

Ep #17: Lessons from *This Messy Magnificent Life*



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 17.

Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*, a show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth, and joy. Here is your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey there, creative friends. How's your week going? Guess what – my week isn't perfect. It's not perfect this week. But seriously, I bet you think my weeks are always perfect because I come on the podcast and I talk about all the amazing things happening in my life and it's all true. There is a lot of amazing and I spend all my time focusing on the amazing and I'm pretty much always upbeat and enjoying life, thanks to practicing all these mindset tools that I teach you.

But life is messy sometimes, right? This week, I fell back into a couple of old habits, dang it. As I was catching up after vacation, I was really finding myself in these old habits and it added some stress and I didn't like it. I didn't like the way it felt and thankfully, because I'm in the habit of working on my mindset and tuning into my thoughts and feelings, I was able to catch myself pretty quickly and prevent me from heading too far back into my old ways and really, I nipped most of it in the bud pretty quickly.

But, I tell you this just so you know that I have stress and worry and anxiety and overwhelm too and I have that at least at some point in every day. So it's not just you and it really is these life coaching tools that I teach and I talk about on the podcast that are what I use, the real tools I use. And that's why I know they work so well. I'm the guinea pig. And, well you know, about the guinea pig, I was just thinking this week, why is it the guinea pig that is the stereotypical animal for trying stuff out?

Is the guinea pig like extra volunteer-y and a bigger risk taker? I don't know. That's a whole other subject. But anyway, I love to be the guinea pig, as we call it, for trying things on myself so I can show you how they work.

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Okay, so speaking of vacation, because this week's messiness came from catching up from vacation, but while I was on vacation, which was in Aruba three weeks ago and then at the lake a couple of weeks ago, I read about six books; all of them completely amazing.

And today, I want to talk about one of the books and one of the authors who is a brilliant teacher and she's had a pretty big influence on me in a lot of ways and that is Geneen Roth. Okay, so while I was in Aruba, I read Geneen's new book, brand new, called *This Messy Magnificent Life*.

And if you have not read Geneen, like her genius book *Women, Food and God*, you might want to stop this podcast right now and order it; order both of these. I can't recommend Geneen's work highly enough. And if you have any issues at all, particularly in the area of food or emotional eating, then you really, really want to know Geneen.

But really, if you do any sort of buffering, which pretty much everybody does, which could include alcohol or scrolling Facebook or Instagram when you shouldn't be or binge-watching Netflix or shopping too much, you know, buffering. It's that stuff we do so we can get that big comfy dopamine hit to our brains that feels so good and it takes away whatever negative feelings we're currently feeling. So it's like numbing us.

And Geneen is your girl if you want to get rid of this kind of behavior, okay. So I had the pleasure of meeting Geneen actually recently, even though I have followed her for a long time, she was one of the speakers at the Feel Good Summit that I went to in Southern California that Dr Mark Hyman put on, so I got to talk to Geneen in person one afternoon. But at this event, Geneen took us through an eating meditation which was pretty crazy, y'all.

It was over lunch and it was a very emotional deeply moving transformational experience when it comes to reconnecting us with our food. So it took an hour to do this meditation and it was really interesting to watch people's behavior. Some people were really mad.

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They were like, I just want to eat and I'm hungry and so much emotional stuff came up for people around her meditation, which was so fascinating. But you know, so many of us have spent years becoming completely disconnected from our food as we multitask, haven't we?

We've perfected eating while watching TV, eating while working, eating while driving, eating while doing just about every other activity that we have other than just eating while eating. Nobody just eats while they eat, or very few people right.

So in *Women, Food and God*, Geneen's spectacular book from 2010 where I first discovered her, is where she talks about her most basic concept or idea, and it's this; the way you eat is inseparable from your core beliefs about being alive. Your relationship with food is an exact mirror of your feelings about love, fear, anger, meaning, transformation and yes, even god. So whoa, so think about that for a minute. It's so true.

And we're going to go through some of her big takeaways from her latest book in just a sec, but this idea of our relationship with food is really the same thing as our relationship with love, fear, anger, meaning, transformation and god. Whoa, take that in for a minute.

Okay, so it's because of this book that I first practiced mindfulness around food, the exact type of work the Geneen took us through in the eating meditation at the Feel Good Summit. Now, I still have a lot of room for improvement in this area, but *This Messy Magnificent Life*, her new book, brings so much more to the table, figuratively, the figurative table and the real table, about life in general, not just food.

And so I wanted to tell you about my favorite takeaways from this book on today's podcast. Now, here's one of the reasons why this book is so heavily on my mind right now. Because in my coaching program called Design You where I work with creatives, in the month of July, I'm teaching our members how to take massive action. And by the way, you can still join us on this massive action work if you're interested – just go to my website or email us at info@tobifairly.com if you want to know about the Design You program.

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But anyway, today on the podcast, I want to talk about how this work of Geneen's plays into the idea of taking massive action, okay. So one thing I know that is going to happen for all of my members of my Design You coaching program, and for me, and for you if you're working on taking massive action in your life, is that we are going to be intentionally pushing ourselves outside our comfort zone, right?

It's not super comfy to take massive action and create massive change. And let's be honest here for a minute; just because we're pushing ourselves on purpose, doesn't mean that the same feelings of fear and anxiety and overwhelm and whatever each person's go-to negative emotion is won't still come up because they still will, even though we're doing this on purpose. We're pushing ourselves out there on the limb of discomfort on purpose, those feelings will still come up, okay.

And when those uncomfortable feelings do come up, because we're doing this deep work and taking action in a huge way, what are most of us going to want to do? Yeah, we're going to want to get rid of those uncomfortable emotions as fast as possible through some sort of numbing or buffering, right?

Now, that can mean a lot of things for you. It could mean overspending, like shopping when you don't really need anything, overeating, overdrinking. Who drinks wine every night to calm down and doesn't get anything done after that; doesn't feel really good about doing anything the next morning? Yeah, overdrinking, binge-watching Netflix or Hulu or regular network television and completely zoning out for hours or days and instead of doing what you say you want to be doing.

And you know, just other types of numbing, could be anything really, that you do that makes you instantly feel better and essentially, it's a way, a form, of procrastinating from doing what you said you really wanted to do, which for me this month means taking massive action in an area of my life or my business, okay.

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And since my own personal numbing of choice is eating, I thought about Geneen in her new book when I was working on this content and I thought it would be so helpful to keep me and my Design You members and then you, those of you listening, who are going to take gigantic action yourself this month, help you stay on track too. When you're trying to achieve those huge personal results in life or business, I don't want you falling prey to numbing, okay?

So Geneen's book, *This Messy Magnificent Life* talks a lot about numbing and it talks a whole lot about a whole bunch of other amazing but related things, not just about food. And I want to tell you my favorite 12 takeaways that are, I think, probably going to bring up some deep stuff for you and some ah-ha moments for you just hearing about them. And then if you want to, you can always go buy her book too and do more work.

Now, I don't have any affiliation with Geneen or anything like that; I just am telling you that this book moved me in a huge way, okay. So here we go on my favorite takeaways from *This Messy Magnificent Life* by Geneen Roth.

Okay, number one – focus on what isn't wrong. A novel idea, right? This is not the same thing as focusing on what's right or your gratitude journal exactly. It's not exactly the same thing and I want you to think about this for a minute. Focus on what isn't wrong.

So we spend most of our time focusing on all the things that are wrong and we can think of a lot of things every day that are wrong, right. And thinking about what's wrong makes us feel bad and makes us want to numb those feelings, right. So what's not wrong in your life?

So think of it this way; if you were to say what's right in my life, you would go on this long list, hopefully, of all your blessings, which is great. But what do you think about when you think what's not wrong? Geneen says, "I don't have a toothache." That's a good thing, right, because when you have a toothache, all you can think about is that toothache. So I don't have a toothache.

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For me, it's things like, I don't have to go into an office outside my home that I hate for work. I don't have to raise my teenage daughter by myself. I don't have to go months at a time before I can take another vacation and relax. So see how focusing on what's not wrong can really transform your feelings every single day. It's a huge thing I think we should all practice.

Okay, number two – there isn't a someday. There never was. No one has ever experienced the future because when it arrives, it's today. This one was huge. She said this even during our eating meditation out in California at the Feel Good Summit and it literally brought me to tears.

So to me, what I was realizing is multiple things, like I realize this means if you're overweight today, then you're overweight in the future because the future ultimately is today. If you're not making money today, you're not going to be making money in the future. If you're not spending time with your kids today, you're not going to be spending time with them in the future.

Do you get it? If we can't do it right now today, if we're waiting for sometime in the future, it's always going to be in the future because there is no such thing and we'll never do it. It's always about what we're doing today; huge idea.

Okay, number three – Geneen says in this book, stop the Me Project. She says, if you keep working on yourself so that at some point in the future you will be whole or complete, that's a problem. You are whole and complete right now.

Now, I love working on myself, improving myself, growing myself, but the Me Project really got my attention because it means that it's not that I will be good enough sometime in the future once I accomplish a lot of stuff, and I think I have felt this way many times in my life. Like when I get that piece of accomplishment, press, money, fame, something, then I'll be good enough.

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The point is, you're good enough right now. None of that stuff completes you. So you can still do things to work on yourself but you have to believe that you're good enough right now and if you never finish any of that stuff, you're still whole and complete today, and that's a huge mind-shift that I think could have amazing ramifications, especially in our weight-loss. So I hope you're excited about that one too.

Okay, number four, if you're working so hard that your health is suffering, there must be an unspoken belief that the potential benefits of the work outweigh the cost and that they will get you something that you don't already have. Okay, that last part was the key for me.

So we pretty much all already have everything we need and everything we need to be happy right now. We might want some stuff, but we have everything we need. And so what would having more, more, more get us? Well, if it costs us our health in the process, whoa. So really, not only is this saying every time you work and your health suffers that work was more important than your health, but it's also asking yourself the question, what exactly is it that I think I'm going to get by working to that degree that I don't already have today? And those of you who've heard me say I'm a recovering workaholic can see how this really resonated with me.

Okay, number five – she says, we don't know what we're feeding, meaning when we overeat, we don't know what we're feeding but we know we want more, as if the answer to everything that makes us uncomfortable is more, as if it's a choice between having more of what we don't want or nothing at all. Okay, let that sink in for a minute.

This means if we keep eating more food but food's not what we're looking for, then what in the heck are we doing? Like, why can't we just have nothing and learn to deal with that as opposed to having more of something that we don't even want?

So the big question is, when will we stop having more of what we don't want and figuring out what it is we really want? Huge question, right, and those of us who emotional eat, that's a question for us, like what are we

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feeding? What are we having more of it and why don't we just stop and figure it out?

Number six – the way you live your days is the way you live your life. Now, I say this sometimes when I'm talking about the work I do with women entrepreneurs and I say the way you do one thing is the way you do everything, but I like this wording better. The way you live your days is the way you live your life.

So this goes back to that idea, sort of, of today versus tomorrow and there being no such thing as tomorrow, but it really puts it into more perspective for me that if you live your days stressed out or unhealthy or overweight or underpaid or exhausted or disconnected from your family and your values, then that's actually how you live your whole life.

So when you think about it that way, how many of us want to get to the end of our life and look back and see that we spent our entire life in one of those negative ways or many of them; stressed out, unhealthy, overweight, underpaid, exhausted or anything else that you're spending your days doing. I don't want to look back and see that. I promise I don't and I don't think you want to either, so it's time to make some major change so that the way we live our days is the way we want to live our life. So I loved this one.

Okay, number seven – it's not about having or getting more big experiences. We have plenty of those. It's about showing up day to day that matters and showing up for yourself daily. Now, that's real work, being present in all you do instead of thinking about getting onto the next better thing.

Okay, how many times do I not show up for myself like I say I want to during a day or a week? A lot. How often am I also just working through things as fast as I can to check them off my list to get onto the next better thing? Well, pretty much all of the time.

So hello, Tobi, not present, not showing up version of yourself, Geneen is talking to you right here. So my goal from this number seven is to start

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showing up for myself every day the way I say I want to, and I challenge you to do the same thing.

Number eight – we lose weight but gain it back so we can once again look forward to the imaginary happy future we should have once we lose the weight and we participate in the judging and the we-shoulds and then start back on the weight-loss so we can feel accomplished, elated, and have something to talk about and a way to pass time.

Okay, this was one of my biggest ah-ha moments in the book because I'm an achiever and I'm a doer and it helped me realize that what if I am gaining and losing the same 20 pounds to give me something to accomplish over and over and give me a sense that that imaginary happy or better future that's out there is what I'm looking forward to while I'm working on losing weight.

Now, holy cow, that was humongous for me. So I'm looking now to go how do I realize that the happy future is today. And this doesn't mean that we're unhappy people, but if you're like me, if you're a future thinker and you're like, oh if it's good here, it's got to be better out there, I can see how this could really play into this whole idea of gaining and losing weight all the time; so a really, really interesting concept.

Okay, number nine – in the same way we believe that without a strict diet we would hunker on our couches uncontrollably eating pizza and ice cream, we also believe without knowing it that we need shame and judgment to keep us in line. Freeing ourselves means seeing that we are more than the sum total of our accomplishments, our relationships, our so-called failures, our body-mass index and our weight. Being free first takes realizing we are in prison and then questioning what imprisons us. You've got to want freedom so bad that you will do whatever it takes.

Okay, Geneen, wow. Can you believe how many crazy nuggets that I've found – and this is only number nine of 12 and this is only a tiny piece of the book. So basically, she's saying here that we are the ones imprisoning ourselves with our beliefs and our shaming and our judgments and we can

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essentially just open the door and walk out of the prison. The prison we're created for ourselves, if we're willing to do the work to remove the shackles of our belief systems. Okay, so are you ready to get out of that prison you've created for yourself? Because I know that I am.

Okay, number ten – if you are eating past fullness, stop. Notice what you feel inside. Accept responsibility for your actions. You are not a child. You don't need to be regulated by an external authority, most particularly a diet. And rather than ask yourself how deprived you feel, ask yourself who is it that feels deprived. She's probably 5 or 8 or 12; are you?

Okay, wow. Are you 5 or 8 or 12? Because I'm far past that. And another ah-ha here for me because again, I think what Geneen is saying is that we're really doing this to ourselves unknowingly and that it's our emotional child that feels deprived when we can't eat anything and everything we want and it takes us stepping into emotional maturity to realize we're not that child that we are acting like around food.

So the next time you feel deprived and you're putting yourself on a diet and you're restricting yourself and you're miserable and it's like you're having a tantrum, because I've done this so many times, ask yourself, who is that girl that's feeling deprived? Is she 5 or 8 or 12 and what's her problem? I think it's going to be really insightful for you. It definitely has been for me.

Okay, the last two, number 11 – it's harder to let innate brilliance and power express itself when carrying around 50 extra pounds. It's not impossible, but more difficult and since life is inherently 50% difficult, why make it harder?

Okay, my life coach mentor, Brooke, says that life is at least 50% bad, essentially. She uses a more colorful word there, but you know, no matter what you do, life just has stuff in it, right, and that's what Geneen's saying. It's 50% difficult, why make it harder?

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And a pretty clear concept here, but just a question to ask yourself, why are we choosing to make our lives harder than they have to be with food and with weight, and it's a great question.

And then my last favorite takeaway from this book is this – every time we stop eating when our bodies have had enough, we face a little death. Binging, which is constantly eating beyond enough, is a way to not have to face that what we love ends.

And Geneen says in the book, all things we love end. Vacations end, dogs, cats, and people die before us. We get old so our youth ends and if we're eating past full so the good doesn't end, it's a problem because all good does end. And she says, embrace that it ends. Feel the feeling that it ends. Deal with it. Numbing makes you miss dealing with it.

So this idea in the book was in regards to someone she was working with actually in an eating meditation like the one I went to who ate beyond fullness because the food tasted so good and because she was dealing with some grief and so she didn't want the food to be over because she was already dealing with this other thing that was over. And I think that's so interesting because a lot of us do this, even just around the food itself.

I mean, I know I do where I'm like, oh I don't want this meal to end, it tastes so good. But this is also the difference in emotional childhood, emotional childish behavior and an emotionally adult behavior. So it takes emotional maturity to go, yeah, it's really good and I want to keep eating it, but that makes no sense for me. I'm going to be an emotional adult here and I'm going to stop because all good things come to an end.

So wow, are you with me? Crazy good stuff from Geneen Roth, and this is just part of an amazing book and one of her many books. So she's full of this kind of information. There's so much more juiciness in *This Messy Magnificent Life* than what I've even told you and it's a short and easy read but the message is so, so powerful. And this is one I suspect I'll keep reading again and again so I can fully comprehend how deep and how powerful these messages are.

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But if I had to say what my one favorite takeaway from the book was, I would say it's the one about today versus tomorrow to keep me on track for taking massive every single day because this idea that no one has ever experienced the future because when it arrives it's always today, really, really helps me see that all that matters is how I show up today.

So ask yourself, what are you going to do today? Will you show up for yourself today, whether it's in your work or in your health or in your eating or with your family or in your relationship with you and your self-care and all the things that you need to be doing for you. Will you show up today? Not sometime in the future, but now.

Well, I sure hope you will and I sure hope these nuggets from Geneen helped and I'm working really hard to make sure I show up for me today and every day too, so I'm happy that we're here on this journey doing this together. So run out and get Geneen's book or books. I posted a link for you on my show notes today at tobifairley.com/podcast if you want to go over there and see this book and the other book I mentioned from Geneen Roth, and I'll see you next time on *The Design You Podcast*. Bye, friends.

Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of *The Design You Podcast*. And if you'd like even more support for designing a business and a life that you love, then check out my exclusive monthly coaching program Design You at tobifairley.com.