

299. Body Love with Kara Loewentheil



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Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 299: Body Love with Kara Loewentheil.

Did you know that you can live a life that's even better than happy? My name is Jody Moore. I'm a master certified life coach and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. And if you're willing to go with me I can show you how. Let's go.

Hey everyone. I have such a special treat for you today. I have my dear friend and fellow coach Kara Loewentheil who agreed to come on the show and talk with me a little bit. And I want to give you sort of a preface first of all why I asked her to come talk about this topic and what we're going to discuss here. So I want to begin by saying that I've known Kara at least five years I think. I met her through The Life Coach School where we were both trained. And we probably couldn't be more opposite in many ways although we have a lot in common as well.

But Kara is from New York, she is a single woman. She coaches feminist powerful women and she is Jewish and got her degree at Harvard, her law degree, practiced law for many years before becoming a life coach. Anyway she's brilliant, funny. She swears a lot although she was able to refrain from that in this episode. Thanks Kara. And so in many ways she and I are just very opposite. We have very different lives. We have some different value systems that we live from, different religious beliefs.

We see eye-to-eye on some of our political beliefs but not all of them. And I love Kara, she's one of my most favorite people. And I'm pretty sure she loves me. And she is one of the examples to me of how actually easy it is to love people if you just let yourself. You don't have to agree on everything. You don't have to have even too much in common to love people when you just get to know them, not that Kara was ever hard for me to love. She's super easy to love, you're going to love her today.

But I brought her on because when it comes to bodies and dieting, diet culture, things like that, she and I teach slightly different things. We have

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different views on it. We have different belief systems around it. And I didn't bring her on to try to convince her or prove my point, in fact quite the opposite. I brought her on because I said, "I want to hear your side of it." I know there is a lot of – even you guys who listen to me and follow me who view it more the way Kara does. And I'm a 100% okay with that.

And in fact this is one of the areas that I want to stay really open to. I want to be open to changing my mind about things if I choose to, especially when it comes to a topic like this, diet, and bodies, and diet culture, and all of that. So I want you to just kind of pay attention to how I ask Kara questions. I really try to be anyway, I'm not perfect at it, but I really tried to go into this open-minded, wanting to see where I could be wrong, wanting to see where I might be misunderstanding.

And I've had many conversations with Kara about many topics in that regard and she always is so lovely about both being convicted in what she believes and also being open to allowing me to believe whatever I choose to believe in the end. So Kara and I have I think what you'll find to be a really valuable discussion about this topic. We still don't have the same set of beliefs about this by the end. It's not like we both came to see eye-to-eye on either of it.

I think though that to hear just another way to think about it because here's what I want you to know, you get to think about this topic any way you want to. And I hope you'll choose to think about it in the way that to you is the most loving and the most empowering, and helps you to live the kind of life that you want to live. So without further ado here is my conversation with Kara Loewentheil.

Jody Moore: I love all of you, including your language and you and I talk differently and I love that about us, that we still love each other. But if you do swear we'll just edit it out.

Kara Loewentheil: Alright, perfect.

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Jody Moore: So tell us a little bit about you.

Kara Loewentheil: This podcast is just going to be 90% bleeps.

Jody Moore: We'll sweep it.

Kara Loewentheil: Yes, 90% bleeps and then one or two other words. Can we tell them the story about how when I had that training class full of LDS members?

Jody Moore: Yes, tell that story. That was fantastic.

Kara Loewentheil: So this is how I heard the story. Yeah. No, go ahead.

Jody Moore: I was just going to set it up. This is back when coach training at The Life Coach School used to be taught in person. Kara and I were both instructors there. Okay, you can take over.

Kara Loewentheil: Well, I'll just tell you what my side, what I heard. So I had a training group that was, I had 12 students who were members of The Church of Latter Day Saints. And I had one person who had left the church. And then I had one person who worked at Planned Parenthood and had never been associated with the church in any way. So we had quite the same and then...

Jody Moore: The whole group itself is only 20.

Kara Loewentheil: I had 14 people and 12 of them were LDS church members and one had kind of faith crisis and left the church and then one was a feminine activist. Yeah, so what I heard was that the LDS members went to you and were like basically clearly a heathen is teaching us and we're worried about our eternal souls if we learned from her. And that you said, "She does curse like a sailor but she's a good coach." That's what I heard.

Jody Moore: Which I stand behind that.

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Kara Loewentheil: It's accurate, yeah.

Jody Moore: It's accurate. Here's the way they said it to me – this is the thing is we always say things in this very delicate kind way.

Kara Loewentheil: Okay. So they weren't like, "She's a heathen." They were like, "She's lost and confused."

Jody Moore: No, they were just like, "Can I just ask you a question? I mean I'm just trying to figure out how do you be in a class like that and have the amount of language and things happening and still feel the way you want to feel?" And it was more like that. It wasn't you're this delicate, subtle and...

Kara Loewentheil: Which is actually such perfect training for being a coach. It's like I'm a body positive anti weight loss coach and I went through Life Coach School training and listened to everybody talk about weight loss coaching all the time.

Jody Moore: Exactly. And that's – I will say this, by the last day, which it was only a six day training or something. And by day six every one of them was so glad they had been in your class. They were like, "We love her and you're right." Anyway it was an amazing experience for them not only because you're such an amazing coach but it was amazing for them to have to get their heads around, like you said. That's the best way to train yourself to be a coach is to have to coach yourself.

Kara Loewentheil: Totally, yeah. I love those girls, I still know some of them, follow on Instagram. I had somebody even now, I'm teaching my advanced certification of feminist coaching. And we talk about this on Instagram.

So I'm sure she won't mind me mentioning, Simone Seol is in it and she is politically more conservative than I am. And so she wanted to do the certification but she was like, "But I'm worried you're going to talk about

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Marxism all the time.” And I was like, “Okay, well, it’s a very small amount of Marxisms, I’m a seven figure coach. So obviously I’m not a communist.”

Jody Moore: You’re like, “I do like capitalism as well.”

Kara Loewentheil: And I run a business.

Jody Moore: You’re safe. You’re safe.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. I’m not going to brainwash you. And I was like, “But also you can manage your mind, take what’s useful and leave what isn’t. I’m not going to brainwash you.”

Jody Moore: That’s right, which I think is so powerful. Okay so let’s continue on with introducing you then, we call you Harvard.

Kara Loewentheil: Whatever, everybody knows us we can just chat.

Jody Moore: No. My people don’t know you.

Kara Loewentheil: Yes, I’m just kidding, that’s true.

Jody Moore: Some of them know you, a lot of them know you. But I want them all to know you even better. So you are a Harvard because of how smart you are and your education. So tell us a little more about you. Try to brag.

Kara Loewentheil: It would be hilarious if I was like actually I went to Long Island Community College, I don’t know why they call me Harvard. Not that there’s anything wrong with Community College, it’s fantastic. So I come from the social justice world and so fear that I might indoctrinate people into Marxism apparently. And so I was a lawyer, I was a reproductive rights lawyer. And then I ran a think tank at Columbia Law School focusing on reproductive rights and LGTBQ rights, and actually religious accommodations. And I could have a whole other conversation about that probably.

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Jody Moore: Right. I didn't even know that. Interesting, okay.

Kara Loewentheil: But anyway now I don't remember any of that stuff because I quit the law and it immediately all fell out of the back of my brain. That's really the most amazing thing I can report is that you can study something for 20 years and then you stop doing it and you're like I don't remember any of that.

Jody Moore: And it's actually good news for all the things we don't want to keep doing.

Kara Loewentheil: Seriously, yeah. So they call me Harvard because I want to Harvard Law School, they. By they, I mean Jody and one other coach. I'm not trying to put this out there as my main name.

Jody Moore: But not only did you go to Harvard you're just brilliant. Sometimes you use vocabulary words that we all go, "Wait, can you explain what that means?" And at the same time super hilarious and fun which is my favorite combination, smart funny people. I've just got to say. I'm sorry to all of you dumb not funny people, but smart and funny is my favorite.

Kara Loewentheil: This reminds me of online dating but I like to have fun. And I'm like, "Who is", I actually want to put on there, "Not into fun." So I get it.

Jody Moore: I know. But you know what I mean? There are some people who I highly respect because of their intelligence and their education, their experience and I like to learn from them. But I don't necessarily see myself hanging out with them whereas you are the best of both worlds. So you said you're a body positive feminist coach.

Kara Loewentheil: So basically my take on our coaching world and the work that I do is that the standard coaching we get, training we get there's a lot of sort of evolutionary biology. We talk about what's happening when you get scared or get anxious and how your body goes into flight or fright. And we sort of talk about that, why are humans so upset about rejection.

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Because people used to live in very small tribes that had, you know, where you were really dependent on other people.

So a lot of mainstream coaching training focuses on there's some evolution of biology. There's some psychology, kind of cognitive behavioral theory of thoughts create feelings, create actions, which obviously we all use a lot in our coaching. And then you have modern therapy which really focuses a lot on your childhood and family of origin as an explanation for why you are the way you are. That those early formative experiences do it.

And so the thing that I think has been missing from a lot of the coaching world and I think and actually you do this in your own way with a different take is the kind of socialization and community that you grew up in. And what the messages are that you learn. So for instance for you specializing in people who are members of a particular faith in church and community.

You're coaching within that context and you have a different perspective on, well, okay, you're raised believing these certain things that we teach in our community that maybe other people don't hear growing up or don't learn or think about. And for me I do that from a feminist perspective meaning I talk a lot about just all of the explicit and implicit messages we get about what women should be like, what's important about a woman, what's valuable about a woman. What a woman should base her self-esteem or her self-worth on.

How a woman should be, how she should behave, what's important in her life. What she should think about sex, and her body, and marriage, what she should think about her work. So that's the angle that I bring to my coaching because I think we're missing something when we just try to explain the way. For instance, I'll just give one example and then I will stop talking.

There is in a lot of dating coaching people talk about anxious attachment all the time which is this idea that your childhood experiences, you know, if your parents are attentive to you when you're distressed. And you have

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consistent nurturing support that you're going to grow up to have basically calm relationships. And that if you have inconsistent care giving as a child then you're going to be very anxious and preoccupied with your relationships.

And to me that may be true but it's missing this entire layer of the way that women are socialized to think of marriage as being the most important thing in their lives and getting a man's approval on romantic love as being the most important thing in our lives. And so a woman might have a totally secure childhood and yet have a lot of anxiety around dating and her relationship in marriage because of that socialization. So that's just one, that's an example.

Jody Moore: Well, and what I love about it is that when we become aware of these messages like you said, explicitly or implicitly that we've internalized and been exposed to our whole lives. All we're trying to do both you and I in our work is to give people a choice. And so it's on the one hand I feel like sometimes people get offensive, like we're trying to take away those beliefs. It's sort of like you're saying with your friend.

Kara Loewentheil: Right. And we're going to brainwash them, right.

Jody Moore: We're going to force Marxism on them or something.

Kara Loewentheil: Right. And I'm a feminist coach it means you have to go beat your CEO and nobody should be a stay-at-home mom. And of course that's not at all what I'm doing.

Jody Moore: It's not to say that you shouldn't value getting married if you choose to value getting married. It's just simply to make you aware that a lot of the things that we think just are good, or bad, or important, or shameful are just messages that we internalized. And it's valuable to know that you get to choose whatever you want. You get to choose to think about yourself in the world however you want to.

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Kara Loewentheil: And for me it's about that self-worth piece. There's a big difference between I want to get married, have children and that's a value I have in my life. And if I can't do that I'm not good enough, I'm not worthy. And if it's not working out that means that I did something wrong and I'm not good enough. It's like that to me is the big importance. It's both – I actually don't believe ultimately any of us are ever making totally free choices because we have all been – the socialization goes so deep.

So it's like let's try to make as free a choice as we can but most importantly even if it's never going to be a 100%, none of us were raised in a vacuum and our brains never go back to zero and blank. But having our self-worth tied up in it, if we can't get the partner, we can't have the kids, or the promotion. Or the like whether you identify as a feminist or the opposite, if you've got your self-worth connected to it so you think you're not good enough if you can't achieve.

Jody Moore: That's right. Which brings me to what I really want us to dive into today and just for the sake of everybody listening I asked Kara to come on because the way that we approach our work is slightly different. But we come from the same foundation, the same tools, the same model. And I really want to have a candid conversation selfishly because I want to understand it better but I thought everyone else might benefit from it as well. I want to dive deeper into things like diet culture and body love.

There's so many more people talking about body acceptance and body love today than at least what I recall when I was younger. I think it's really healthy that we have a movement around it and that we're trying to undo some of the maybe toxic things we were taught. But I do sometimes feel like we just start talking about the opposite side of the same coin. So let me give you some examples but I want you to please feel free to disagree and push back. That's one of the things I love about talking with you.

Kara Loewentheil: I was going to say. I don't think you have to worry that I'm going to be like, no, I can't contradict Jody on her podcast.

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Jody Moore: No, I know, but for everybody listening, Kara and I, I don't know, I get a lot out of the way you think about things. So over the last year I hired a nutrition coach and started counting macros and dieting we would say. And one of the things I get, a lot of people want to lose weight. But I also get sometimes people criticizing me for wanting to lose weight and saying that if you really love your body you don't need to lose weight.

And my argument for that is I can choose to lose weight because I love my body, because I'm at very high risk of type 2 diabetes. There's a lot of reasons. I want to have more energy. I want to keep up with my kids. Now, that's not to say that I don't still have to – kind of like you said earlier, I would be lying if I didn't admit that I still have something in me that thinks I'm just going to look better, align myself better and feel like a better person when I lose weight. I'm not denying that that part's there.

But I think to say that if you love your body you can't choose to lose weight. To me it feels like the opposite side of the same coin.

Kara Loewentheil: Okay. I don't think that sounds like you're being wrong. I want to separate out a few different things there. So one thing is a really common but just factually misinformed conflation between weight loss and metabolic changes that may be the result of diet, of food and exercise. So weight loss in and of itself is not health promoting. If we cut 20 pounds off your body that would not change your cholesterol level, that would not change your insulin resistance.

If you change the way you're eating and you change the way you're moving you may improve your insulin sensitivity, which is how your body processes and uses insulin, which is a hormone that impacts fat storage in your body. So type 2 diabetes people think is just caused by what you eat. In fact there is a big genetic predisposition factor in type 2 diabetes. And the science now and also these things are always evolving but the science right now is basically says that some people are able to delay the onset of type 2 diabetes possibly for quite a long time with diet and exercise.

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Some people cannot delay it no matter what they eat and how they move because of their genetic predisposition. Some people will never develop it because they don't have that genetic predisposition regardless of how they eat and move. So the scientific understanding is a lot more complicated than the way the media presents it to us.

So what I would say to you is when someone says to me, "I want to lose weight so that I feel better, and have more energy", and whatever, whatever. I'm like, "Those aren't caused by the pounds on your body. Those are caused by your metabolic regulation and what you eat and how you move."

Jody Moore: But it just so happens that a lot of times when we start eating better we do often.

Kara Loewentheil: Some people do and some people don't. We have a real salience bias about this.

Jody Moore: Yes, that's true.

Kara Loewentheil: What happens is that people who do change their eating and movement and don't lose weight, people basically don't believe them that they've changed it because we think it should always result in weight loss.

Jody Moore: Yeah, that's true, I would agree with that. But here's the other thing, for me over the past year it's been a goal. And I can't say that I feel confident I'm always going to be able to keep my head there which is actually why I stopped dieting recently because I could feel my head going to an unhealthy place around it. So I was like, "Whoa, no, we're not doing that." So now I'm just back to more intuitive eating.

Kara Loewentheil: And that's so important though because I mean scientifically, obviously we believe in managing our minds. But the studies do show that at least in people who aren't managing their minds, calorie restriction inevitably leads to an obsessive focus on food and a focus on

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dieting and disordered thinking. There's a famous experiment called the Minnesota prison experiment where they took a bunch of healthy men, cut their calories to what is now recommended to women as their normal daily intake of 1200, which is insane.

And the men basically all developed eating disorders, fixations with food. But ironically some of them then became obsessed with dieting. It's like your brain gets a little crazy.

Jody Moore: Yeah, for sure. I'm sure any of us who have tried dieting would say that sounds accurate. But over the course of the past year to me it was more like a challenge that I wanted to take on, like a goal. Just like building my business sometimes is a goal. Why do we set higher goals in business to make more money? I don't need to make any more money. And if I'm trying to make more money because I think it's going to make me approve of myself more or more acceptable to the world, that's probably not my best motivation.

It could be healthier motivations to pursue a goal and I really felt like that over the course of the past year until like I said, the last month or so when I was like, "No, okay, we're not going there." I mean what are your thoughts on that?

Kara Loewentheil: I mean I am really not a purist. First of all from my perspective as very much like a pragmatist, I'm not saying no one should ever try to lose weight if they want to. I'm saying here's what the science shows us. 97% of people are unable to change their weight by more than plus or minus 10% and keep it that way for more than three years. It's just not scientifically proven that this is a thing.

And so we have an entire medical – it's like as if we have a treatment for heart disease that only worked for 3% of people and every time you went to the doctor with any problem they were like, "You should do this heart disease treatment we have that only works for 3% of people." It's just lunacy that this is what is always recommended to people. And it's not let's

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look at your insulin resistance and figure out what blah, blah, blah. It's like, your knee hurts, you should lose weight.

So I think this is a perfect example of a situation where I don't believe that any of us can get our brains to a 100% weight neutral. Just like I don't believe any of us can get our brains to a 100% race neutral, gender neutral. We are so deeply socialized. But I'm not a purist. I don't think we have to get there. I would say for you, you're not the average person who tries to lose weight. You're a master life coach who's been coaching yourself on your self-love, and your self-worth, and your self-acceptance for five, ten years now. You're pretty far along in that journey.

Jody Moore: And I paid someone good money to help me do it. I think to your point, I don't think it's as simple as we tend to think. Or again what breaks my heart is the amount of drama and shame that we attach to this topic.

Kara Loewentheil: Yes. And also you've lost the weight now. Here's the thing that is misconception about weight, it's not that difficult to lose weight in the short term. I mean yes, a lot of people experience that as difficult. But statistically speaking a lot of people are able to do that. It's the problem is that what happens to 97% of people is that they start weight cycling, which means they gain the weight back, often more, then they diet again etc.

What most people are not informed of is that weight cycling is much worse for your health than staying at a certain weight, even if it's a larger weight, consistently. It's actually the losing, and regaining, and restriction, that is what really screws up your health.

Jody Moore: And your mind.

Kara Loewentheil: Well, yeah, I mean all of this. And all of these studies are done on people that manage minds, which of course I always say you take with a grain of salt. But I don't think it's – I agree that if you completely love your body there'd be no reason to change it. But I also just don't think anybody ever gets to – my brain still – I am very affirmatively anti diet, anti

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weight loss, I don't engage in it myself. I practice sensible eating. But my brain is just deeply socialized like anybody else.

And any time I experience rejection my brain's like it would be better if you lost weight, you would never have to feel bad again. So I just don't think we ever fully escape that. But it's like with anything in life. It's like just informed consent, it's not me saying nobody should try to lose weight. It's like make sure you understand the science, you've done the thought work on what you're making it mean, all the self-worth you have attached to it, you make it from place.

Jody Moore: Yeah. Go into it with full awareness. I mean you're right, it's like if none of us had any of these sort of insecurities or nonsense thoughts about our need to be approved of us none of us would wear make-up and get our hair done.

Kara Loewentheil: Right. And just think about all the thin unhappy people that you have. I've been doing this a lot with clients recently where I'm like, "Take the thing that you imagine if you could just have that thing." For some people it's getting their business in a certain place, for some people it's their weight. For some people it's whatever. That thing that you're like if I could just fix that. And I want you to think of someone in your life who has that thing and you know that they're obsessed with some other thing.

I haven't figured out what I'm going to call it but I want to call it, like it's something like self-worth musical chairs or something.

Jody Moore: I call it Whac-A-Mole.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. But for me I'm like it's Whac-A-Mole with yourself. But when I think about it, for me it's very powerful to think – so for me I look at look one of my, you know, I have a relative who is thin and fit and exercises all the time, and never worries about their weight, whatever. They are so incredibly anxious and stressed out and have all their self-esteem wrapped up in their career that isn't going the way they want to.

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It's so powerful for me to look at a person who has the thing I think would make me happy. And see that they have some other thing, that they have attached their self-worth to. That's why it's like a merry-go-round. You're like if I was just on that horse. But the person on that horse is like if I just was on that horse. We think that there's a human experience where we don't have one of those things to worry about. But there isn't. You just get to trade, do you want to worry about your weight, or do you want to worry about your job, or do you want to worry about your marriage?

Nobody gets a life where we don't have one thing that we constantly have to coach ourselves on about our self-worth.

Jody Moore: I did a podcast a long time ago called The Human Void kind of about this. They have this void and when you have kids you notice it at a very young age that they look to their mom or dad to fill it, or to buy them the toy or to whatever. And we want to fill it for them, we try to. It doesn't ever work and it's the same for us. It's like there just is this void. I don't know why we have it but we all have it. And you can try to fill it in but then it will just show up again.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. It's like I think Brooke talks about it as dissatisfaction. There's just like human life involves some dissatisfaction. But for me it is just really powerful to be like the person who – it's not just the person who has the thing I want isn't happy. It's like the person who has the thing I want is worried about something else that I have that they think will make them happy. Where actually it's almost like we're in the – it's not called The Watch.

It's like an O. Henry story but basically it's a story about this young couple who's very poor and so for Christmas the wife decides to – it's like she decides to cut off all of her hair to sell it to buy a chain for the husband's pocket watch. And he's sold his a watch to buy her a comb for her hair.

Jody Moore: Yeah. Isn't that The Gift of the Magi?

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Kara Loewentheil: Gift of the Magi or something, yeah, exactly. Yeah, so I just think about that, it's like that. We're like, "Just have that thing." And the person's like, "No, I have that thing, that doesn't work. I need the thing you have."

Jody Moore: Oh my gosh, yeah. It's exhausting.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. So it's like to just to resign yourself to like, yeah, you lose the weight. Even if you're in the 3% who keep it off, there's no exit ramp off the human experience, right?

Jody Moore: Yeah, that's right. Now, you made a comment that you said you're not saying that there's never a healthy reason possibly to choose to lose weight. What might that be?

Kara Loewentheil: If I said that that's not what I meant.

Jody Moore: Okay, tell me.

Kara Loewentheil: What I mean is I'm not saying it's not my business to tell other people whether they should try to lose weight or not. I don't think there is ever a good reason to focus on weight loss itself because the weight is never the issue. It's always if there's a health issue it's not actually the physical fat cells on your body, it's whatever it is, your cholesterol, your insulin sensitivity, your hormone regulation, whatever, whatever.

So I don't think ever focusing on – it's sort of like when we say to people, "If you focus on", I'm trying to think of a good business example. But it's like focusing on the destination of the journey. It's like focusing on the symptom not the cause.

Jody Moore: Yes, I agree with that.

Kara Loewentheil: If it's about health then and you change your health behaviors and you get your health result the weight on your body doesn't matter.

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Jody Moore: Or if it's about getting stronger or something even.

Kara Loewentheil: Right. I mean I started lifting a few years ago and I have gone down a dress size. I think my weight has actually gone up because muscle weighs more than fat. I didn't lose weight to do that. And it's just we have to break – we have this association that if you eat and move a certain way you'll look a certain way. I go to the dog park and I just look all these different breeds and shapes and sizes of dogs. And nobody would be like all of them should like the weimaraner. And that's what humans are like too.

Jody Moore: That's a really good analogy.

Kara Loewentheil: It would be so crazy if somebody was in there with their pitbull being like, "I don't know, I put him through all these exercises and he just still doesn't look like a Great Dane." You'd be like, "It's a totally different dog."

Jody Moore: I love that so much. Okay I want to also have you define for me the way you would define it, obviously there are lots of definitions, but how do you define the term diet culture?

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. So I think diet cultures...

Jody Moore: Because sometimes people come at me with that.

Kara Loewentheil: Jody, are you feeling very attacked about your diet?

Jody Moore: A little. Well, I don't feel very attacked. Just every now and then I'm like, "Why do we have to argue about this?" I don't have any problem with anybody who doesn't want to lose weight. I honestly couldn't care less. Why do people get so mad at me if I do want to lose weight is my question?

Kara Loewentheil: So here's what I'll say.

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Jody Moore: I'm not even defensive about I'm just curious. I was like, "I need to talk to Kara, she'll explain this to me."

Kara Loewentheil: Okay. Well, so obviously it's because of their thoughts. I mean I don't get mad at people who want to lose weight and I'm anti diet. So it's their thoughts. But I will say this. I think that diet culture...

Jody Moore: That's right. That's right.

Kara Loewentheil: The real word for it to me is fat phobia. It's more like racism, sexism, ableism, religious discrimination. We live in a society that enormously discriminates against people in larger bodies. And it is actually a discriminatory ideology. Diet culture is a nicer word for that because people don't want to even be associated with it. That's how deep fat phobia is, is even people who are against diet culture don't want to be associated with the word 'fat'.

So I think from that perspective if you think about it, it's really existentially, like I used to do legal work around this because they get treated that operate in different ways. It's like some categories are things you could change, like religious discrimination. You can change your religion. But we still don't allow you to discriminate against people on that basis just because they could change it. And body size is more like that than it is maybe than racism or sexism. Although I mean there's sexual identity and gender identity are more fluid now.

But I think the thought and the model of the people who are upset when they see people trying to lose weight is basically like this is active participation in this value system. And there is no harmless way to do that. So it would sort of be like if you were part of a religious minority that was discriminated against and you were publicly talking about converting. And being like, "Well, I'm doing it because I love this new religion, it has nothing to do with the old", whatever.

It's like the thought process is basically like, well, you can't really do it in a vacuum because it's taking place in the context of a society where there

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are enormous social, financial, health related costs to being in a larger body. So I think that's the thought process. Now, do I go around messaging people that they should try to lose weight? No. There's also just a model that certain people have about doing that and they do it about multiple things probably, not just that issue.

Jody Moore: Yeah, of course, yeah. I don't know where the free time comes from. But anyway, maybe it's amusing for them or entertaining. But I wanted to ask you this, so sometimes the way I think about it is I have four children as you know. I love those children but I also want more for them. I want them to learn. If I have a child that's, "Let's read, because if you don't you're just not acceptable and I can't love you until you learn to read." And this is not just with weight loss but with any goal we're trying to work on.

I feel like the healthiest head space with anything, again trying to build your business, trying to – anything that you just decide to set your mind to doing. When we're in the head space of the way I think about my children which is I want to help you learn to read because I love you, because once you can read you're going to open up in a richer way than you would possibly be able to if you couldn't read. And so the problem is that, like you said, the underlying beliefs that I think we would all be lying if we denied.

Even let's talk about money for example. If I said, "No part of me thinks having more money would be – I would be happier", let's just say. Part of me still kind of thinks that, more money equals more happiness. Or a little bit thinner, I would be more acceptable. So while my higher brain has different ideas, a part of me does still believe that. So I think that's where we get into trouble, is not letting those creep in. But the reality is we are designed for growth.

We are designed for challenge and I know both you and I like about the work we do that it does help you develop a different relationship with yourself, learn discipline, learn how to love – you have to practice loving yourself. When we pursue goals in the healthiest way ideally we achieve

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that along the way. But I'm curious your thoughts about my analogy with the child learning to read.

Kara Loewentheil: Most people, although not everyone can learn to read. But I would say a larger percentage of people, there are people who have disabilities that prevent them from learning to read. In that case it's not loving to try to get someone to learn. And I think that the place the analogy breaks down a little bit is that the statistics show that intentional long term weight loss is not available to most people on a long term basis. And so is it loving to try to be...?

Jody Moore: Okay. What about money, let's relate it to money.

Kara Loewentheil: A lot of this comes down to what's your belief about what's possible and what's it based on. So some people would say, "It's unrealistic to tell people that everyone can be a millionaire or make a million dollars." There are structural factors that get in people's way. And it's not any better to tell someone to set a financial goal that's not achievable. Statistics show x, y, z. To me, I think for me I tend to believe more in – this is just my thought pattern.

I tend to put more faith in what I believe to be a biologic impossibility versus a structural one in the sense that I think that we – I think humans can do amazing things with their minds. And so I think it's easier to overcome if you have the right tools. Some of the potentially structural barriers to making money than it is to overcome some, what I believe to be biological realities about weight loss and people having different body sizes. I don't discount socialization around money, it's a real thing.

I think that the socialization around – and plenty of people without money would say, "Yeah, our society completely stigmatizes poverty and poor people are discriminated against." And the problem with the socialization around weight to me is that it is still so invisible to so many people. You have to be living under a rock these days to not have heard that racism and

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sexism exist, that's just like a thing. Now, you may have different beliefs or positions about them but you're not unaware that that's a concept.

So many people are completely unaware that it is not actually just objectively true and good that being thinner is better, healthier and more attractive. It's just not even – we're still so far behind I think on the public education about it.

Jody Moore: Yeah, I would agree with that. I mean the awareness of what exists in our culture and our society but even the awareness of what exists within us, I think we have a long way to go.

Kara Loewentheil: Right, totally.

Jody Moore: So, awesome. Well, gosh, I mean I will just say...

Kara Loewentheil: I didn't curse at all by the way so far. We don't have to bleep anything.

Jody Moore: I just was thinking that as you were saying your last sentence.

Kara Loewentheil: Are you impressed?

Jody Moore: I was just about to commend you for that by the way, super impressive. I also want to say that I don't know that I agree entirely that it's as impossible to change your body as maybe you do, but that's alright. We're both not out to convince each other. Just for anybody listening I mean I think it's important that we become aware of ourselves. And that with any goal we try to pursue whether it's a goal around your health, or your money, or whatever it is, that there can be reasons that might be reasons you might like.

I mean Brooke always says it that way, "Do you like those reasons? You do not?" Which I just want to go, "I don't know. I kind of like all of them and I kind of don't like any of them."

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Kara Loewentheil: I have one thing I want to say about this. I am thinking about this more with the money. If the studies showed that 97% of people who are able to make a million dollars have lost all their money three years later.” Then I might be like, no, I don’t think – I think to me, I want to be clear. When people are like, “What do you mean people can’t lose weight?” I people lose weight all the time, again it’s not that difficult for a lot of people to lose weight in the short term. It’s what is happening long term.

And obviously some people can. You and I know successful weight loss coaches who are in that 3%. But to me it’s not just sort of my opinion. It’s like okay, well, yeah, if the statistics show that 97% of people who make a million dollars in a life coaching business, three years later are bankrupt. Then I would be like, well, I think that maybe there’s a problem with this.

Jody Moore: Yeah. And that’s where I think you and I differ which is why you went to Harvard and I went to Utah State is because...

Kara Loewentheil: I don’t think that’s why.

Jody Moore: No, really. Hear me out for a second. I don’t really care what studies show. I like to make my decisions based on what I want to do and what I want to decide is possible for me. That’s really clear to me when it comes to my business and my financial goals because the studies do show that fewer than whatever percent of entrepreneurs are successful and actually make it. And I’m always like who cares, I’m going to do it.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. Well, of course I operate that way too on some level. I’m not like every other life coach. But I think to me...

Jody Moore: Right.

Kara Loewentheil: But part of what I’m trying to say is that the issue isn’t can people lose 20 or 50 pounds? Yes, the science says they can. Can they keep it off? To me there is a biological process that happens. The science suggests that there are biological processes in your body that want to keep – it’s very difficult to keep your weight down without much effort.

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Versus you make your money, there's not a whole organism that we don't totally understand that's going to – I just don't think they're exact.

Jody Moore: I would agree, they're not exact. But I still think – I just want to make sure that we're empowering people to believe whatever you want to believe about what you're capable of in any area of your life.

Kara Loewentheil: See, but I think we all have things we think. If your client was like, "I believe I can fly, I'm going to jump out the window." I don't think you'd be like, "I empower you to believe that." I guess what I'm saying is we all have points which...

Jody Moore: I empower you to believe that. It would probably be fun to watch and see what happens.

Kara Loewentheil: It is subjective. But I think part of where I have trouble with some of the way that we talk about life coaching is we act – it's like as though some of us truly believe anyone can do anything. We all have beliefs about what is truly plausible or when we would be like, "I actually think my client's having a psychotic break and hallucinating and we should contact", you know.

Jody Moore: Yeah. But I'm not saying you should jump out the window. I'm saying people have lost weight and kept it off, that is a thing.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah. And what I'm...

Jody Moore: Right?

Kara Loewentheil: Yes. But what I'm saying is that I don't look at statistics or I don't think any kind of science, or math, or whatever else can tell me what's possible for me. We all do have things where we think something's possible versus something isn't. And for me my understanding of the science is that – not that it's impossible. Some people do, do it. But you also have to be asking...

Jody Moore: It's not impossible.

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Kara Loewentheil: But also why? Let's bring this back to the why. So let's say it is possible. It's going to take much of your energy, this much of your time, this much of your money. You have to spend your whole life eating a certain way that, whatever, to keep your weight there. Why are we doing that? So it goes back to that question of what are your reasons and do you like them?

Jody Moore: I can see that. I just don't think it's that. Again I'm not trying to be a bikini model.

Kara Loewentheil: So for you to stay there it might not take that much effort. There are people for who...

Jody Moore: That's what I'm saying.

Kara Loewentheil: But there are people whose bodies would never be able to stay at the weight you're at.

Jody Moore: Right. I'm not saying everyone should be at my weight at all.

Kara Loewentheil: No, I know, but I'm just saying there's a privilege inherent in being a smaller bodied person in the first place and being like, "Well, I've been able to lose those 20 pounds and keep them off." You're operating in a very different place from somebody whose body is naturally inclined to be at 200 or 300 pounds.

Jody Moore: For sure. But what I'm saying is, that just happened to be where I knew that I could not have to live an unreasonable life around food. And that's me in my situation and everybody else is different. And nobody has to lose weight. I couldn't care less if – but whatever it is that you desire to do, if it's coming from a healthy place, if it's coming from a desire to see what you're capable of. And if it's coming from a desire to challenge yourself, I don't think that's always a negative thing. While I would agree it's super challenging not to let the negative creep in.

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Kara Loewentheil: I think the question is always do I know that I could be equally happy either way? If you think – that’s how you know if you’re lying to yourself about your motivation I think.

Jody Moore: That’s right. I would agree.

Kara Loewentheil: But if you’re like I totally just want to grow and be healthy. And then I’m like, “Great. And can you be happy at the weight you’re at now?” And you’re like, “No, I hate myself.”

Jody Moore: That’s right, then we have a problem.

Kara Loewentheil: That’s how we know, right, whatever the goal is. It’s just like the same with dating and relationships, people are like, “Well, I just really love being in a relationship. I just don’t like being single.” I’m like, “Totally, cool, you really like being in relationships. Could you love yourself if you had to be single for six months for some reason or a year or if you were single for the rest of your life?”

And if the answer to that is no, that makes me really anxious to think about. Then we know there’s some work to do and it’s not just you happen to prefer being in a relationship or you happen to prefer this weight. You happen to prefer making this amount of money. If the alternative of staying how you are makes you feel like you can’t be happy, it makes you very anxious about your own self-worth, that’s how we know that motivation is not going to sustain you.

Jody Moore: That’s exactly right, I agree with that. Kara I love you. Thanks for coming on my podcast.

Kara Loewentheil: I love you too. Thank you for having me. And I have taken this – I mean obviously ultimately do I spend my day up in people’s business about whether they should lose weight? No. But I do think because I try to take a strong position on the other side to help people think about it because it is so unquestioned, that’s so prevalent.

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Jody Moore: Yeah, that's why I wanted you to come on. I wanted you to go...

Kara Loewentheil: I know. I'm glad we talked about it.

Jody Moore: Yeah. And if you want to hear more from Kara her podcast, I'm going to say the name.

Kara Loewentheil: UnF*ck Your Brain, whatnot.

Jody Moore: Un-eff your brain.

Kara Loewentheil: Un-eff, what you would say if you were allowed to curse instead of UnF*ck Your Brain, that's the name of the podcast.

Jody Moore: And there is some language so don't play it in front of your kids. But Kara is so brilliant and my sister and I always say, "A well placed eff word is kind of necessary at times."

Kara Loewentheil: But if you listen to 10 episodes you will become a Marxist who doesn't care either way.

Jody Moore: Yeah, that's true.

Kara Loewentheil: So just keep an eye out for that.

Jody Moore: So you've been forewarned.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah, nine episodes you're safe, but that tenth episode.

Jody Moore: But anyway, is there anything else we should send people? You have an Instagram page, where else can they find you?

Kara Loewentheil: An Instagram page, that's what we call those.

Jody Moore: Is that what it's called? I sounded really old when I said that just now.

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Kara Loewentheil: We can edit that part out. I do Instagram.

Jody Moore: We're keeping it in.

Kara Loewentheil: My last name is very hard to spell, Cara Loewentheil. Just look for UnF*ck Your Brain podcast. But spelled F asterisk and the rest of it and you will find me.

Jody Moore: You can go to my page and look up the people I'm following and then you'll find Kara Loewentheil. It's not that hard. We'll put it in the show notes.

Kara Loewentheil: Okay, there you go.

Jody Moore: And thank you so much for coming on Kara.

Kara Loewentheil: Thank you for having me.

Jody Moore: I love you.

Kara Loewentheil: I love you too. I'll talk to you next week for my podcast.

Jody Moore: Yes, can't wait. I'll see you then. I'll get ready for swear words.

Kara Loewentheil: Yeah, cursing required, it's mandatory.

Jody Moore: Okay, good.

Kara Loewentheil: Bye.

Jody Moore: See you later.

Who is your life coach? If you don't have one I would be so honored to be your coach. I created a virtual coaching program called Be Bold that I want to invite you to join me in. We can address challenges, we can work on goals, and we can do it in so many different ways.

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We have group coaching, individual private coaching, and online chats along with hundreds of hours of courses and content that I've created just for you. When you're ready to really take what you're learning on the podcast to the 10x level, then come check out Be Bold at JodyMoore.com/membership.