

Ep #245: Body Image with Kara Loewentheil



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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Well hello, my friends. Before we get started on today's podcast, I just want to let you know that this one went very long. So what we've decided to do is edit it down so it's a shorter version of the extended version for iTunes and for the podcast that you're receiving. If you would like to listen to this podcast in its entirety – the entire interview and chat – you can go to thelifecoachschool.com/245 and listen to the entire thing; it's super awesome. Alright, let's go.

Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Hello, my friends. Welcome to the podcast. I'm so excited today to have Kara Loewentheil – which I practiced saying her last name correctly a couple times before I said it. I'm so excited that she's here. She is one of my very favorites in just every way. I wanted to say student, I wanted to say coach, I wanted to say business-owner – she's everything. She's all of the things.

Most of all, she's a blast to talk to, super fun, she has a great podcast you should all listen to called – here comes the explicitness. Listen, I'm going to warn you, there will be swearing on this podcast. I know that a lot of kids listen to this podcast. I'm just going to do a little side note. Somebody told me this story about how their kids were listening to swear words and they're like, "Oh no, we've heard much worse from Brooke Casserole."

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Brooke: Anyway, Kara, I'm so happy that you're here on the podcast. Tell everyone all about you and your things that you have to share.

Kara: All the things. I'm the full package. So my podcast is called Unf*ck Your Brain. This is where the cursing starts. If you have any sailors in your life, this would be a good episode for them to listen to. I'm a feminist confidence coach, so I work with women to help them understand how a lot of their self-critical thoughts and insecurities and fears and self-doubt are

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all kind of created by the social messages they get; that we internalize them very early on and they just seem like our own natural thoughts. And we think we're thinking them because we aren't terrible or stupid or ugly or slow or dumb or whatever we think about ourselves – just the litany that most of my clients think about themselves and I used to. So I teach women how to create true confidence from within by using thought work to undo the patriarchy.

Brooke: Awesome. So I asked Kara to come on the podcast because I wanted to talk with her about body image. And for so many reasons, I've never done a podcast on it. I think a lot of the work that I do on body image and weight-loss is misunderstood. I also think a lot of the work that Kara does on body image is misunderstood. So we kind of want to set the record straight. We'll be talking very quickly. We'll be swearing a lot. And then, at the end, we'll offer a way for you to get more, if you like it, if you like the style that we have.

I'm super excited because Kara took my master coach training – we had such a blast for an entire year, and now she's in my millionaire mentoring program, which, of course, we're going to have a blast in. She's helping me with all of our 100K students. So I just can't get enough of her, obviously, so I bribed her to come on the podcast.

So let's start with body image. Actually, you know what, we should start – why don't you tell a little bit about your story, I'll share a little bit about my story as it applies to body image. Why don't you go ahead and start?

Kara: Yeah, I mean, I'm still waiting for my bribe by the way. It has not arrived.

Brooke: Okay, it's coming. It's in the mail.

Kara: Is it one of your puppies maybe? So I have, I think, a story that is very familiar to a lot of women, which is that I don't even remember a time before I was very aware of my body and thought that it was gross and ugly and too big and was kind of obsessed with food and eating too much or not

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eating enough. Then I went through the usual teenage cycles; dabble in a little anorexia, dabble in a little bulimia, just try everything out. And that basically continued all through my 20s. so I spent, you know, 20, almost 30 years, with a terrible body image and always trying to lose weight and always thinking that if I did lose weight then I would finally feel good about myself and my life would be perfect. And I tried all the different things and some of them would be successful for a short period of time and maybe some for longer and some not at all...

Brooke: Successful meaning what?

Kara: Meaning just like I would lose weight a little bit and then I would gain it back or I would...

Brooke: Because we all know that success means that you've lost weight...

Kara: Losing weight, obviously, yes. And then your whole life is perfect. I just kept fighting for that part where the whole life was perfect. It just wasn't showing up for some weird reason. It's almost like my thoughts about myself hadn't changed because my body size changed.

So ironically, kind of, I actually found you through the last weight-loss thing I ever did, which was Weight School, which you did with Susan Hyatt back in the day. So it's fascinating because I took that at the time that I then also decided to stop dieting and started reading a lot about body autonomy and the fat positive movement; a lot of different stuff. But your thought tools that I learned in Weight School, I actually used not to lose weight, but to change my body image and to love the body that I had.

It was not like a magical unicorn bath. It was like long excruciating work. It was not like I just did a Model and looked in the mirror and was like, "This is wonderful." It was some of the most hardcore thought work I've done in that it took so much work. It was just like practice and practice and practice, like tiny, tiny baby steps along the thought path, going literally to, "This is a human body. Other people have a body like this..." very neutral. But over

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time, I was able to improve that. And so I really used thought work to love the body I had and to find it sexy and appealing.

And there's been levels to that work. First it was believing that other people could find it attractive, but that was still easier than finding it attractive myself, and then it was doing that level of the work. But I've seen such a, you know, your dating and your sex life maybe being an approximate proxy for things. But when I was thinner but hated myself, my dating and sex life were way worse than they are now, even though then I was in the kind of conventionally acceptable range of body size – towards the top probably, but like a size 12-14.

And now, I'm like a size 18, a plus-size – I'm definitely fat by anyone's standards, which I don't consider a bad word – and my dating and sex life are so much better because of my confidence. It has nothing to do with which body size I have, but because I did all of that work on my confidence. So all of the things I thought I had to be thin to get, I actually got right at a totally different body size because I did the thought work. That's kind of my story.

Brooke: And have you decided that you don't want to lose weight? What is your thought about losing weight?

Kara: Yeah, I think my thought is that I don't want to lose weight. And I actually had a fascinating moment recently that was such a sign of how much my brain has changed, because before, I was totally in that place where I was like, "Oh, maybe I'll have a debilitating tapeworm and that would be great..."

Brooke: You know what mine was? Tapeworm is good. Mine was, I don't understand why you can't just go to the hospital and they just put you asleep for like six months. Seriously, that seemed totally logical to me. It would stop me from eating and then I would be thin when I woke up and everything would be great. I'm willing to give up six months of my life to be thin, because that's the answer to everything.

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Kara: It's so crazy. You can tell somebody you had the flu and they'll be like, "But I bet you lost some weight, didn't you?" Which is so crazy, you're like, I'm literally vomiting because my body is trying to expel a viral pathogen that's trying to kill me and people are like, "But you lost three pounds."

Brooke: Let's look at the bright side...

Kara: Maybe you could get the few again just 300 more times. So that's what it used to be like. And then recently, I actually made some changes to what I eat for true health reasons. I think a lot of times, we just sub-in health for diet. But I was having – like, for some skin issues and I wanted more, even, energy. And I think that I lost a little bit of weight. I don't weigh myself. And my first thoughts was like, "God-damnit, I like my clothes. Now I've got to get all new clothes."

But that was such a beautiful moment to me where I was like, I've done so much work that I don't automatically be like, "Yes, maybe I will get thin and my whole life will be perfect again now accidentally from this other direction." That was so powerful to me.

Brooke: It's so interesting. I think that so many of us have that story. You're younger than I am, but I think it's passed on to generation after generation, just this idea that our bodies aren't acceptable and we should be thinner, and if we were thinner, we'd be more acceptable, we'd be more loved, we'd be better, we'd be more attractive, which is the most important thing, right...

Kara: Obviously.

Brooke: And for me, growing up, it was always about – you know, my mom was always telling me how important it was to be beautiful. And she didn't say, "Brooke, it's very important to be beautiful." It was always, like, "Oh look at how pretty she is." And when she would describe someone, she would always lead – and she still does this, "Well you know, she's gorgeous..." as if that is the most important thing. And I think that's how

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she was raised. And so it was always about being thin. She was obsessed with her weight and obsessed with dieting, and so I became obsessed with it too. And of course, when I look at pictures of me when I was younger, I was perfectly thin, you know, it was fine.

It was only through dieting that I made myself gain a bunch of weight and really I think torture myself with food and with body image. And I think that for me, when I look back on it now, the thing that I think was crazy, the rub with the socialization of it is, as women especially, we're socialized that we should be thin. Thin is better. Attractive is better, and we're also socialized that we should eat all of the food all of the time and drink all the drink all of the time without question.

So it's like, why aren't you drinking and why aren't you thin? Why aren't you eating this cupcake and birthday cake and all this food and why aren't you thin? And so I always felt like I just wanted to be normal, which of course meant that I was thin and I could eat whatever I wanted. For the longest time, I thought that was the answer; eat all day whatever you want and be thin.

I used to dream about – I would think, “When you die, you just get to eat fettuccini Alfredo all of the time. That was my goal in life, to be able to eat, but I couldn't because I'm not allowed. And so I had a moment in college. I read this book called *Overcoming Overeating* and they basically just said you have to eat whatever you want all of the time and forget this dieting stuff.

And I had read a lot of Geneen Roth. It just resonated with me and so I decided, I'm going to stop trying to restrict food and I'm going to, on purpose, decide to love my body, which seemed like the exact opposite thing to do at the same time, right? It's like, okay, if I starve myself and I get thin, then I'll be able to love myself. But can I eat whatever I want – which to me at that point really meant how to control bingeing on thin foods. Like, you know you binge on thin foods?

Kara: Totally.

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Brooke: I would just fill them full, and I decided to do that, and I went and bought clothes that were bigger than I had because I knew I was going to gain weight and I just went into this moment. And I think, looking back on it now, I don't necessarily think that was the best plan, but it's what I had at the time and it taught me so much about how important it was to make the decision between whether I was going to believe that thinness meant happiness and thinness meant I could officially be appropriate enough to love myself, or to just be fat and unworthy and self-loathing, because what I was doing wasn't working.

And it was a huge defining moment for me. I gained a lot of weight, but I was happier and loved myself more than I ever have. And I remember thinking to myself, would I rather be thin or happy? And I really couldn't understand the question...

Kara: because we think that thin means happy, so it's like the question doesn't make any sense to us.

Brooke: I'm like, "What do you mean? Would I rather be happy or happy?"

Kara: Right, I want to be happy with the thin because that's what's made me happy. I ask my clients that all the time and I totally tell them, you really have to decide. You have to decide which of those things matters more to you. But the question breaks people's brains because we're so conditioned to think that thin is everything you want in life. Like, once you're thin, your husband turns into a totally different person who acts like the guy in the romantic comedy movies...

Brooke: And you make more money...

Kara: Yeah, and your children always behave. And you're younger. You're 10 years younger, which is also always better. Younger is better. Thinner is better. And your hair is longer and you're never sad and you never feel lonely and all your clothes are from Chanel.

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Like, we have such crazy fantasies about it and there's no – part of the problem, I think, that people get into is like with anything you're chasing for an external feeling, you're relying on your own brain to tell you when you're thin enough, and you're never going to get there because your brain is going to be like, "I don't know, we're not happy yet. I guess it has to be another five pounds. I thought this was the number, but my husband still doesn't take out the trash..."

Brooke: Yeah, so I better gain it back and lose some more and try that again...

Kara: You're like, "I did the experiment, I was guaranteed an outcome and I'm not getting it."

Brooke: But here's what I realized. And when I say I look back on that now, it was the wrong question, right? Asking would I rather be thin or happy is like asking about two completely irrelevant things. Thinness and happiness have nothing to do with each other. One has to do with how much tissue you have on your body and one has to do with the nature of your mind. And I think when we combine them, when we think that being overweight or being fat means that we're unhappy and being thin means – this is how I know this is true; I used to stare at thin people that didn't seem happy and I was totally confused.

And then I would go out to lunch with friends that were naturally thin, never had a weight problem. And they never talked about food or their weight and it was like so confusing to me. I'm like, "Shouldn't we be talking about how thin you are? This is the most amazing miraculous thing. Don't you just wake up every morning and look at your thighs?" Which, of course, it was totally irrelevant to them and they were unhappy about other things that they chose to be unhappy about.

So I think that's the work that needs to be done, you know, as a society, as women especially. They're completely separate things. You can be thin. You can lose weight and be happy and you can be fat, you can be overweight, and be happy and vice versa.

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Kara: Yeah, and we assume the other one. Like I remember this conversation I had with my mother in college and I was, like, not even fat. You know, I had gained 15 pounds or something. It was nowhere near where I am now. But I remember being like, “Well, but obviously I have to be concerned because if you gain weight, you must be depressed or something.” And I was like, “Okay, but do I seem depressed? I’m getting dressed. I’m wearing makeup. I have a boyfriend. I’m doing well in school.” But it was like the evidence in front of you was no match for the story that clearly this means something has gone terribly wrong and you’re letting yourself go and you must be depressed or mentally ill or whatever.

Brooke: Right, and I think that that’s – when I talk about our work as misinterpreted sometimes, I think it’s – like I talk a lot about weight-loss and stopping overeating and focusing on that. And my reasoning behind that is really for the sake of embracing eating as a way of not feeling and understanding that for yourself and really coming to terms with that. and a lot of people misinterpret my work when they don’t understand it to be just what we’re talking about, which means you should get thinner and being thinner is better, and once you’re thinner, you’re more enlightened and evolved than someone that isn’t.

And I think, on the other end of this spectrum, I think there’s with this acceptance of your body the way it is. Maybe if it’s not to society’s standards, it means you’ve just let yourself go and you don’t care about yourself at all and it’s a basic F-you to the whole world and you’re angry and sad inside, kind of thing. And I think those two extremes are what keep us just in tyranny about all of it.

Kara: Yeah, totally. And neither of those is true.

Brooke: Of course not.

Kara: As you say, your body has this no relationship to your internal, but the problem is, we think it does. So then, we’re like chasing – we’re trying to change the circumstance. We’re like, “When I’m thin, when that’s the circumstance, then I’m going to be happy.” And we’re missing that whole

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thought part that we talk about that goes in between that determines how you're going to feel.

Brooke: Yeah, I just had a client I was coaching on Scholars and she went away to Europe and gained six kilos, which is what, 12 pounds probably-ish...

Kara: Sure, I don't do metric, but it sounds right.

Brooke: And I'm on video with her and she's like amazing, in every way. And she's sitting there thinking about the size of her thighs or maybe her stomach, I don't know, she didn't say, but it's just like obsessing about it and frustrated about it and thinking about the gym about it and what she's eating about it. And it was just so fascinating to me to explain to her that the 12 pounds that she had put on her body had nothing to do with her level of unhappiness. And she was like, "Well do you think I should just go buy clothes that fit me?" Seems logical to me.

Kara: You were like, "No, I think you should keep wearing the clothes that don't fit you because it's good to – everybody likes to feel like a sausage that's coming out of its casing. It makes you feel good about the day." But that's that self – people are like, that will motivate me. It's like we all go back to that punishing myself will motivate me thing, which is such a thought error that we have in every area of our lives.

I can't reward myself by buying a nice piece of clothing that actually fits. I need to be reminded every moment of my failure and how terrible I am so that I'll be motivated. That does not work that well.

Brooke: And I was asking her – I'm like, when you go to the gym and you beat yourself up and you try to hate yourself thinner, how does that work? Clearly, it's not working because you're coming to me to figure out how to do it faster. And I think that's – if you're wondering, am I in this place that you're talking about? Here's how you'll know – and maybe you have some stuff to add – like, if you think your life will be better in any way, the only

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thing that will happen when your body gets thinner is that your body will be smaller and you will have saggy skin.

Kara: And then you're going to have to coach yourself about that.

Brooke: And so, what will happen from that C is many of you will change all of your thoughts about yourself and you'll give credit to your body for doing that. And one of the things that I told this woman on the call is I just said, "Listen, whatever thoughts you had about yourself 12 pounds ago, you have permission to think those exact thoughts now. And it doesn't mean that you won't lose weight and it doesn't mean that you will. But as soon as you're in a hurry to lose weight, you're doing it wrong."

And as soon as you are trying to loath yourself as hard as possible to lose weight, you're doing it wrong. Even if you're successful – and believe me, I have tried to hate myself hard enough to lose weight. It is very difficult. But if you starve yourself long enough with enough hate, you maybe can get down there, but it's not sustainable. There's nothing sustainable about the cycle of hating yourself and your body. And I don't think you can separate the two very easily. What do you think?

Kara: No, and I think – what's your prize at the end? It's just you hate yourself in a smaller body, plus now you have the skin you have to hate yourself for.

Brooke: But isn't my dream that I won't hate myself if I have a perfect body?

Kara: Yeah, of course. I see the same level of fixation in my clients who are struggling with dating. They think – I'm always like, "When you get a partner, here's what's going to happen; your life is totally the same but another person lives in your house and you have to agree about what to eat for dinner." That's all it is. It's like nice to have that guy around. You probably like him. He's like a good friend.

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But they think it's like, "I'm in another plane of existence where my whole self is validated and realized and I am finally in love with myself." It's the same thing I see with thin, and I think that's because those social messages are so strong, especially for women. So we get this magical thinking that if we just get that thing, it's like the world becomes Technicolor. It's like a grey movie becomes color and like everything is perfect.

And I see the same level of fixation and self-loathing and self-flagellation and obsession and rumination. So it's like obsessing about how many calories you eat, obsessing about why the guy didn't text you back. It's like every little moment is a giant crisis. It's like that same – your self-regard is so fragile that any tiny misstep is like, that's it, you're terrible.

Brooke: Well, and I was actually thinking about this today. I think that the clients that I have that have all the societal prizes – I used to think rich and thin, everything's great as soon as you're rich and thin. As soon as you have the husband and the children and the nice house and the Maserati and whatever your dream is, the second house for some people, the business, whatever it is.

I think the hardest work that I've done with people, and maybe the hardest work I've done on myself, is where there are no prizes left to solve your problems that are external when you have them all. And I'm thinking about a really specific client of mine who has more money than probably everybody else listening to this podcast combined. And yet, we spend a lot of time worrying about money together.

And it's fascinating and I look at women who have lost all their weight, which was supposed to be the answer, and now all we're doing is talking about the skin and why they aren't younger and why they look older and why their hair isn't as thick. What I've realized is that we all just pick the one thing that will be the answer to our self-loathing. And it's not out there.

And even when you get those things, what happens is then you feel like, okay, I have all these things and I still hate myself, but I don't have a

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reason to hate myself. And there's no hope out there in the future. There's no diet. There's no pill. There's no surgery that's going to solve this for me, so now what? Which I think is a beautiful place to land. It's just very disappointing for everyone who goes through the process of losing weight – especially hundreds of pounds – to land there and realize – it's kind of like the gastric bypass surgery. So many of them come to me and then they're alcoholics after that. And it's like, huh, what do you think is going on here with yourself? And so I love this conversation because I think it can prevent a lot of agony.

Kara: Totally. I mean, one of the reasons I love group coaching is that I get women in the group who are like, if I just had a partner, if I just was thin, or I just was this, everything would be perfect. And they're so baffled that there are people in the group who have the thing that they want and they're sitting there on calls being like, "What is she complaining about?" Like, she has the thing...

Brooke: She has the secret, yeah...

Kara: Whatever it is, she's thin or she's tall or she's rich or she's got the husband, how can she have any complaints? For me, it was so powerful, especially when I was doing body image work, to see that. I was actually in this online – this is one of the few times that Facebook has been good for someone's self-esteem – I was in this Facebook group of women dating. And of course, my story the whole time was, like, the reason I don't have the perfect relationship that turns my life into the fourth dimension is my body weight...

Brooke: Of course...

Kara: Of course, even though I was much smaller than I am now. So I was in that group and I was like, thankfully I'm logical and I knew about thought work, so I was already starting to open my mind to the concept that my thoughts might not be true. And I was like, "There's a lot of pretty, thin, conventionally attractive women in this group. They seem crazy also. Maybe that isn't really the key to everything."

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But I, for sure, this is like the most depressing version of life coaching, but it was really helpful for me. I walked around New York for a whole summer. I live in Manhattan and it's like there's little models walking down the street all the time. They're like a different species. They're like six feet tall and their head is the size of their femur, you know, and you're like what...

So I spent a whole summer walking around because I noticed that every time I saw a thin young woman, I immediately felt jealous and I thought her life was perfect. So I walked around all summer, and every time I saw a woman, a thin woman and I started to think that way, I would say to myself, "All beings suffer." It's like I retrained my brain piece by piece. Now I just say to my clients, even Beyoncé gets cheated on. But it's the same concept, right?

Back then I think it was like Christie Brinkley was in the news. She had just been cheated on and it was like one of those. You can be a literal wealthy supermodel; it is not going to protect you from pain and suffering. It is not going to make your relationships magical. It's not going to insulate you from negative emotion, which is what we all think it's going to do.

Brooke: Well, do you know who I wanted to be my whole life? If I could just be her, everything – I'm not kidding you, I would have traded places with her in 60 seconds – was Whitney Houston. Isn't that fascinating? I just thought she's got it all. She's gorgeous. Her thighs are so little. How are someone's thighs that little? And she was so beautiful and she was so talented. And I just knew that she had such a better life than me. And it's so fascinating now to see what was really going on with that.

I teach a concept – those of you who listen to the podcast know this – I teach the concept of 50-50. And I've told this story before but I'll just reference it here; my son was watching someone who had been drafted for two different professional sports. He was that talented as an athlete. And Christian, my son, is like a golfer and a soccer player. He would love to be drafted for anything. Like, he just thinks this guy has the best life in the world.

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And I said to him, everyone's life is 50-50. It's the positive balance of emotion. So this guy, his life isn't any more balanced to the positive than yours is, so what do you think his 50% negative is? What is it about? And it was just fascinating to have the conversation and be like, it's about all the same things and all the different things. Because, you know what models worry the most about?

Kara: Being thin.

Brooke: Their weight. Isn't that so annoying?

Kara: They're like smoking constantly trying to keep it at 109 because if they get to 110 at six feet tall, they're going to be fired by their agency; totally.

Brooke: But we think, if we were that weight, we wouldn't worry about our weight anymore, which is the biggest lie. So let's talk about – I mean, we're talking kind of about concepts and theory, but how do you love your body? If I look in the mirror and I see something that I think is wrong – so, for example, I have cellulite. I have saggy skin. I have, you know, skin where fat used to be, let's just say, hypothetically. And as we get older, our bodies are changing, our faces are changing, all of that. And the knee jerk reaction for most of us is to think, I'm ugly. I'm unacceptable. I need to fix that. There's a solution for that. There's something wrong with me because I don't look like the airbrushed models. I don't look like I did when I was 18, which when I was 18, I hated myself and my body by the way...

Kara: Which is such a powerful important reminder though because it's like, women will be like, "But if I just weighed what I did when I was 25." And you're like, "Were you happy when you were 25?" No, but then they're like, "But I'd be happy now." And I'm like, "Right, because now your thought would be oh my god it's so great to be this weight. But the whole point is that it's your thought, not what you were." So we get all this weird nostalgia about the past when we were like totally miserable back then.

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Brooke: Of course, yeah, if we could just get back there. So I remember – and I'll say what it is for me. Maybe you can share a little bit of how you do this, is I lost a lot of weight. And of course, I thought that then I would love everything about everything to do with my body, and that is not what happened, my friends. That is not what happened.

What, for me, changed when I lost weight that was the most miraculous thing in the whole world was that I stopped obsessing about eating food all the time, or not eating food all the time. That was the gift. And the byproduct of that was weight-loss, which was just fun for me as a byproduct. But the self-loathing was still just so acute. It was just so available to me, I should say.

Like, I knew that I had to do the love work and I thought that once I got thin, then I could stop doing that. Then we're in love. Everything's fine...

Kara: Two birds with one stone. I'm just going to change this number on the scale and it's just going to – it's like a gift with purchase. Self-love's just going to arrive.

Brooke: It's all of a sudden going to be wonderful. And so I made a decision. I remember one day nitpicking at myself, at my body, at my face, at everything about it, and I just decided that was it and I put my foot down with myself. I said listen, it's kind of like – I don't know if you've ever dated someone that just treated you just a little bit like shit and you kind of put up with it because they were kind of cute. You knew that it was not okay but you kind of kept going back. That's how I felt my relationship with myself was.

I was just kind of a jerk to myself; the stuff I said to myself and the way I rejected myself. And I'm like, enough is enough. And even now, if I get a little hint that, "I'm not sure as sis supposed to look like that. I'm not sure that's what's supposed to be happening there." And then I wonder, like, according to whom?

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Kara: I was going to say, did the universe send you a certified letter that was like, “Here are the four forms of acceptable asses. Please confirm corresponds to one of these. Check the box, get it notarized, send it back so we know that your ass is in order.”

Brooke: Well I look at J-Lo, who I’m the same age with, and I’m just very confused as to why I don’t look like her, because she’s the one we’re supposed to look like, right?

Kara: One of the reasons I love living in New York is that it’s so diverse. It’s like, you would never go to a dog park and be like, I don’t know why that dog is tiny and this dog is big. All these dogs should be the same size and have the same belly and the same ears. That one must be broken. I think they’re all supposed to be this size.

Brooke: Yeah, totally.

Kara: And in New York, because it’s so diverse culturally and ethnically, you know, you walk down the street and you’re like, “Obviously humans do not all look the same.” We don’t have the same genetics. We don’t have the same personal trainer. We don’t all have the same plastic surgeon. We don’t have the same nutritionist. And also, you and I have to spend hours coaching people; we don’t get to dance four hours a day to keep our – whatever she does...

Brooke: And I think that’s what’s interesting too. I think a lot of people – I’d be curious to know what you think about this, but I do want to just say, those of you who are wondering, how do I love my body that I don’t yet love, is that you have to do it on purpose. You have to decide that you are going to love yourself on purpose by thinking thoughts that are loving.

Now, in the beginning, you will think a thought that will sound like, “I love my saggy ass...” and you will not feel love. So you have to get to the place where you just say, “I have an ass.”

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Kara: I did a lot of, like, “That is a human stomach.” I also did a lot of like, “There are other stomachs in the world that look like this.”

Brooke: Yes, “This is normal. This is good. This is fine. This is me right now.” And what I choose to think about this will determine how I feel because this doesn’t have the power to make me feel anything, which is so confusing.

Kara: And I think the other really powerful thing that I did when I was doing this work very intensively was that every time that my brain went, “What if you just stopped eating carbs and you lost 30 pounds...” and that whole thing starts to run if you just do that diet and do that one and go to yoga five times a day and whatever starts to go, I would just be like, “Okay, why do I want that?”

And for me, at the time, I was single, so it was all wrapped up together. It was like, well if I got thin then I would have – you know. So I would just be like, “Brain, why do we want that?” And my brain would be like, “So you can find a boyfriend and feel loved.” Okay, so I want to feel happy. Happiness is available to me now. Or sometimes it was, because I want a boyfriend, and I want a boyfriend so that I can feel good about myself, and that’s available to me. It was like constantly interrogating that thing of why do I want this, to constantly recreate the loop in my brain to remember. I must have said, “And happiness is available to me now...” like six million times.

Brooke: Seriously, yeah.

Kara: But because it’s so ingrained, especially this stuff – sometimes you work with a thought pattern that’s like a few months old, no big deal. These are like, it’s been going on since you were two. So that, for me, was very neutral thoughts like this is a human stomach, there are people who have stomachs like this. They might be worthy of living even though they have this stomach. And then a lot of why do you want to be thin? Because I think I’d feel good about myself. That’s a thought that’s available to you now, just really retraining that cycle.

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Brooke: Yeah, and I used to look in my mirror and I would say, “This is you today. This is you today.” And one of the things, crazily, that helped me is when I would see pictures of myself, I used to always think – and many of you may do this – that’s a bad picture. That’s a good picture. I look fat in that picture. I look good in that picture. And especially now, like, you just purse your lips or, what is that?

Kara: Duck face? I don’t know how to do it...

Brooke: And then you can color your face on your iPhone. Like some pictures I get of people I don’t even recognize them because they’ve been like finger-painted. But I think that – which is odd, right? But I remember going through this thing with my dogs, which is so interesting. I love my dogs more than anything, and I would never ever say, “That’s an ugly picture of my dog...” or, “That’s a bad picture of my dog.”

I’m like, “Oh look, it’s his butt. Oh look, it’s his leg. Oh look, he’s squinting.” It doesn’t matter. And I was like, what if every time I saw a picture of myself, I would think that, I would say that. So it’s interesting now I’ve done so much work on it and I’m so committed to it that people just think I’m so conceited, which I’m totally okay with because I’d much rather you think I’m totally conceited than know how much self-loathing I’ve experienced my entire life because I’m done with it. I’m totally done with it.

And I can look at everyone in different sized bodies, different ages, and love all of it because I’ve practiced that skill. Like, it is easy for me to love the people – this is what I say to myself; if you can love you after how much you hated you, then everyone else becomes easy after that. I think it’s some of the most important work we can do if we want to show up for other people as truly ourselves, right?

Kara: And you see so much more beauty in the world. If only one type of body is allowed to be beautiful, then you have to spend all your time looking at all these schlobs like you who aren’t beautiful. If you can see other people’s bodies as beautiful – even now, sometimes what I will do, if I put on an outfit and my brain starts to be a little... then I will imagine like a

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fat fashion blogger who I think is super cute, and I'll imagine her wearing the outfit. And I'm like, I totally think that looks good on her. This is just an error.

The moment when I realized that it was possible that what my brain was telling me I was seeing in a photo was not just an accurate scanning visual signals transposing to retina, but was being mediated by my thoughts about myself, that – because we understand the idea that the thought, “I don't look good in that photo...” is a thought. But I don't think we understand that it actually colors what we see. Kind of like, when we look at the photo, what we notice or what we think about the angle, it's all colored by your thoughts about yourself.

So that, to me, was like mind-blowing because I definitely had just assumed, “Okay, well my eye sees this, transmits information to my brain which evaluates if it's good or bad.” But now it's like, no, it's like the camera is a propaganda camera. It's like totally biased. It's not transmitting accurately at all. So what I think I see in this photo may not actually even be what's in the photo, which is so wild.

But when you look at the science about it, it's totally true. Our brains are like overwhelmed by a cacophony of signals all the time. Like, I don't know, let's pretend this is a computer. Let's just tell her that's a computer, that's a cat, that's a door, this is fine, we're making this all up.

Brooke: Yeah, you know, you made me think – because you use the word fat a lot, which I think a lot of people would be nervous to use, like it's an offensive word. And I remember this time, my kids were super young and we were sitting in a pizza parlor and this boy walked in and my son says, “Oh my gosh, he's fat.” And I'm like, “What, shhh, don't say that...” And he was like, “What? What's wrong with that?”

And I was like, whoa, here I am conditioning him that that word is negative and that you shouldn't say that. And in some ways, I don't know that that was the right or wrong thing to do, but it certainly is something to be aware of; that you can't say that because that's less than and that will make him

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feel bad because that's true about him. So I think, do we want to talk a little bit to that?

Kara: Yeah, I mean, most people do think fat is a bad word because they think fat is bad, so it's like a big deal to someone, right? Whereas I think there's so much – and it's not the only word I use. Like, I would call myself curvy or plus-sized or whatever. But to me, it's so powerful that the thing that I thought was my greatest fear is now just a totally neutral descriptor. It's like, I'm short and I'm fat.

And if you think that I'm insulting myself, that's your thought about you. That has nothing to do with me. And it's so ridiculous. We think it's so bad that if somebody will say they're fat and their friends will be like, "No..."

Brooke: "No, no you're not. You're fine. You're okay. You're okay."

Kara: Yeah, there's nothing wrong with it. It's just a word. And when you can kind of – I mean, to me it's just a symbol of how radical it is to not assume that fat is inherently bad.

Brooke: So what do you have for us, Kara? Tell us how we can take this deeper and do the kind of work that you say was so hard that we're so challenged with. What does that require? How can we do more of it?

Kara: Well, you can listen to my podcast, of course. But I'm also going to be teaching a body image class in January. So it's going to be January 6th. I think that right after the holidays is always a good time because everybody's been drinking or eating or fighting with their family or whatever they've been doing.

Brooke: Trying to put on dresses that don't fit...

Kara: And trying to put on that dress you only wore once to the office holiday party and all of a sudden it's like it's a different size and you're like, that's confusing. I think someone stole this and put a smaller size in my closet. So I call it the Unf*ck Your Body Image masterclass.

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So I'm going to be teaching a real combination of some of the tools we've talked about. I also teach some kind of concrete practices that you can use in terms of changing your visual diet, giving yourself more examples of – it's like reprogramming also not just your thoughts but also your visual feed so that your brain adjusts to seeing different sizes as beautiful and practicing that, loving photos of yourself. There's a lot of different ways of doing thought work and different ways of getting access to it.

Brooke: So if I want to sign up, how long is the class?

Kara: So it's going to be a two-hour class. I personally think people have a hard time paying attention for more than two hours; me included, so a good two hours. And I always, the way I do my class, is always that I teach some and I coach some. So I teach some, and then you'll have an opportunity – obviously not everybody gets life coaching, but you get an opportunity to get coached live.

And I think with body image stuff, it's so important because it's one of those things where I think our brains are just like, "What else could I possibly think about this?"

Brooke: This is just ugly, period.

Kara: This is cellulite. Are you telling me to believe I don't have cellulite? We don't even know how embedded our assumptions are about what's good or bad, so it's an area where I think life coaching is actually super important. So you learn – and everybody's got the same thoughts, so you learn a lot, whether it's you directly or the other person. So it's going to be two hours. And do you want me to give you the sales page address? Is that something people might want to know?

Brooke: I'll have you do that in a second, but I just want to say that I highly, highly, highly recommend that anyone listening to this podcast that thinks they want to lose weight – now notice I didn't say anyone who has a poor body image. Anybody who wants to lose weight, who thinks they want to

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lose weight, who thinks your life would be better, that thinks you need to lose weight – I think would really benefit from taking this class.

And it doesn't mean – people are afraid, like, "If she teaches me to love my body then I won't want to lose weight and that's the worst thing that could possibly happen to me in the world." If that is you, and there's so many of you listening that that is you, I highly recommend that you take this class. I promise, you can still try and lose weight. It will always be available to you. No one will ever take that tyranny away from your life.

But if you're going to do that, we want to make sure you're doing it from a place of love. And that sounds so silly to some people, like, "Oh yeah, love..." but it's the only answer.

Kara: You can't do advanced calculus without pre-calculus. Body love is like the prerequisite and all y'all are trying to skip it because you're like, "It's boring. I don't have time. I have to take advanced calculus so that I can finally be happy." You can't skip...

Brooke: That's so true. It's like, I don't think working on my body image will get me the result I want.

Kara: Right, that's like, why do you want the result? You want the result because you want to think and feel a certain way. It's just like for anybody who's – I know a lot of coaches listen to your podcast – if you are desperate to book a new client so you can feel good about yourself as a coach, it never works out the way you want.

Brooke: You're needy and creepy, yes.

Kara: Yeah, you're needy and creepy and you can't get there that way. Whereas, when your thought is like, "I am going to get so many clients to make so much money it's like no problem..." then the person is like, "Ooh, I'd love to work with you." It's the same kind of – what you want is just the thought and feeling. But then you're like, don't give me the thought and

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feeling, then I won't do the thing that gets me the thought and feeling. It's like so backwards.

Brooke: Yeah, and I think that there's an audience of you, a portion of you that listen to me, that just don't want to lose weight. You don't want to think about losing weight and you really want to stop thinking that you should lose weight. And I think this would be a fantastic class for you as well because I think some of you are just like me. You got to the point where you're just like, enough is enough. I want to focus on something else for a while. And then it's like that nagging, "But you have homework to do. But you have homework to do. Don't forget about that big project which is called weight-loss so you can be worthy in the back of your head..." that I think a lot of you struggle with.

And, there's another group of you who have used my work to hate yourselves. I see you. I'm always like, don't use the hunger scale to hate yourself. If you are into self-loathing, I use Geneen Roth's work to hate myself.

Kara: Right, if you think a protocol is a diet – when I was teaching at coach training, I taught that. You know, a protocol is not a diet, and one of the women in the group was like – I like watched her brain explode in real time. She was like, what are you talking about? And I think that's one of the reasons people skip the work is you come in from the outside world with all its diet mentality...

Brooke: And just lay it on...

Kara: Yeah, you're like, "Oh there's a protocol. Here's my diet. Great."

Brooke: What exactly do you eat? I'll just do that, yeah.

Kara: "Oh, no sugar no flour, great. I'm used to hearing no this, so that's a diet. I know what to do with that, which is stick to it for two weeks then fall off the wagon and binge for six months, hate myself the whole time, then start again."

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Brooke: Yes, and that's why it kills me. We were talking about this the other day; it kills me when I've worked with someone in self-coaching scholars for six months on their mind and they've lost all this weight and their friend's like, "Wow you look great. How did you do it?" And they say, "I gave up sugar and flour." I'm like, that's so unfair to that person. All the thought work that you've done and you're not even giving yourself credit for all of the work, and that is the only work that makes it so you can even stand yourself for more than five minutes.

So basically, what I'm saying is that if you listen to this podcast, I think this work is...

Kara: If you have a human body and you've ever had a negative thought about it...

Brooke: If you have a body, take this class. You guys know that I don't recommend people lightly. I don't do any kind of affiliates. I'm not getting anything for doing this. I had to bribe her to come on the show.

Kara: That's my undying love and devotion.

Brooke: And, you know, Kara's not for everybody. She's going to swear and she's going to talk super-fast and watching her coach is spectacularly fun and awesome and so if you guys want to go to the class, which I highly recommend you do, go sign up for it right now. Where do they go?

Kara: Yeah, so they can go to www.unfckyourbrain.com/bodyimageclass - presumably you have show notes, so that maybe easier for people to find it that way. Then go to your show notes and check it out.

Brooke: And, if you want to get coaching, intense coaching beyond that, I highly recommend that you check out her work and listen to her podcast and dive into everything that she's teaching. What I love about Kara and what she's done is she's taken all of my work, so if you love the Model, if you love thought work, if you love all of that, she just teaches it kind of in a different style than I do and she's available in a different way than I am. So

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I think that for so many people that are my fans will absolutely love her as well.

Kara: It's like more yelling and more talking about the patriarchy. Basically, more cursing and talking about patriarchy.

Brooke: Yes, but there's a lot of things that she talks about that I never talk about. And we disagree on some things, which is totally perfect. But we never fight. We never punch each other.

Kara: No, we only snuggle, which is such a testament to thought work. I'm like, I'm a body positive coach that doesn't teach weight-loss. Oh, did you want to know about my teacher? She's like a famous weight-loss coach.

Brooke: And would you like to come on my podcast and talk about how you don't ever want to lose weight? Let's do it. And that's the magic of all of this work. It's not like – and I've talked a lot about – so I'm actually going to do a podcast on it. We need to understand how to disagree on things and love each other madly anyway. That's the beauty of it. And I want to hear all of your ideas. I want to hear each one – and I think all of you guys should expose. Like, if you don't believe everything Brooke does or teaches exactly the way she does then I don't want to listen to you, I think, is a huge mistake.

Kara: Totally.

Brooke: So you're welcome, my friends. Don't call Kara "Kera." I just want to warn you.

Kara: Immediate expulsion from the group and you don't get a refund. If you call me Kera on the coaching call...

Brooke: You will be tempted. I watch people do it all the time and I always correct them for her because she's very polite and doesn't do that. Alright, my friend, thank you so much for coming on. This was so fun. I think we covered all the things.

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Kara: I know, this was a blast, totally. I love nerding out about this stuff.

Brooke: Yeah, so you guys go over to her website. Check the show notes to get the link to the class. Make sure you go. It's going to be awesome. Have a wonderful week, everybody. Talk to you soon; bye.

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