

Ep #23: Taking 100% Responsibility for Your Emotions



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 23.

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, beautiful friends. It's almost fall, y'all. But unfortunately, it's still like 98 degrees in Arkansas this week and I don't like it because I'm ready for football and sweaters and good old fires in the fireplace.

And speaking of y'all, I had someone in my coaching program this week that said she'd been listening to a bunch of my course content, my programs, my podcasts, and now she has the strongest urge to say y'all. That's awesome.

Okay, so today, y'all, I want to talk about taking 100% responsibility for our own emotions. This is something that I've been working on for several years and thankfully, I get better at it all the time. And as a result, my life just keeps getting better and better and better and better and better too; it really does.

So what exactly do I mean by this? Well, we humans, we're so interesting. We have a habit of trying to take responsibility for other people's happiness and for their actions, and then we believe that we actually have control over their feelings. But guess what – we don't.

And we believe that we can make other people happy with our gestures and our words and our actions, and a lot of us spend a whole lot of time trying to do this, even though it is completely impossible. We cannot control other people, including what they do and what they feel. We can't hurt their feelings either, y'all; only their thoughts can do that, and they can't hurt our feelings.

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And you may say right now, “Nope, Tobi you’re wrong. People hurt my feelings all the time. And also, when I do certain things like I cook for my family or I send a friend a gift, well I sure do make them happy.” But here’s what I want you to know; here’s what’s actually happening.

People take certain actions, or even inactions – they don’t do something – and then you get to decide how you feel about it and whether or not to be offended or to be full of joy or to have some other emotions. So it’s your thoughts about them that either hurt your own feelings or make you feel great or something in between.

And the same thing happens with others when they think a thought about what we do or say. It’s not the actions that have the impact; it’s the thoughts about the actions that do, okay. So as we discussed in previous episodes of my podcast, it’s your thoughts and only your thoughts that cause your feelings, got it?

And that is true for all of us; me, you, everybody. And we spend a lot of time trying to please people and make people happy, so much so that I did an entire podcast episode, which was episode number five, about people-pleasing. And again, no matter what we do, there’s only a 50% chance that it’s going to make other people happy, okay.

So go back and listen to that podcast if you find this a difficult concept to really comprehend. But today’s episode is about the other side to the people-pleasing coin. It’s the part about us being pleased. So not only do we try to take responsibility for other people’s emotions, we often delegate our own feelings and emotions to other people.

And we don’t even really know we’re doing this a lot of the time, but we expect others to make us happy. And the minute we do that, we are no longer in control of our own emotions. We have delegated them, okay. So in the next podcast, next week, I’m going to talk about villains and victims, which is a related topic. And when we get there, you’ll see what I mean.

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But for today, my goal is to help us all understand that our happiness, our joy, and the results we get in our lives are 100% our responsibility. It's time we stop blaming others or even believing that they play a role in our happiness at all.

And before we go any further, let's just discuss happiness for a minute, okay, because I think one of the biggest problems we face with our emotions is that we believe that we are supposed to be happy all the time, that we are entitled to happiness all day every day. And I don't know where we get this notion that if we're not happy every day that something is wrong.

Now yes, it's wonderful to be happy. It's my favorite way to be and we can choose happiness as often as we want to, and we'll get to that more in a minute. But to think that by default we are supposed to be happy all the time, now, that is a myth because life isn't always easy. It isn't always fun and there are reasons every single day that we can choose happiness if we want to because, let's face it, life is about 50% great and about 50% not great on any given day, right?

So if we realize that we aren't supposed to be automatically happy all the time, if we stop thinking we are entitled to happy, then we can get down to reality and understand that happiness is a choice, just like unhappiness and negativity and sadness and anxiety and anger are all also a choice.

Now, let me clarify for a sec. If you're dealing with depression, which is a real thing and not a choice, that is different altogether than what I'm talking about and you should definitely see a doctor for this. There is zero shame in getting help for depression. I've dealt with depression myself before and I've also gotten help for depression and, thankfully, it was amazing and I feel so much better. So please don't wait because that is a serious situation.

But today, what I'm talking about is the day to day ups and downs of emotion we experience because we think we are supposed to be elated all the time and we're just so confused when we're not automatically that way.

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It upsets us and we then do other things like buffer with food and alcohol and lots of other stuff to try to make us feel happy again, okay.

So what is the healthy thing to do instead of that? What are we supposed to do about it? And how does all of this come together in today's topic? Well, I want to tell you the top four things you need to know and really become aware of so you can start taking 100% responsibility for your feelings or emotions, whatever you want to call it, and start doing that today and every day because it will change your life in ways that you can't even imagine, okay.

So first, number one, it's on you; all of it. How you feel every day is 100% on you and only you. You get to decide to be offended or not, upset or not, to take things personally or not. You always have the choice of, "or not." You can pick "or not" anytime you want.

Isn't it crazy how we don't even realize this? But in every situation, no matter what the circumstance, no matter what happens, we can choose to not be upset. And you may say, "But Tobi, there are tons of situations where being upset is justified." And I'd probably agree with you, but here's the thing, this is not about justification.

I'm not saying that everyone wouldn't agree with you and support you being upset. I'm just saying you'd still be upset and all that goes with being upset; the negativity, the rehashing of the thing or arguing, the hurt feelings, the pain, the suffering, the hours wasted in drama, the lost productivity. And in every situation, no matter what other people do, you have the choice to choose the thoughts and therefore the emotions that feel good, not the ones that feel bad.

And when you don't choose to feel good, I want you to be 100% clear that you are choosing the pain and the suffering, okay. It's as easy as that. But choosing not to be upset, also easy, is a freaking liberating choice to make. You are free from the pain and the suffering, okay. and you can choose that every single time if you want to.

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So honestly, you don't ever have to be upset with your children or your spouse or your family, or anyone else for that matter, if you choose not to be. If you decide to be 100% responsible for your emotions and if your goal is to be happy far more often than not, you can make that happen.

And now you may be thinking, "But, Tobi, wouldn't that mean I'm a doormat or I'm a pleaser or I'm being taken advantage of if I don't get mad?" And you know what – not at all. I'm not saying let someone abuse you, I'm just saying that you can decide not to make their actions mean anything that hijacks your emotions.

We spend so much time, in our thoughts, creating so much unnecessary drama. For example, we think things like, "I'm so mad at my husband; he never helps around the house." Or, "I can't believe he stayed out with his buddies until 2am while I was home doing everything." Or, "I'm so hurt that my friend didn't come to my birthday party." Or, "I'm so exasperated that my mother in law is always telling me what to do and making little comments about how I do things like I'm not as good as she is." Or, "I can't believe my client didn't like my presentation. It was amazing. They must be crazy."

Hear me; in every one of those situations, you can decide to be 100% responsible for what feeling you choose. Now, if you choose to be unhappy, that's fine, but it's on you. And in every one of them, justified or not, you can choose to give people the benefit of the doubt and let people off the hook and assume they mean well and are only trying to help and give people some slack because they're busy or because they need some downtime on their own or because they're not behaving exactly the way you want them to at every single moment, right.

You can. And, y'all, when you choose this potion, your life becomes immensely better in every single way and every single day, without any part of other people's behavior having to change. And I hear you; you're already wanting to tell me all the reasons you have to feel upset, and I get it. You're thinking, "But, Tobi, if I don't get upset then my husband, mother in law, friend, will get away with bad behavior or something that just isn't right."

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But let me ask you this; do you want to be right or do you want to be happy? Do you want to be right or do you want to be kind? Do you want to be right, or do you want to experience more joy than you can possibly imagine?

Do you want to feel like every day is the best day of your life? Well if you choose to only take responsibility for your own thoughts and your own feelings and your own actions and let everybody else do the same, then your life will feel amazing.

I live this way now, y'all and it is incredible. My husband and I get along so great, and we didn't used to because I used to expect him to make me happy, and he did me too. But it's so much more fun when we aren't expecting each other to make the other one happy.

And my daughter and I, we have such an easy relationship because we live this way too, and she is a teenager, y'all. And she's not running amok with no rules or no guidance, but I'm teaching her to take responsibility for her actions and her feelings by demonstrating this behavior in my own life. And it's so much easier for her to be her best self when she's not worrying about how to please me or how to please her dad or how to please her friends or anyone else.

And I'm already thinking about what this could look like in her future and our future, our future relationship and how this can play such a great part in our life. For example, one day when she's likely married and trying to balance holiday schedules, because she'll have another family then to think about besides just me and her dad, well I can think, "She's my only child and I will be totally upset if I don't get her on Christmas day at my house."

Or, I could think, "You know what – I love her so much that I want to make her life easier. So I'm letting her off the hook to make whatever holiday schedule works for her and I don't care when I see her, just that I do get to see her and we can make any day of the month our Christmas. And if she's busy on December 25th, or the whole week for that matter, then my husband and I will just take some fabulous vacation during that time and

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we'll see her when it works for her and we'll all be so happy and so grateful and love the heck out of each other when we're together."

Now wow, what a difference, right? We can be mad and we can make it mean something that she doesn't show up exactly when I want her to so I can be happy, or I can give her the benefit of the doubt and that's whether it's in our future, talking about Christmas, or when it's right now as a teenager every single day.

And we'll appreciate each other so much more if we are making our lives easier than they could be, right. Living this way is what I call adulting; being an emotional adult. And I highly recommend it, okay.

So that was all the first step of doing this, but what else can we do? Well, if you want a life that feels great every day, you can have it right now with only changing one thing; your mindset, because it is a choice. So related to part number one, related to that last segment, let me tell you the next part. You can live in negative thoughts all the time, or you don't have to.

You can wake up each day and think thoughts like, "I'm a hot mess and my house is a wreck and my kids are driving me crazy. My boss is a jerk. My employees are not carrying their weight. The president is a moron. I already am behind and the day just started. My best friend is so selfish. My husband is oblivious. I'm fat and I can't stick to a diet and I'm embarrassed about it and my clients are all cheap and unrealistic." And a whole lot more thoughts that, you can all imagine, are going to keep you upset all the time.

And we do this to ourselves daily. And trust me, I've tried all of these on for size and when I start spinning them in my head or, even worse, verbalizing them, like complaining to my mom or my husband or someone else, well you know what happens? My emotions spin out of control and the results are not pretty. It usually means I have a full-on meltdown. You know what I mean; you've had it.

You can choose those thoughts and you can get those results or you can choose to think thoughts that make you feel good, like, "My life is amazing

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and I'm so fortunate and I have clean drinking water and I have a roof over my head and I'm not hungry and I'm not sick and my kids are awesome and I'm so proud of myself and my accomplishments and I have plenty of time today to do what's really important and I get to work in my dream job and I have an opportunity to improve myself every single day and my husband is really patient and loving and my mother in law, she loves my kids so much. And our life may be chaotic sometimes but I sure will miss this when my kids are grown. And everything happens the way it's supposed to and I'm excited and exactly who I am and where I'm supposed to be today. It's okay, I'm right where I'm supposed to be. And my weight doesn't determine my worth, and my body, it's amazing; look at her. She's been through all this stuff with me and she just keeps being there for me."

And you know what – there's so many more thoughts just like this. And here's the thing; not one single thing about your life has to be different for you to think these positive thoughts over the negative thoughts I mentioned first. And yes, these two sets of thoughts could be available to you. The exact same person can decide to pick one over the other with nothing in their life changing.

Every thought and every emotion is equally available to you at all times. You get to decide. You're in charge. So what will you choose? Something that upsets you or something that allows you to be relaxed and happy and focused on what really matters?

Okay, third, the third thing you can do is this – you can take a look at your life and realize you may be capable of so much more than your current life is and you can change that when you take full responsibility for your own happiness. Become responsible for showing up for yourself. Become responsible for taking your commitments seriously. Become committed to doing what you say you will and what you want. Become responsible for living your best life now. Be choosy about what you say you'll do.

Don't over-commit, but always do what you tell yourself you will. And don't be obligated to anyone or anything without your consent. If you hear yourself saying, "I have to..." meaning I have to but I don't want to, it's a lie.

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You always have a choice. Obligation equals frustration and resentment and anger and it takes up time that we could be choosing the life that's right for us. If you are only responsible for you and your own emotions 100% of the time and if you allow others' emotions to be 100% on them, then you will start doing what makes sense for you.

And this isn't being selfish, it's being true to yourself. And you don't have to go to something just because somebody invited you. Only go if you really want to be there. And you don't have to lose weight or start a diet because the world says you should; just do it if it's right for you.

Create the life you want by taking responsibility for you, okay. It's not selfish. And finally, relationships thrive when both parties take 100% responsibility for their own happiness, whether it's a romantic relationship, a family relationship, or a friendship, this is true for every relationship.

When two adults show up without expectations from anyone but themselves, the world is so much easier and more pleasant. And that doesn't mean everyone will suddenly be selfish and unkind, not at all because, think about it, if you're taking responsibility for your own feelings, does being selfish and unkind feel good? Of course not.

You're not going to choose to do that. loving the heck out of other people feels amazing and if you want to feel amazing, that's what you're going to choose, right? So imagine the freedom in not ever having to get mad at anyone. It's glorious.

Again, this doesn't mean you don't take care of yourself or you don't put boundaries in place so your needs are met; you totally do. But you just rely on yourself to make you happy and to tend to your own needs and everyone else is off the hook.

And yeah, you can still make requests of other people, especially in your family. You can make requests of them to help you around the house, you just don't get mad at them if they don't do it the way you want them to and on your timeline, okay.

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But if you're always giving people love and the benefit of the doubt and treating them with patience and treating them with kindness, then suddenly – guess what happens – they want to say yes to your requests. They suddenly want to give back to you and make your life easier because you're always doing that for them.

It's like catching flies with honey and it's a win-win for you and for everyone else. And it also means that you don't have to wait for somebody to make you happy. You don't have to wait for the right man. You don't have to wait for the right friend or the right person to make you happy. You are already happy because you are guaranteeing that all by yourself because you're choosing happiness.

And then, any joy that other people bring you – because they do bring you joy – it's a bonus. It's not required of them; it's the extra. It's what makes life absolutely amazing, okay. So this is exciting stuff. And yeah, on that last note, you can't go preaching this to other people and suddenly make them be responsible for them, okay. So don't make it your charge, or you're still trying to control other people.

You're only in charge of you, okay. And if you demonstrate this and if you live this way and if you give people that benefit of the doubt and let them off the hook on a regular basis, they're going to notice and they're going to want to feel that way too, okay.

So people don't do what they say, they do what they do, alright. So model this behavior. Love the heck out of yourself and everybody else. Go create a life that's spectacular and be 100% responsible for you. It is your choice and it is going to change everything about your life and I can't wait for you to tell me about it. So tell me how it goes and I'll see you next week, friends. Okay, bye for now.

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.

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