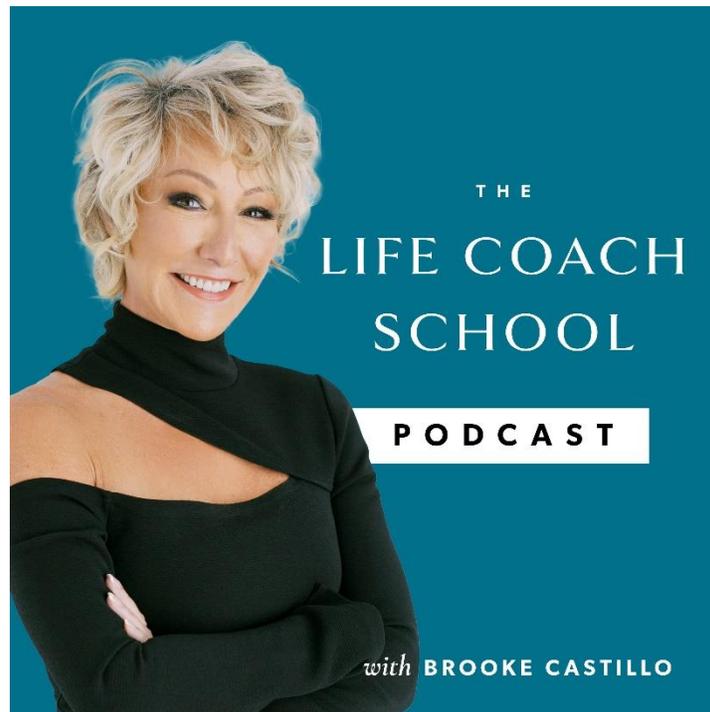


Ep #399: How to Be Different with Kara Loewentheil



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo episode 399.

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.

Brooke: Hi friends. Today's going to be hilarious. Kara Loewentheil is here. You know her. She's been here before. She's one of my dearest friends. We were just talking before this happened and literally, all I did was laugh for 10 minutes. You are the funniest person ever. I love you so much. More people should be funny like you. So, welcome to the podcast, Kara.

Kara: Thank you. Thanks for having me. 399, I'm like, what is 400 going to be like? Because now whatever 400 is, it's going to be showed up by this episode because that's going to be so good.

Brooke: Okay, this is what happened. I texted Kara, I'm like, listen, I want to do a podcast on how to be different than what everyone else wants us to be because I feel like we are. And it's not easy to be different than other people. It's not easy to be different than the social norms. And I want to give people tips, ideas, ways of embracing their differences, even if other people don't like it. So we haven't prepared at all and...

Kara: We never do. Why would we?

Brooke: We've lived this.

Kara: After six years of coaching, I mean, you coached me about this probably in coach training, and Rachel has been doing the lord's work in between on coaching me on this. Finally, this year was like, you know what, I never prepare for things and that's great and fine. I finally stopped thinking I should prepare. I just did Clutch College Live and a speaking event and I was like, nope, prepare the morning before, good to go.

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Brooke: And I actually feel like we've been preparing our whole lives to talk about this.

Kara: Exactly. If you're thinking about this all the time, it's not like, I don't know what I'll talk about. But it's just like, my genius comes out extemporaneously and it's never going to come from like, okay, I did 16 pages of notes and then I condensed them into an outline and then I did flashcards. That's what I used to do.

Brooke: So here's the topic. So we're going to talk about how to be different. And that what that means is when you are in this world of social norms and social expectations, what "everybody" thinks we should be doing with our lives, and we do things differently, it's hard.

Because of our brains and how we've evolved. So I talk to lots of young people because I have young children, well, young-ish children, 20 and 21. And the question that they're always asking is, how am I supposed to live my life?

It's a big question that we continuously ask through our whole life. And unfortunately, many of us get the answer to this question from looking out into the world and seeing how other people are living their lives. And thinking, oh, most people are doing this, so this must be what I should do.

I think this is the worst way to answer the question how I should live my life. Because it helps you blend in, it helps you be comfortable, and it helps you not be the unique, amazing, awesome, extraordinary person that you can be.

So I want to ask you because I feel like you've lived your life that isn't aligned with all of the social norms in the world, in all ways. Some of them you have, some of them you haven't. And you're kind of what I would call an outlier in some ways, and you handle it so beautifully. At least to my perception you do.

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You're different, you don't apologize, you embrace your differences. Just in general, I'm going to get many more specific questions, but in general, how would you talk about how you've done this in your life?

Kara: Well, this is a pretty concrete technique so I don't know if you wanted it this early, but when I'm coaching on this, so I coach on this often. This comes up a lot and the one I coach a lot on is dating where people will take whatever their insecurity is about what's different about them and they will blame that for if they're unhappy with their dating life, like the state of their dating life.

But you could do it with friends, whatever. So I often encourage people to think of something that you feel so good about with yourself that even if nobody else liked it, you wouldn't care.

So for me, that was always like when I was dating and before I did all my body image work and I had a lot of insecurity about weight, I was terrified that a guy would go on a date and be like, "No, gross, you're too fat."

I never worried that somebody would be like, "Ew, you're a feminist?" If that had happened, I would have just been like, how did we get this far without you understanding that? And if you object, this date is over. But I would not have like, "Oh no, maybe I shouldn't be a feminist, maybe they're right."

So we all have these things that we like about ourselves that we would not throw ourselves under the bus for or question about ourselves. And I think the way you think about that thing is a useful place to see where you have weaker links. Because the weaker links is where we are looking for conformity. We only want to conform when we believe our non-conformity means something bad about us.

Brooke: That's so well said. So for me, I get a lot of non-conforming hate, should we call that, about being rich and wanting to make money and about talking about money and about telling everyone else they can make money. And when people hate me for that, it's funny to me. It doesn't bother me at all.

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And people are mad about it, really mad. It just doesn't bother me. And so I think, how have I gotten to the place where that doesn't bother me? How have you gotten to the place where being a feminist, even though other people don't like that maybe about you, or they think you're doing it wrong, how have we gotten to the place where, yes, it's non-conforming and it's okay?

Kara: That one came naturally to me, but then the place I had to do all this work was on other areas of my life. So I think I look to that place to be like, okay, it's possible to feel so confident about something that many other people hate that you literally don't care.

So what are my thoughts about that versus what are my thoughts about the areas where I do care? I think we all have something naturally - it might not be politics, it might be if you went on a date and a guy was like, "Ew, you're funny? I don't like that."

You wouldn't be like, oh my God, let me be not funny, right? Or if you met someone and they were like, I'm not friends with blue-eyed people. No matter who you are, there's something about you where if somebody rejected you because of that, you would be like, that is so stupid and weird, I'm not going to lose any sleep over it, this clearly means nothing about me.

And so how can you look at how you feel there and then apply it to the areas where it's harder? For me, with body image stuff, that was a very - we've talked about it on the podcast three years ago. I had to do a lot of very concrete rewiring.

It's not a mystery how I got there. I had to start out with maybe the size of my body doesn't mean I'm a horrible person with no discipline who should die forever, and then work my way up, because that's what we're taught. But now it's actually so astounding.

I was talking to somebody the other day and they basically just said something that indicated that someone they might introduce me to would have a thought about my weight or my health or something, and I was

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honestly taken aback because I so don't think that way anymore that I was like, oh, that didn't even occur to me that I was going to have to - I literally only think about it now when I make doctors' appointments.

When I go into a situation where people often get weight shamed. And I'm like, okay, right, I got to tell them I'm not up for that. But the fact that it came out in this other situation, it was so striking to me that in the past, if I'd been thinking about meeting these people, that would have been the first thing on my mind. And now, it was so foreign to me that I was actually like, what? How weird.

Brooke: That's amazing. When you get to the point - I just did a podcast on this in terms of criticism. I think as I get older, I just care less what other people think too, which is such a great aspect of getting older.

Kara: The best part of getting older as a woman is just giving less fucks.

Brooke: Seriously, I just love it. So I think that - I coach people on this all the time. So there's opinions about getting married and having children, there's opinions about getting divorced, there's opinions about not having children, there's opinions about whether you should go to college or not, or what kind of school you should go to, or how your education should be, what kind of job you should have, how much money you should make, whether you're outspoken, whether you're loud, how you're behaving.

And so I think when you look externally to see what most other people are doing and what's accepted and what's an accepted norm, it's very easy to make a list of those things and comply. Because you don't have to deal with as much criticism.

You can be kind of part of this group, you don't have to stand out. But I also think - and this is really in line with what you were just saying, it doesn't require very much of you. It doesn't require...

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Kara: You just go along, right? But also, I like to back up the view, the norms are, okay, you're supposed to get married and have children, but not when you're too young and not if you're too old.

Brooke: And not to another person who's too young or too old.

Kara: And how much that moves over time. So it used to be like, well, it's only normal if you get married to someone of your own sex or gender identity, and now, okay - sorry, yes, so it used to be only okay if you got married if you identified as a woman and you married somebody who identified as a man, and that was it. That was the only marriage that was okay.

And now we have same sex marriages available legally, and now okay, so that's been brought into the fold of normal, but it's still abnormal to not get married at all in certain communities, or even age. If you were a woman 100 years ago, if you were unmarried at 25, that was like, some shit has gone wrong and off to the spinster parish with you.

And now, depending on what community you're in, and within sub communities there are norms. So if you just step back a little and look at how arbitrary that all is, the norm for marriage in my community of East coast Ivy League educated whatever is very different from the norm for marriage in a community of like, devout religious Christians living in Alabama potentially. It's going to be a different norm. So even looking outside your own subgroup helps you be like...

Brooke: Being exposed to different belief systems and different cultures, different areas, totally. I was just hanging out with one of my friends and he was telling me about his 98-year-old grandfather who's getting a divorce and I was just so delighted. Like, delighted at this.

Kara: I have so many questions. Is it somebody he's been married to for 60 years or did he get married at 95?

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Brooke: Yeah, they've been married for a long time and she was much younger and she was putting some demands on him and threatening to leave and he just said that's it.

Kara: Wow, good for him.

Brooke: You wouldn't expect that from that situation.

Kara: Yeah, you'd think I'm 98, I'm just - we're just going to wait out the clock here.

Brooke: Yeah, I'm 98, I'm old, I shouldn't do things like that or whatever. And it just caught me in my own thinking about what's normal and what's not and what we should be doing and what we shouldn't be doing.

And so if we pull in our own - and this is so much of the work that we do. If we pull in our own expectations of our own life and consider that anything is possible, that we can make as much money as we want, no matter how everyone else tells us to be realistic and that we should get married and we should have children, and if you don't have children, you're going to miss out on one of the most beautiful things in life, it's like, but what if the most beautiful thing in life is not having children for me?

Kara: It's like being single and running away to Montenegro for two years before you can.

Brooke: Right. And what if I don't want to have a legal marriage, and what if I want to be with three different people that I call husbands?

Kara: Or you want to be married to all of them and the law hasn't caught up.

Brooke: Exactly right. And so are we willing to consider what is our true desire, question everything, and then go out into the world and say this, this is my life, this is me, this is who I am. And maybe someone will say, "I don't have anything that comes that naturally to me," or, "I don't know if I can ever go against the grain."

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Because what happens is this knee-jerk reaction in your brain, which is kind of a fun visual, in your brain that oh my gosh, I'm separated from the tribe, I'm probably going to die. I should be all of these things and be compliant and go along with this crowd instead of feeling separate from it.

What if we were willing to only do the things that genuinely felt right to us internally? And let me ask you this. How do we know the difference?

Kara: There's so much to unpack there. Can I say five different things in a row? So one of the things I find really fascinating are people who left very insular communities. There was a Netflix show recently called My Modern Orthodox Life I think is what it was called, the woman's name - I forget her name.

She left in her 40s. She left a very religious orthodox Jewish community and when I say very religious, I mean like - I'm trying to translate this from the Yiddish. The Jews, we call them frum, it just means like, not just they go to synagogue a lot, meaning they are living by biblical rules. A lot of it is from the 18th century.

How do you make that transition? How do you be in that world? And when you read and listen to people talk about leaving insular communities of any kind, it's so interesting, some people, it's like, from five years old they were like, I was just like, no, this doesn't make sense to me, this has never made sense to me, I just don't buy it.

And some people, it's this gradual awakening. So I think that goes to the sort of like, you don't have to be somebody who from five years old is like, no, none of this makes sense, I'm just biding my time until I can get out. People can change at any period of their lives.

But the question is the difference between what we truly want, the conformity, I think it's always like, what's the feeling behind it? And understanding like, I think the most complicated area actually is where you have mixed motivations, where you both do feel some desire that you want

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children and also feel like you'll get social validation and approval from it and your parents will finally be happy and whatever.

I'm going through this right now in my life where when I think about marriage and more formalized romantic relationship agreements, it's like, I've done so much work in this area and I can still tell it's both. There's things that appeal to me about it that are not really about the institution of marriage at all, that are about celebrating a big commitment in your life with your loved ones, and then there are things about the social validation.

And I think that's the trickiest area is knowing when a mixed motivation is okay and sort of is a good reason to do something, and when you're really sticking with the crowd. But I think if you had to boil it down, it would be like, are you doing it because you feel anxious about not doing it? In a way of like, what will other people think?

Or are you doing it because it feels - like they're scared to do it because you know it's what you truly want and you're afraid of risking rejection. And then there's being - it's scared to do it versus scared to not do it maybe is the way to talk about it. Does that make sense?

Brooke: Totally. And this is what's so fascinating about this topic because I think the more freedoms we have, the more complicated our life can be. If we're following a very strict religion for example, it's very clear...

Kara: What to do, when to do it, how to do it.

Brooke: So I had this happen when I got a divorce. I had a lot of people kind of come to me privately and secretly and say, "Is that allowed? Are you allowed to just get a divorce for no reason? Nobody has to do anything horrible?" It was like, the secret society was coming to me and whispering.

Part of me was like, of course it's allowed. It's allowed in every way. And is it what you want? Just because it's allowed doesn't mean you need to do it. This is something I put a lot of really serious thought into.

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Kara: You can't tell what you want when you don't think something's allowed.

Brooke: That's right.

Kara: You might be trying to go after it because you think it's not allowed. Sometimes you want things out of rebellion and resistance. But I think we truly - my theory about this, having coached so many women who think they don't know what they want is that we always do know what we want. We just have a lot of voices telling us we don't.

So I think I've told this story on my podcast before but I once coached this pretty young woman in her early 20s about what she wanted. And she was just like, kept insisting she didn't know, she didn't know, nothing sounded good.

And after half an hour of coaching, we got to like, actually, she had this very specific interest in being a specific kind of marine biologist. It was something so specific that was actually the secret dream. But there was so much piled on top of that of like - so we do this thing where we're like, well, if I can't have what I want then I guess I don't know what I want out of these other options that I don't want.

Brooke: It's so good. And I think too we get confused - I coach a lot of people on what they want and I mean, sometimes it's just one question that I'm like, what do you want? They're like, I don't know. I'm like, yeah, but if you did know, and they're like, well, I want, like you said, be a marine biologist.

Kara: It's so specific.

Brooke: And it's right there. You're like, well, if you only knew what you wanted. I do think it's interesting that kind of unpacking why we want what we want, because I think that's why there's so many layers to this work. Because if we start believing that if I get this thing in the world that I want, then I'll be happy and beautiful and thin and rich.

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We put so much pressure on what we think some external thing will give to us. And that's why it's so important to know internally, tapping into if we're not looking at social norms, we're not looking at what everyone else is doing, and if nobody was going to criticize us or put us down and no one was watching, then what?

Kara: Sometimes I ask it the other way, which is if people were going to hate what you were doing either way, which thing would you do?

Brooke: That's good.

Kara: Or if you were going to feel anxious and terrible either way, which thing would you do?

Brooke: I like that, that's good.

Kara: Because there's this fantasy that if I just pick the right one, I'm going to feel better. So I do often ask like, if you could feel great either way, but I also ask, okay, when that doesn't work, I'm like, okay, you're going to feel terrible either way.

Brooke: Because you're committed to feeling terrible.

Kara: Yeah. Do you want to feel terrible married to one person or you want to feel terrible in a polyamorous triad? And they're like, oh, well, I guess if I'm going to feel terrible either way, then I want the triad, or whatever. Sometimes they want the one guy.

But that sort of - I think so much of coaching boils down to reminding people there's no exit ramp off the human experience. You're going to be having the human experience either way, exit 16 does not take you off. So where do you want to have it? Do you want to have it?

And like you said, it's not that there's always one right answer. Do you want to have it in the suburbs, in a conventional marriage, with three kids and a dog, going to the corporate job? Do you want to have it living in a garret in Paris drinking with artists all day?

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It could be either one. But either way, some days are going to feel amazing and some days are going to feel horrible. Now where do you want to have that experience or what conditions do you want to have that experience in?

Brooke: Where do you want to have the human experience?

Kara: Exactly. What kind of life do you want to have the human experience in? It's going to feel terrible sometimes either way. I find that's very clarifying for people because it also helps illuminate where they may be thinking, "But if I just figure out which of these it is, then I won't have to have that."

Brooke: That's so good. That's so good. So you said you had five things. Was there something else?

Kara: Oh God, who even remembers the rest of them?

Brooke: That's good.

Kara: There's one more thing that I think is important about all of this, which is sort of - I mean, I think there's so much socialization that goes into this. Obviously, people of all identities can suffer with this, but I think women especially have trouble with this because we are socialized to think that our value comes from pleasing other people and going along and not making a fuss.

So we are not socialized - men are socialized more often to think their value comes from I'm going to self-actualize and self-express and do this thing, I'm going to...

Brooke: Provide.

Kara: Yeah, whatever it is. And there's downsides to that too, but women in particular are so divorced from what they want. They're socialized around sex to worry about the man's pleasure, they're socialized around family to think they need to sacrifice everything to their children.

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So there's the not knowing what you want, and then there's the not wanting to admit what you want because you have all these thoughts about what it would mean. Yes, I do want to run away to Antarctica on that fellowship, but then I'd be a bad mom because I'm not here taking care of my children.

There's so many layers to it that you have to, goes back to what you said before, what's the why? What's the why not? You have to understand all of those reasons.

But all of that being said, I think ultimately, most people - if you're drawn to coaching, if you are drawn to self-development and drawn to coaching and drawn to psychology, whatever it is, you want to have a life that is in integrity. You want some level of self-knowledge. And you want to do something extraordinary.

That doesn't mean externally extraordinary. This doesn't mean you have to move to Antarctica to discover a new kind of lichen or something. It might just be you want to live an extraordinarily intentional and present life in totally conventional surroundings.

But all of that, you can't do what everybody else is doing and expect to have an exceptional experience because everybody else is doing it because it's easy and the norm.

Brooke: And it's not an exception.

Kara: And we want them to approve. We're like, hi, I'm going to make a whole bunch of different life choices that really reject everything you're doing, and I'd like you to approve of them please and validate me and make me feel good about them.

Brooke: So that's what I want to talk about next. So how do you deal with the lack of approval or the criticism or the dissent, isolation that comes from that?

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Kara: I think this is one of those things that's like - this is just funny; I hope that Danny is listening to this because I worked with Mara and Danny on dating coaching. Mara and Danny, I forget his last name, sorry Danny, but I'm still giving you a plug anyway.

Brooke: Dating coaching, how do they find them, let's just say.

Kara: It's about love coaching I think is the name of their coaching. If you need dating coaching, that's where you should go. I think their program now is called Six Months to Married, which is hilarious also obviously that is not the...

Brooke: Please get married Kara so you can be their testimonial.

Kara: I need coaching on never wanting to get married, and they were like, great. So really, they work with anybody. Anyway, the point of all this was one of the things they do is have you define your values for your life and for your relationships, and I made so much fun of it, was always complaining about it.

Then any time that something comes up, turns out, it's actually quite useful to be like, what are my values? What are my articulated values about my life? And is this in alignment with them?

And when you feel that you are connecting to one of your values, this is all 100% credit to them. I just learned this. I was totally resistant the whole time. But I think that in this kind of situation, that totally helps. When what you are facing - you think about resistance fighters or something.

People who do really brave things in the face of not only disagreement, not only like, trolly comments on Instagram, but literal physical death threats, it's because the value that they care about or the mission that they're on is so important that it's worth it. And so I think you have to decide what is your value. You often say you want to be an example of what's possible, right?

Brooke: Which requires me to stand out from the crowd.

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Kara: And that's your value, but you can always return to that. It's a source of strength and commitment when you are weighing doing something against the fear of displeasure. My version is like, I want to live an extraordinary life.

I want to live an extraordinary, intentional life, which for me, doesn't have much to do with - there are some amazing extraordinary external things happening, but it's really about what extraordinary level of presence and attention can I bring to my own life?

I was having this conversation with my partner the other day where I was like, I totally agree that 99% of people would think our relationship was already amazing and it is amazing, and I want it to be extraordinary. I'm not settling for amazing and it being better than everybody else. It's not a competition. I just want it to be extraordinary.

So I think when you can articulate that value to yourself, whatever yours is, that's what helps you. The first couple of times you're not going to get over the fear of rejection and the tribe. That shit is strong. It takes practice doing it and seeing you didn't die. And then doing it again.

It's like that chronic pain book that I told you about, *The Way Out*. He talks about corrective experiences, which is when you do the thing, you experience the fear and the pain, you work through it, you realize you didn't die, you're teaching your brain basically it's not so dangerous. And I think you have to do that with social rejection too.

It's like, okay, I told people I was quitting running a think tank at Columbia to become a life coach. It was horrible, but I didn't die. Okay, I can do it again the next time.

Brooke: Yeah. And I think too, it's like step one is just so many things come up when I tell my clients that everything is allowed. They want me to give them permission to do the thing that they want to do. And I'm like granted, granted, which of course I have no authority to give them the permission. They've always had it.

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But it's like, you are allowed to do whatever you want, and this is a time in the world for women especially where we have more options than we've ever had, which makes things more challenging. But when you're asking yourself, how am I supposed to live my life? What am I supposed to do? Especially if you're young, what are the rules, how should I do it?

I always encourage you to question everything. Question everything that's been laid out for you as an expectation and this idea, I think I originally got from Martha Beck was this idea of what will everyone think?

Kara: Who is everyone?

Brooke: And she laughed. She's like, it's usually your mother and two friends that you don't even really like.

Kara: And it's so random. It'll be like this girl who teased me in eighth grade named Becky, what is she going to think?

Brooke: So one of the things that I recommend that you do is write down what you think they will think because that's what you're actually thinking. That's what you're actually worried about. And what is it like to go through your life not having your own approval and seeking everyone else's, versus what is it like to have your own?

Kara: And your own authority. I've been talking about this a lot because some of the people who came through my Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching, a couple had faith crises, one or two were in the Church of Latter-Day Saints, and other religions.

But we've been talking a lot about the idea of like, who is the authority? Who gets socialized to seem authoritative and who doesn't? If you're raised in a very top-down authoritative hierarchal religion, then it's very obvious. The whole leadership of this organization are men, so I guess that's who is the authority.

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But even if you don't, we just get socialized to think - women especially are socialized to not believe they have authority of their own. It's like someone else is in charge, someone else knows what we're supposed to do. Someone else is the authority.

And what would it mean to claim your own authority? Authority isn't always easy. It doesn't always feel like making a decision that everybody likes and approves of. That's not what a leader does. A leader is not a people pleaser for a bigger crowd who can find something that everyone agrees on.

Brooke: Wait, what did you just say? That is so freaking good. There are so many people that listen that are leaders that are women. Say it again.

Kara: A leader is not just a people pleaser for a bigger crowd of people.

Brooke: Oh my God, that's so good. Because here's what happens. As the crowd gets bigger, it's harder to people please everyone, so you will feel like you are failing, or you'll feel like you need a smaller crowd so you can get back to people pleasing everyone. That will hinder your growth more than anything. That's exactly why - I just had a braingasm. So good.

As you grow, you will be less effective at people pleasing. You will have to give it up. You will have to let people disapprove of you and criticize you and be against you. And will you claim that authority on what you believe in, even though there's people that dissent?

Kara: It requires such a high level of that because it really - when I think about people pleasing and leadership and doing what you want, all of this, sometimes it is just your mom and Becky, and sometimes it's some sort of community. It's like, whoever it is that you're worried about.

So I used to have a lot of fear about being canceled by other feminists, other feminists were going to disagree with me. And it's been so interesting because now I'm working on a book project and we're meeting with

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publishers and hopefully there's going to be a book deal, and I'm much less worried about that.

And I had this great conversation with my brother once where - this is part of why I'm less worried about it. He was like, one of my brothers ran for public office, has been involved in politics, obviously an area where lots of people will hate you. Pretty much 50% of the electorate guaranteed and everybody else will hate you.

And so he's gone through that struggle, and one of his friends once said to him, "You know, football coaches get death threats about the plays they call." And for me, that was so freeing because to me, football is not something to be like - who gives a shit?

I'm not denigrating anybody cares about organized sports but I personally do not feel about organized sports in such a way that I'm like, sure, that makes sense, you did call a bad play and we lost the Super Bowl so you should die.

But people think that. But it was so powerful to me because it was like, oh, in any community, there's going to be like, people with very strong feelings of disapproval. Depending on your community, the things that trigger the rejection or outrage or criticism are going to be totally different. And so that helps me remember that it's all completely subjective.

Brooke: Yes. That is so good. I love football metaphors. I don't know why. But I love the idea that like, if you lose the Super Bowl, you failed. Even though you won almost every game in the whole season.

Kara: And people are like, not only did you fail, but you should die. I'm going to come to your house. That's how terrible - I am just like, that is the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

But somebody else - there's a bunch of football guys being like, can you believe the feminists are arguing about whatever thing? Why do they care about whether it's six weeks of this or whatever of that?

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Any time you can pull back and be like, oh right, humans all over the world have a lot of opinions about what each other should be doing that all contradict, it's literally impossible to do something everybody will approve of.

Brooke: And here's the other piece of this that I think is so important to remember. We don't want everyone to agree about everything. You're never going to be extraordinary if you're trying to make everyone happy and everyone like you. You aren't going to have to grow.

The dissent, the criticism, the disapproval, the hate, all of it is part of our assignment to be the version of ourselves. I think that is included as part of what it takes to mature and grow and become more of who we are. To take a stand shouldn't be easy.

Kara: It's a fantasy to think that there's anything you could do that everybody will approve of, no matter what you do. You could have the most conventional life and there's a bunch of people being like, God, what a fucking boring square. There's just no way.

Brooke: There's just no way, so you might as well live what's actually true. And here's one thing that I think is so important for all of us to do is where in your life are you conforming? Where in your life are you going with the crowd at your own expense? And what do you think is the cost of that? How expensive is that? What would you say to that?

Kara: Well, I just always like to think about it's a cliché but it's a cliché for a reason. I just think about being on my death bed and am I going to be like, wow, I'm glad I never told anybody the truth about what I think. Or wow, I'm glad I...

Brooke: I'm glad I kept quiet.

Kara: I'm glad I stayed in that job that I didn't want because I didn't want Susan from accounting to be mad that I left.

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Brooke: Or Becky.

Kara: Or my mom, who's been dead for 40 years. Whatever it is. There's studies on what people regret at the end of life. And it's very consistent and it's mostly not spending enough time with their family, so for people who work, and then it's basically not telling the truth, not going after what I wanted, not - the science is out there. This is not a good path.

At the end of your life, statistically, you are likely to regret making the decisions that you have made out of conformity and fear and not wanting to rock the boat. That's what the social science tells us. You don't even have to take our word for it. 80% chance on your death bed, you're not going to be like, "Yeah, so glad that I let my dead parents view of how I should live my life control me for 50 years."

So I just always try to go to that. I really want to feel and I do feel - thought about why I'm not - obviously I get mortality panic occasionally like anyone. But if I got hit by a bus tomorrow, I really feel like I have lived my life and been myself and done - I haven't had all the experiences I want to have. I hope I live to have them.

But I would have no regret that I didn't go after what I really wanted, or that I didn't live my true life. And that's not because I was born special. I did a lot of work to get there. But it's exactly - right before we started this podcast, I told you the story about my partner saying this hilarious thing that made clear he really saw me clearly.

And we were talking about how you only get to feel seen. That's all we want is to be accepted and seen. But when you aren't your true self, you can't be seen. So that feeling you want of acceptance will never come from conformity because when you are trying to...

Brooke: You're pretending.

Kara: You're pretending and you always have to be constantly monitoring, am I acting well enough? Am I conforming well enough? Oh no, is the

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crowd buying Jeeps this year? Do I have to go buy a Jeep? What am I supposed to be doing?

It's so unstable. So that's the saddest thing about it is ultimately, it doesn't even work. It's so much work and effort to conform for a feeling that you will never get by conforming.

Brooke: It's so good. And I think people get a false sense of safety for blending in with the crowd. We're all wearing the same clothes, we're all doing the same thing.

Kara: But do you actually feel safe when you're doing that? If you break it down, how did they feel? Fucking anxious constantly.

Brooke: Someone's going to find out that this isn't who I am. I often say it's the difference between regret and resentment. You're either going to regret all these choices and it's actually not even a choice between them, you get them both. So you regret that you didn't do what you wanted to do, and you feel resentment because whoever you're doing it for doesn't actually care.

Kara: Does not care.

Brooke: They're just like, you do what - we're all doing this, right? We're all doing this so it's all these people that aren't living into their extraordinary version of themselves, holding each other back and complaining about the people who are. And so I think for everybody...

Kara: And that just comes out of fear and resentment. Who complains the most about women breaking whatever barriers? It's often women who didn't who feel resentful. And that's not because women are catty or whatever. It's not a bullshit patriarchal stereotype.

It's just people who have held themselves back end up feeling resentful and then there's all this resistance to people wanting to be free in a different way.

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Brooke: That is so well said. That is so good. And so I think - I mean, for everybody listening who has this idea that you don't know what you want, we know that you know.

Kara: We know what you want too. Just write us a letter and we'll let you know.

Brooke: And you know that you know. So it's like, what if just for five minutes you let yourself know what you're afraid to know, and you thought about maybe I could do this thing.

And here's what I want to say, and this is the truth because people freak out when I tell them this; you can spend time thinking about it, you don't ever have to do it. You don't ever have to do it. But I do think there's power in just knowing what you want and knowing what could be. And then you can make a conscious decision not to do it on purpose because you want to conform...

Kara: But tell yourself the truth.

Brooke: Yes. Tell yourself the truth about that, versus I could actually go out there and do this. When people say to me, "You can't tell people that they can do whatever they want, you need to help them face reality," it makes me just - I'm like, is that another way we're trying to hold us all back?

We create our own reality. We really do by the actions we take and the decisions that we make. And by exploring what's possible and knowing that everything could be allowed. Not even that it is, just evaluate that maybe - like what you're saying. Maybe, possibly it could be true that you could have this thing that other people wouldn't approve of but you would and you'd be okay.

Kara: I love that. I'm always just like, tell yourself the truth. I want to be a marine biologist but I don't think I'm smart enough. Just being honest with yourself, even if you never take action about it, will change your life

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because you stopped pretending and spending all this mental energy pretending you don't know what you want.

You just tell yourself the truth that you're afraid to go after what you want, even that awareness, I mean, there are entire meditative traditions that are thousands of years old built around the idea that simply awareness will produce shifts in your consciousness. And that's true.

So even if you are never going to act on it, or you don't think right now you're ever going to act on it, just telling yourself the truth saves you a lot of bullshit and will produce change ultimately, maybe not towards that thing, you don't have to take the action, but it's just a completely different relationship to be in with yourself to tell yourself the truth, even if you're not going to change your actions.

Brooke: It's just in integrity, even if you're not taking action on it. You're living it, you're knowing it. It's so good.

Kara: And it invites you to work on - the only reason we don't want to do that is because we judge the shit out of ourselves. So it's just an opportunity to notice that and practice that self-compassion. Like oh, I want to do this thing and I'm afraid of what people will think, just like literally every other human who's ever lived and had that thought pattern.

Brooke: I think that's something we forget. Everybody is in this boat with us. Don't think that...

Kara: People who didn't care what the tribe thought died out. Evolutionarily, those people are gone. Their genes did not make it.

Brooke: Yes, it's all part of the process. We made it because we cared and now we have this opportunity not to. It's so good. Okay, you guys, if you want more help with this, Kara has a membership program that you should join immediately called The Clutch. You go to - where do we go?

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Kara: Unfuckyourbrain.com/theclutch. Just Google the Clutch and there will be swearing.

Brooke: There's non-conforming swearing. And it's fantastic.

Kara: But all are welcome. In fact, one of my graduates from my Advanced Certification just told me that several people reached out to her being like, am I allowed to do it if I believe in God? And she was like, yes, it's okay.

Brooke: We take all non-conforming and conforming people.

Kara: All beliefs. Most belief systems welcome, yes.

Brooke: I think that's something that you're fantastic at. Having very strong opinions of your own and accepting other people that have differing opinions and we'll coach all y'all.

Kara: I coach people on their relationship to God all the time and it's incredibly powerful.

Brooke: It's so powerful. Awesome. I love you so much, thank you so much for coming on the podcast. Go join The Clutch y'all and non-conform to everything.

Kara: Thanks for having me.

Brooke: Peace out. Bye everyone, see you next week.

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