool. A hammer is a tool; you can build a house or you can kill for somebody.

So, I think it's very, very common that when people start learning how to coach themselves, how to change their thinking, they start to blame

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themselves if they're not doing that perfectly, or if they're having trouble, or whatever else. And that is, of course, because women are socialized to blame themselves for absolutely everything.

Like you threw a party and one person had a bad time, that's your fault, right? Your child left the house 30 years ago and they had a bad day today, and that's your fault. So, I think all of that socialization leads to it.

And I think, the somatic piece... You and I may talk about it in slightly different ways. I talk about it as the nervous system could also be about sort of processing your emotions. But either way, I mean, that's always been, I think, the importance of feeling your feelings and being in your emotions.

Although that's not always been articulated as clearly as it could have been for people. It has always been part of this work, but of course, the people who are attracted to cognitive work don't want to have their feelings. Those of us who are attracted or like, "Oh, I could just do this with my brain? Awesome. I could just be a brain in a jar and just ignore this whole body situation."

So, I think in so many different ways, the project is how do we integrate a fuller container that takes more elements into account, while also still being operational for people. That was one thing that was really important to me in writing this book.

Because there's a lot of self-help books out there. It sort of feels like there's two things out there. There's either books that are so stupid, they're concrete but they're just dumb. They're like, "Oh, you want to lose weight? Make a meal plan. Okay, here's 40 recipes with tuna," whatever. You can Google that.

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Or there's books that are really smart and have no application. So, people read them and they're like, "Okay, that was an interesting New Yorker article. But I don't know what to do with my brain."

So, my goal in this book... I mean, this is the goal of all my work, but really, in this book... is to say to be smart, and simple and effective, but executable. It's to not dumb it down, but to actually give you specific concrete things you can do.

This is why every chapter has multiple exercises to go through about that topic, to actually help you change your thinking. I mean, we can read about CBT all day long, or we can read about nervous system regulation all day long, and be like, "Yes, that does sound good. I think my nervous system's..."

Victoria: "I'd like some, thank you."

Kara: Especially for those of us up in our heads. Now, I can do a diagram of the polyvagal nerves, but if I don't know how to operationalize that in my own life... I don't like that word, it makes me feel like I'm a tech startup... but if I don't know how to implement it in my own life, not much is changing.

Victoria: That's the movement from practice to praxis.

Kara: That a great accessible word that many people use.

Victoria: "Oh, yes, yes. Yes, it is. Thanks for coming to my TED talk. I really appreciate having you here. Thank you and good night."

Kara: Wait, what is that? Does that voice have a name?

Victoria: Theodore?

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Kara: Is that from Ted from Cleveland?

Victoria: It's interesting. I went Theodore, you went Ted. You're more intimate with Ted. Y'all hang out, maybe you get Espresso martinis at the airport bar.

Kara: You're describing my vision of hell, right now; an Espresso martini and an airport bar. Wow. Wow.

Victoria: That's what that voice is into. It's not me.

Kara: I see. I understand. You're just channeling. This is like Abraham Hicks; that woman who channels Abraham. You're channeling Ted from the Cincinnati airport.

Victoria: Listen, yes, I think I am.

Kara: What were we talking about?

Victoria: Lordess only knows. Praxis. I was going to break it down.

Kara: Okay, break it down. Tell us about praxis.

Victoria: God, stop yelling at me. But that's the whole goal of my work, right? Because people ask me all the time, "What do I do when I'm freaking out and screaming at my kids? What do I do when I'm in this really challenging conversation and I go into freeze? What do I do in that my entire butt is on fire moment stuff?"

But the work is six months in advance. Right? The work is a year ago. It's really doing the day to day, minute to minute, work to, yes, manage your mind. And also, the praxis of somatics, living it. Being in touch with your physical body, and recognizing what's going on, honoring the sensation,

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being present so that you can have the choicefulness that is the goal of somatic practice and thought work.

Kara: Choicefulness; we got a lot of words today.

Victoria: Choicefulness is my legit favorite word. Is that a word? Listen.

Kara: Listen, Brooke, you started using convicted in a way that wasn't right, and everybody started doing it. So, choicefulness... Yes. I mean, I think that both are so important. Because if you go too far in either direction, I think you are not getting that holistic solution.

If you go too far in the cognitive, sure, definitely people are out there just trying to thought swap all the time and never have a feeling. You can also go too far, I think, in the somatic direction. Where people are, in two different ways, one being... Which we've talked about. You're releasing the tension over and over, but you're not addressing the thought patterns that are craving attention.

So, if you're practicing it that way, if you're not figuring out what's underneath, then I don't think it's any different than people who exercise to manage their emotions. Which is fine, as long as it works. But then, what happens when you sprain your ankle and you can't run? Then you have a nervous breakdown because you're so dependent on that, right?

There are definitely people in my life who manage their mental health with no thought work.

Victoria: Not enough nervous system regulation, hows that working out?

Kara: With just a lot of very rigid self-care practices, that they have to be able to do all of, and then their whole life has to revolve around that. And if something unexpected happens, now, they're doubly fucked. There's a

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bigger challenge in their life. And if they can't access their normal three-hour meditation and exercise process, they can't cope.

And so, if you are ignoring the thought change part, then I think what you're doing really, is you're sort of venting the pressure lid. You're dealing with it when it comes up. For me, a lot of the power of cognitive work is not even thought change, it's thought awareness.

We're talking about the good balance being somewhere like 60/40, one way or the other. If you're 90/10 either way, it's when you have a problem. And it's kind of obvious that the problem, 90/10 in the cognitive world, is you're just maybe not having any of your feelings and trying to avoid them.

But I think the problem, 90/10 in the somatic world, is A, your brain will keep creating the stress again, because you haven't changed it. But also, you're not necessarily getting the depth of self-awareness that I think you can when you start to pay attention to the way that you're thinking.

Everybody comes to thought work because they want to change their thinking. But I'm actually like, "I don't care if you ever change this thought. I actually just want you to be aware of it and change how you respond to it."

Victoria: Right. I think there's something really important to say in there, for my nerds, that when you are doing that sort of emotional and spiritual bypassing, of being hyper aware of your body, that's creating a whole other issue on it.

But where I intended to go; is we create this drive for continued peak experience. You need to have the biggest 'shroom trip. You need to do the 12-hour yoga. You need to take a baseball bat and beat a thousand mattresses or you're not getting your anger out. It has to get bigger and bigger and bigger.

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It's the slow, small experience of our emotions, with presence and awareness and intentionality, that actually allows the medial frontal cortex to create change in the subcortical space. Meaning, that the video cassette of you having that emotion, and what that creates in your life, can only change when you truly hold space for it. Which is a really friggin boring process.

There are no fireworks, there's no explosion, there's no 'oh, wow.' It's just you with yourself and your feels, and hopefully a loving guide like us. And probably some crying and some shaking coming from the body. Not you creating it, but your nervous system shaking you. Your nervous system crying you. And when you hold that experience in true love, that's what creates change.

Kara: I think people can get into, whether it's somatic or cognitive, this perfectionistic "If I'm doing this right, then... Okay, I'm going to feel my feelings or regulate my nervous system, whatever, instrumentally. Okay, I'll allow it all so then I feel better afterwards." Or getting sort of hung up on... You're always going to get dysregulated and reregulate. This is normal. But if you're reading Instagram captions... The goal is not to be perfectly regulated; you would be a robot. That is not what we're doing here.

Victoria: Or catatonic.

Kara: Yeah. I think that's sort of when you haven't done that work of, what is the goal here? What are we trying to do? But I think you can get that sort of perfectionism of, "I'm trying to never feel bad again. I'm trying to always have perfect thoughts. I'm trying to always have a regulated nervous system."

I think the other thing I see, is when people don't know that some amount of dysregulation is normal, or negative emotions. It's not useful to create hyper vigilance around your somatic experience. We know that that is an

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element of chronic pain. It's the kind of brain being hyper vigilant, and very nervous and upset about any kind of sensation that comes up.

So, I think with all of these things, it's like... I did a podcast once called "No Gods, No Gurus," that was basically just...

Victoria: I love that saying.

Kara: Yeah, but I'm not your guru, Vic. There is no orthodoxy to this, no one perfect system. When life coaching gets described as like a cult or whatever else, I'm like, it's not the industry or the concepts, it's that people are looking for that. People want there to be one answer. Like, it's all going to be thought change, all going to be nervous system regulation, it's all going to be plant medicine or whatever, right? It's never going to be just one of those things.

Victoria: It's that veil of false safety, right? We just want to feel safe. And so, if we think that there's one magic silver bullet, perfect thing, that will do it, we'll do it. Then, what's interesting, is we'll ignore all the parts that aren't working, when our conviction is 'this is the thing.'

Kara: I write about this in the book, and I teach this thing I call "survival self-talk." Because I'm somebody who a lot of people have tried to teach somatic practices to, and some of them are helpful, but I am extremely verbal. And there are other people like me, for whom, some of the nervous system regulation stuff, if I'm really activated, actually works less well than certain verbal self-talk practices.

So, I also just feel one of the reasons there's no right answer, is that different people respond to different things, right? Some people respond really well to somatic nervous system regulation in a very body-based way.



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And then for me, if I'm really activated, I can do all of the bilateral touches and deep breathing, and everything that I want, but my brain is like, "Override, override, override." I have to really practice... I have, through trial and error, created the ones who work for me. In the book, I walk people through creating their own.

But I literally call it "survival self-talk," because it's not the time to be 'here's a bold new thought I'll try to think.' But it's like, 'here's the time when I'm really activated...' I tell a story in the book about getting stuck in my bathing suit at a bathhouse. Like, total freak out, my nervous system had. That was the genesis of this kind of thing I teach in the book, survival self-talk.

That's how to, for those of us who are very verbal and very cognitive oriented, how to get ourselves to the place where some breathing might help, or some somatic practice might help, or some other thought work might help, or whatever it is.

But just one of the things I want people to take away from this book and this work is, you can consult experts but you have to be the authority on your own experience. You and I, of course we've done a lot of work on this, but women are socialized to not see themselves as an authority. If you're a member of another marginalized group, even more so. So, we always want someone else to tell us what to do.

We just redid our business values, and we did so many formulations of why we do the work, what the goal is. "We teach women to change their thinking so they can... what?" And we did 10 versions of it and then finally I was like, "I think it's just so they can do whatever the fuck they want." We were all like, "Oh, yeah, that's it."

Honestly, you want to become a bank robber? Not the path I would choose for myself, but yeah. You want to be the president or you want to be a stay-

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at-home mom? You want to be a goat farmer or you want to be a fashion designer? You want to get divorced or you want to get married? You want to rob a bank, or you want to become a shaman? Like, whatever it is you're going to do.

Victoria: I love these dichotomies you're creating, by the way.

Kara: Yeah, they're just coming out of my brain. Those are not in the book.

Victoria: I want a t-shirt with each of those dichotomies. Robber, shaman...

Kara: Mondays and Tuesdays I'm a bank robber. Wednesdays and Thursdays I'm a plant medicine ceremony facilitator. Fridays and Saturdays, I'm off.

Victoria: I'm off. Don't come for me. I'm off duty. I'm off on the astral plane with my goats. Do not come for me. I am unavailable. Unavailable. Out of planet. Out of orbit.

Kara: Out of orbit, that's what OOO is. I'm just responding, "I'm out of orbit, today." Can you imagine?

Victoria: I would pay to get email.

Kara: My agent would be like, "This does not bode well."

Victoria: "This is also not on brand." It's on my brand. I'm into it. I mean, it brings us back to choicefulness, right? That, for me, is the most centralist tenant of feminism. It's not for any kind of anybody to tell anybody what to do with their own life. Right?

Kara: Unless you have consent.

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Victoria. Yeah. Which is the second most important, of the aforementioned intersectional feminism, is the consent. Which goes hand in hand with choicefulness.

Kara: Totally. One of the things I talk about in the book is the way that women are socialized to second guess and doubt themselves, right? So, we have so much anxiety around decision making, partly because we've been socialized to believe that we don't know how to make decisions.

That our decisions are irrational. Our decision is only right if everything goes perfectly and no one's ever upset about it; the criteria that we use for our correct decision. Whereas men are like, "Oh, well, I accidentally bottomed out the stock market. But I had a good sandwich today. So, on the whole, I'm doing well."

Victoria: "It was a Reuben; those are great. It was really toasty. It was really good. Lots of sauerkraut."

Kara: I actually had a Reuben for lunch.

Victoria: Did you? I'm jealous.

Kara: [inaudible]

Victoria: It's our psychic connection.

Kara: This is a really important element. I mean, that's really what all of this work is about. For me, the reason that we change our thinking is not so that we can have better thoughts and get to heaven first faster, or pass the test. It's so that we at least know that we are living our lives for ourselves, right? We're not living the life that society told us to live.

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One of the things I feel like is the biggest difference between I how I feel about my life, and how I think most people in general, but especially women feel... Maybe the men too, but I'm just I'm not as worried about them right now... The women, and people socialized as women feel like, "If I got hit by a truck tomorrow, I'd be bummed. There's stuff I want to do. I'm planning a honeymoon..."

But I would feel like I really lived my life. I was the person I wanted to be. I was myself. I went after what I wanted. I had the career I wanted. I helped people all over the world. I let myself be truly known by others, and truly knew others.

Ultimately this work is... I call it "life coaching" because that's what people are familiar with, but really, it's practical philosophy. The questions that women answer with self-help work, are questions that when men ask them are deep philosophical inquiry. What is the good life? What am I doing here? What kind of life am I supposed to have? Who am I supposed to be? How do I evolve and grow?

It's practical philosophy. It's feminist philosophy in praxis, as you would say. All of that requires deprogramming to bring it back. It's not that we're going to get to some perfect pre-socialized state, because that doesn't exist.

Socialization is also how we know which food makes you barf or not, and what berries are safe, what's safe to eat, do we pee in the middle of the living room or not. A lot of stuff comes from socialization, so you can't get to a pre-socialization state.

But you can learn how to get closer to whatever idiosyncrasies of personality and being are truly yours. And that, I think, is the goal. Men are socialized to be a person, and women are socialized to do things for other people. That's what we're trying to un-do.

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Victoria: I talk in a similar vein about a return to dignity. I think that's what systems of oppression, plus a family blueprint based on emotional outsourcing; codependency, perfectionism, and people pleasing; takes away our connection with our inherent dignity.

That's that somatic disconnection that lives in functional freeze. In the state where we are detached from our own emotions, where it's like they're in a block of ice, and we're really anxious about it, right? We're in sympathetic and dorsal at the same time. That's exactly the state you're talking about.

Where we don't have choicefulness, intentionality, reciprocity, mutuality. Because we don't have vulnerability and we're not present. Because we can't be, because that is tantamount to death to our nervous system, and we're no fool. So, we're not going to actually do what's in our truest best interest, but rather in the best interest that was prescribed to us.

Kara: I mean, vulnerability is such an interesting phrase because it's something that I hear women often talk a lot about, how other people in their lives can't be vulnerable. And I'm like, "Oh, honey, you're not being vulnerable."

But that's also socialization. What women associate vulnerability with, is the ability to be hurt and feel bad. Which, yes, we do have that in spades. Yes, but that's not the same thing as real vulnerability. We're not vulnerable with ourselves. We don't tell ourselves the truth. We don't tell ourselves what we really think and feel.

Again, no wonder, because society has taught us to punch ourselves in the face the minute that we do, so we're never going to. And so, I think that one of the things that you and I both work on a lot, in two different ways, is creating the fundamental safety in the relationship with yourself, right?

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How do you feel safe with yourself? How do you not punch yourself in the face? How do you not throw yourself under the bus? Whatever metaphor is going to resonate for people. But how do you develop that kind of compassionate awareness and presence with yourself?

That is really, I think, the key to all of it. That is what society really socializes out of everybody. I don't think most men are walking around with this either. But I think that's the piece that is missing.

Women are just socialized to constantly be policing themselves and each other, and everybody else. Sure. I mean, listen, I got a lot of opinions about my partner's haircuts. Like, "Well, what are you going to do?" It's like, "I have opinions too about these haircuts." What's happening?

Victoria: I'm a Leo and I have a lot of hair-based opinions. Also, Argentines are friggin' terrible. I mean, you think you've met judgey people? Let's take a trip to Bueno Aires.

Kara: Here's what I've learned dating a Midwesterner. They're so judgey, they just express it very subtly. They just say things like, "It's so interesting that he chose to be a doctor," and then they like trail off. What that means is, "I can't believe that dum-dum thinks he can go to medical school." But they just say something like, "I was surprised."

Victoria: Yeah, I lived in the South for about two seconds. Remember that one time...? It was not for me, and I was not for them. It was made clear within two seconds that I was a fish out of all kinds of waters.

I remember one of the first days the graduate students we were teaching were coming in, and one of my colleagues, a Doctoral-trained nurse researcher, literally put her hand on her pearls and said, "Well, I swear. She would not have come to school looking like such a little slut if she'd realized. Bless her heart."

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Oh, the judging. Argentines are just like, “Her boob job is terrible.” That's my mom. We'd be walking down the street in New York and she'd be like, “That's a terrible boob job,” and I'm like, “I'm eight.”

Kara: Is this a piece of information I truly need at this stage of my emotional and psychosocial development?

Victoria: If you just THINK: Is it thoughtful? Is it honest? Is it intelligent, Necessary, or Kind? I'm going to vote no.

Kara: Wait, how do you have so many acronyms?

Victoria: Girl, I love an acronym.

Kara: But OHIO... You didn't make up OHIO, did you?

Victoria: No, but OHIO is the bestest: Only Handle It Once. So, yesterday, one of the lids to one of our pots broke. And so, Billey was like, “This thing is broken.” So, I went on cuisinart.com and replaced it immediately. Do not write it down if you can accomplish it... What's your rule? Is it two minutes or less? Five minutes or less?

Kara: It's two minutes for me, five minutes for the gentleman consort, because he's slow. He just gets a little distracted sometimes when he opens his phone. So, it's five minutes for him, and it's two minutes for me. I got that from David Allen back in the day.

Victoria: It's such a good rule.

Kara: Okay, so we have THINK, we got OHIO, we have a whole other episode about acronyms.

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Victoria: We should. I think people want to hear that. They want to hear our acronym stories. I'm already like, "I have to buy this book."

Kara: Don't worry, you'll be getting an email explaining how you can buy the book.

Victori: Okay, you're not sending me a copy?

Kara: No, are you kidding? I've got to sell like 20,000 books by the end of the first week.

Victoria: Ellen sent me a signed copy, and then I bought 25 of them and sent them to patients. So...

Kara: Listen, I'm sending you to Italy. What do you want?

Victoria: Thank you for that. I'm really excited.

Kara: I mean, I will send you a copy if you really want. But I am going to be emailing my friends and family so they can order some copies.

Victoria: Alright, I'll order like 25 copies, and then will you sign one?

Kara: Of course, I'm going to sign your copy.

Victoria: Okay, great. Kara, your work is so amazing. You're amazing and incredible. Yes, that's right. I'm so grateful to know you, and I'm so grateful that you came on the show so my listeners could get to know you. They all need to go order your book, where can they do that?

Kara: So, you can buy the book anywhere you buy books. We all have complicated feelings about Amazon, you can go there. Bookshop.org. But if you want the best bonuses, if you go to [TakeBackYourBrainBook.com](http://TakeBackYourBrainBook.com)...



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You need the “book” in there... TakeBackYourBrain.com is a defunct marketing website, so don't go there.

It's TakeBackYourBrainBook.com. When you buy one copy, you get a guided 30-day journal, to take you through the book. And some bonus audio teachings. At different numbers of books, we've got other additional amazing bonuses. We've got a Book Club-In-a-Box. We've got tickets to live launch events, all sorts of fun stuff.

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Victoria: Fantastic. Thank you.

Kara: Thanks for having me.

Victoria: Thank you so much for joining me, my loves. What a delightful conversation. I can't wait to get my copy of Kara's book; it's going to be a good one. Yeah, and I can't wait to tell you all about my book too. It's coming out, not for a while, but it's going to be exciting.

We need a new book on codependency. We haven't had one in 100,000 years, and we've definitely never had a feminist one or one that talks all about the nervous system. So, I'm pretty stoked for all of those things. Beautiful.

So, my love's, let's do what we do. A gentle hand on your heart, should you feel so moved. And remember, you are safe. You are held. You are loved. And, when one of us heals, we help heal the world. Be well, my beauty.

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Thank you for listening to this episode of *Feminist Wellness*. If you want to learn more all about somatics, what the heck that word means, and why it matters for your life, head on over to [VictoriaAlbina.com/somaticswebinar](https://VictoriaAlbina.com/somaticswebinar) for a free webinar all about it. Have a beautiful day my darling, and I'll see you next week. Ciao.