

## Ep #40: My Year-End Review Ritual



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**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #40: My Year-End Review Ritual

You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 40.

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.

Hello friends, are you ready for 2019? Well, ready or not, it's almost here and I for one am so very excited. A lot of wonderful things happened in 2018 for me, including the holiday we just had, which was so much fun. But I am so super grateful for so many things this year and I'm really excited about them and I don't know about you, but I like to take this time of year and reflect on those things in a fun year end ritual that I have.

And I'm going to tell you about that in just a second. But first, I wanted to highlight one of our listeners because I'm so grateful for our listeners this year. This was my first year to launch the podcast so it's one of the big things I did this year and I want to make sure that for this episode and all of 2019, I do a really good job of thanking all of you for listening and for your comments and your ratings and reviews.

So this comment is from our listener, Laura, and Laura left a wonderful review on iTunes about the podcast and this is what she said. She said, "Tobi was my business coach for several years and her guidance completely transformed how I run my business and my systems, but she continues in her podcast to share her wisdom and her experience to help the design community grow and thrive. I could listen to her all day. Thanks so much Tobi for always being so generous and sharing all you've learned."

Well Laura, thank you so much for being so generous with your comment and your compliments, and I am so super grateful for you. And since Laura left this comment, she has even joined my *Design You* coaching program. So I get to have fun working with her all over again. I think you're loving that too, right, Laura? So thank you so much and thank you to all of my

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listeners for 2018. You have been such a joy with your comments and your feedback, so thank you so much.

Okay, so now let's talk about what this episode is all about and that is my year-end review ritual. I love this so much. I can't tell you how much I love this. I mean honestly, I think I like the New Year even better than I like the holidays. Christmas and Thanksgiving, and I love those so much but I love this practice and I started it in 2008, back when I began writing my blog.

And I started reviewing the year at the end of the year as it would come to a close and celebrating all the things that went right and all the things to be grateful for, all of those who were a part of my year and being grateful for them. And also digging into what challenged me that year, what I learned that year, what I want to do differently in the year ahead. Really just reflecting and spending some time thinking about what those last 12 months looked like.

And you know what, this practice that I now have because I do it regularly every year is really cathartic to me. It's like cleansing and it's just so eye-opening and I really, really love it. And it's really important because it's the best way to determine for me, and I'm sure for you too if you start doing this, where you are in relation to what you really want in life and what needs to happen to accomplish the goals in the new year that you want to accomplish and what really needs to happen for you to live the life that you want to live.

Because if not, if we don't reflect, then we can stay stuck doing the same thing year after year after year. We can say that the same kind of life and the same job and the same body and the same mindset that we don't really want but we don't really know what to do about it and if we're not thinking about it and we're not measuring what we did over the last 12 months and making a plan for what we want to do in the next 12 months, then we sort of just stay in that mediocre place.

And even those of us who are achieving aren't really fulfilling what we're capable of if we're not measuring and we're not planning strategically of

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how to go from where we are to where we want to be. So that's what so cool about this process and here's something I learned about myself in the process. It's that I have a terrible habit of not stopping to celebrate my successes when they happen.

And I've now struggled with this for years. I've probably struggled with it my whole life but I've known since 2008 when I started this process. So for 10 years, I've known that it's something that I struggle with and something that I really work hard to be sure that I do now that I'm aware of it.

So being the reformed or reforming overachiever that I am, reforming workaholic that I am, it's so easy to move right on to the next thing on my goals list or my to-do list without acknowledging myself and my team and all the other people who make us make so many amazing things happen.

So though I should do this all the time, at the very least, I make sure that that practice of stopping and celebrating what's happened this year becomes part of this once a year ritual and look back and year-end review that I do. So I take the time to sit and record all my big wins. Big and small wins for the year and I give gratitude for them and for those who helped me make all that stuff happen because let's be clear, I don't do all this stuff alone. Nobody does big stuff alone.

And so before I turn my attention to what I want to focus on for 2019, which I'm so thrilled to do, I can't wait to do that, but before I let myself go there, I take this time of reflection and I take this time to get clear on what happened in the last 12 months. So the gratitude piece I was just talking about, that's just one part of my year-end review. You might want to do this whole process for yourself and I'm going to make that easy for you in a little bit. I'm going to tell you how to do it.

But before I give you the tool to do it with, I'm going to tell you what the framework looks like that I use so that you can start to review your life and your business and really go through the same process because it's going to set you up to really be better next year and the year after that and the year after that.

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So here's the first thing I want us to think about before I give you the framework. So the first thing I want you to realize is that creating a goal setting process - and I'm going to talk about goal setting after the new year. So in just a couple of episodes, we'll be talking about goal setting. But for right now, I want you to just realize that creating a goal setting process or strategy that really works for the new year includes these things.

It includes reflection, it includes vision, it includes planning, and it includes accountability. And so often, people jump straight to number two, which is the vision, the dreaming part of what you want. And then it's super easy to flow right into the planning of what you want. But so often people skip the first step, which is reflection, and the last step, which is accountability.

And if you skip reflection and accountability, you're not going to have a strategically sound goal setting practice that really works for you because I've tried it. And this other piece of the puzzle, well, these two pieces are really important. So today we're talking about the reflection piece.

So the year-end review is that. It's the reflection. Reflecting back on what we've done. And it's the part where we see what we did, whether it worked, if we even liked it or not, because something could work but we might not have enjoyed it or we might not want to do anymore of it, we might not want to keep doing it. So did we like it, what did we learn from it, and what part of what we did last year do we want to bring into the new year and which parts do we want to leave behind?

Sometimes there's more stuff to let go of than to bring with us. So all of this comes from this reflection process. And the really great reason to do this is because if you don't, then you are essentially reinventing the wheel every single year at the beginning of the year because you're not learning from your wins and you're not learning from your challenges or mistakes. You're starting from scratch.

And yes, a clean slate is great. I love to look at that blank piece of paper and map out what I want the new year to look like, but you know what else is great? Learning from experience. So let me take you through the seven-

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step process that I use to look back at my 12 months to reflect back and to get ready for the new year so we don't bring some mistakes that we could avoid or some challenges that we could have learned from into the new year.

So in this year-end review process, phase one or step one is actually titled reflection. And this is where you make a list of every single thing you accomplish this year, and it should be a pretty hefty list. So if you're like, I didn't do anything, you need to dig in deeper because you did a bunch of things. I know you did. I know you did not do nothing for 12 months.

You may not count them as big wins, but it's not necessarily big wins that matter. A lot of progress in life comes from a whole lot of little bitty wins, a lot of small wins strung together consistently to equal something big. So I want you to make a list of every single thing you accomplish this year.

And then I want you to think about these questions. So in 2018, what was time well spent? What was money well spent? What worked and just felt easy for you this year? What did you do that you just like, I'm so tired of things being challenging and being a struggle, but this thing, this one thing I did just had so much ease about it? What was your biggest setback or challenge? So the opposite of ease. What was that thing that just was so hard in 2018?

And here's a great question. What matters to you most right now? When you're standing in this moment kind of between last year and next year, like in this little spot looking backwards and forwards, what is it that you learned from the last 12 months that could influence next year? And what do you want to do more of that you did in 2018 in 2019? What just lit you up and worked in you're like, yeah, I got to keep doing that next year?

And there's more questions that I go through just like this about life and business, but you can see that it's really a deep process of what I did best, what maybe wasn't so great in the last year, and this is not a process to beat yourself up. I want none of that in reflection. It's more just curiosity and intrigue and just fascination of wow, look what that looked like.

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So that's phase one or step number one. Step number two is called collect data. So this is the math part, the numbers, the details. And it really has to do with your business or your personal finances for sure too. They need to be rolled into this section of collecting the data, depending on what it is that you were working on this year.

So if it's about your business, which mine definitely is, what are the numbers? What were your revenues and expenses for the year? What was your salary? What are the markers in your business that you want to look at so that you can tell if you grew? Like, how many customers do you have or what do your social media followers look like?

And this isn't a more is better exercise. This isn't saying that if you don't have a certain number of social media followers, that you're a nobody, or that you're not successful. It's not that at all. But it's more of a you can't know if you moved closer to your goals each year if you don't take a snapshot of where you are.

So financial snapshot with consumers, customers, the snapshot. Your tribe, your followers, or anything else that you really want to measure and get on paper. And it might not tell you as much this year as it will next year if this is your first year to do this, because next year you'll have this year to compare and you'll be able to look and say where did I start 2019 and where did I finish 2019.

But even look at those numbers by themselves can really help you know what you're doing right, especially with things like your personal salary and where you want that to be. And that's something that I made a huge leap in in 2018 so it's really fun for me to look at those numbers and so I want you to get the math, the data on paper.

And you'll just be able to tell where you grew because a lot of times in the section before, in that reflection section, you're like, I didn't really accomplish anything this year, and then you look at some of the actual numbers, the math, it blows your mind, right? You're like, wow, I actually

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did a lot more than I thought I did this year. And there's way more need and cause to celebrate.

Or if you're not where you want to be, it's so much easier to create a strategy and a path when you get to goal setting when you have this information. So it's not about beating yourself up, it's just about writing them down.

Now, the next part, phase three is called clearing the path. I love this part. It's a mindset exercise and it's about how we really get our path cleared and ready for next year and if you know me at all, if you've listened to any of my podcasts, you know that everything I think about these days is mindset. So this one is super fun to look at.

So here's the questions you ask. What do you need to wrap up or finish or mark off or let go of so that we are free and ready to move into 2019? And if it's something that isn't easy to just let go of, then what's the plan that you need to make? What kind of work or research or efforts are required to get this thing completed or to move past it? And sometimes we don't need to complete it. Sometimes we just need to move past it.

And there's another part in a little bit I'm going to tell you about, which is even more fun because we let it go. But for right now, what is it? What are those things that are going to trip you up next year if you don't get them out of the way? So this is not only about ending things for the year. It's what you need to wrap up. But it also has a component of maybe something that you want to do, that you want to add in. So getting rid of, but also adding in.

For example, what can we say yes to that fills us up for the rest of this year, which might just be a few days of the year, depending on when you're doing this, or even into the new year. What do we want to say yes to? And it's about considering what people and places and things we want to be present for maybe in the last few days of this year and moving into next year.



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So see how it's clearing the path. Clearing the path from all the baggage and the stuff and the things that could trip you up, but also clearing the path, making room for things that matter. The people, places, and things that matter that you want to be present for. So clearing the path. That one's really profound. I love that part. So super fun.

And then that's followed by phase four or step four, which is gratitude. And this is about creating a habit. So from today, the day you're listening to this and the day you start my process, if you decide to, through the end of the year, or if you're already in the new year, just take a week or so and start getting in the habit of this. I want you to have a daily gratitude practice.

And I want you to ask yourself these questions. So who impacted your day in a positive way that you're thankful for today? What unexpected thing happened that brightened your day? What did you feel happiest about or when did you feel happiest today and what caused that moment? Where do you feel safe and content and why? And who contributed to this feeling of safety and contentment?

And why are you able to live in a healthy, happy, and fulfilled life? And there are a few more questions like this that you'll see because I am going to give you access to my actual framework in just a few, but you're going to see what this is like. But I love it because you do this at the end of each day, and this is something that I hope will become a regular habit for you, not just at the year end, but all the time. But this exercise is so powerful because it's hard to be down and it's hard to stay stuck and it's hard to have a pity party when we're focusing on all the blessings of each day.

And what's so great about this habit and this practice is it's not just about the big things that happen to you. It's not that something amazing has to happen. It's not that you have to get a new client or a new relationship or something huge to be happy. But something as small as who shared kind words or actions with me today? That's one of the questions you'll see when you see the framework. And everybody can find something to be grateful for that's as simple as who was nice to me today? Who smiled at me today? Who lifted me up today?

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So gratitude is huge for the big things, and again, like I said that I'm not so good at celebrating all my wins, but being not just celebrating but being truly grateful for those little day to day things is huge. And it's going to help you move into the new year in a much better place.

Phase five or step five, whichever you prefer to call it is goal and resolution assessment, and that's assessing your 2018 goals and resolutions. Because we're not quite ready to set the ones for '19. This is the process of getting ready for that. So before we do that, before we set those goals or as I prefer you to do, one key goal at a time for 2019, let's look at what we set for 2018.

And in this phase, we go through a specific process of looking at both goals and resolutions if you had both for last year, and what are they? What's the difference in a goal and a resolution? Well, just to be clear, a resolution is more like an intention. It's a mindset. It's a thing that you want to feel or do or be. And a goal is more specific. It's specific steps you need to take action on to achieve a desired result, which might be the resolution, or it might be some other want or a desire that you have.

So last year, my resolution, if we call it that, was to thrive, and that was my word of the year, which I'll tell you about in the next episode. We're going to do something fun about words of the year, which I love to do too. But last year I picked the word thrive as my word of the year for 2018, so this year, but this past year. And so that really was my resolution. That was my intention was to thrive all year.

And I really made it my one key goal to actually grow and thrive in my *Design You* coaching program. So my resolution was to thrive in every way, but my one key goal for the entire year of 2018 was to launch and grow my new program, *Design You*. So this was the section or is the section, section five, phase five of my year-end review where I check into both of those things. My thrive resolution and my goal for *Design You* and see what worked and what didn't work and if I'm finished with these and if I'm going to wrap them up or if I'm going to continue these into the new year and bring part of these with me.

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And in the framework, I have a whole process of asking you specific questions about your goals. If you haven't been a goal setter in the past, this will be eye-opening for you and you can think, maybe you had some sort of unspoken goals and you'll learn that in the future you want to actually write them down because if you don't, you don't have them on paper and you can't measure them and you're not looking at them regularly, they're probably not going to happen. But at least you can do sort of a little check in, a little more loose check in of what you feel like you were wanting to do this year and if it worked.

And where it says what helped you do this or what was the problem with this, you might find that the problem is oh, I didn't really commit, I didn't really write them down. But check out that part in phase five and see what you did right, what you want to bring with you, what was a challenge as far as your specific goals.

Two more sections. Two more phases of my year-end review. So phase six is let it go. I laugh every time or smile every time I get to this phase because I now think of Disney's Frozen movie. So we have a theme song for moving beyond our hang-ups and our fears and our grudges and anything else, our resentments, our pain that was in this year and that might hinder us from being our best next year. We have a process and a theme song now, let it go, for what to do here in phase six.

And that part of phase six is really what is so amazing about the year-end review is letting stuff go. And a lot of times we don't take the time to consciously do this, right? And if you want to start a new tradition for New Year's Eve, you can start a tradition around letting things go. And I even talk about this in my framework that I'm going to give you access to in a second, because this is a perfect time to do that. It's the perfect time to start a new tradition, and the tradition that I love that I talk about is a burning ceremony.

So this is where you write down on a piece of paper all the things that you want to let go of from 2018 or even years past that you didn't let go of before and you release them so you truly have a clean slate emotionally

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just in time for the new year. And what I do is I actually do a journaling exercise to get them all on paper on December 31st, the last day of the year, and then I do a meditation and a prayer around this and then during New Year's Eve, in the evening when we're together with friends or even just home as a family, I burn those journal pages and that really is that opportunity to release myself and my emotions from any pain, frustration, fear, regret, or anything else that I'm hanging onto that I know I don't want to bring into the new year.

It's so fun. I love this. My daughter loves this. Everybody I know that's done this really loves it. So it's just a way for us to have a little cue, a little mental trigger to say I'm done with that stuff, it's over, we're leaving it in the past, we're not bringing it with us, we're not bringing those thoughts into the new year because we don't want them to hold us back.

And then finally, in phase seven, which gets a little deep and it's really kind of edging into that goal setting area but not quite there yet is where you do dreaming and vision casting. So this is a process of really thinking and letting yourself go deep and dig into what it is that you really want for yourself. And it helps you build momentum for setting key goals that you're really going to tackle in the new year.

So it's with this process that you get a lot of clarity. So this is that exercise where you get in touch with what you really want. And to do this, I go into my inner most wants, my inner most being, that place deep inside my heart and I check back in each and every year and see what's stuffed way down in there that I've been ignoring or covering up and haven't maybe let myself admit for a long time that I'm really dreaming of or that I really wish or want.

A few years ago, it was that I just was striving for a lot of outward success, but what I really wanted was calm and peace and to be with my family and to not travel so much. And so I really let myself dig in and admit that and I started creating a life that I really, really wanted. So this is the place you do that in phase seven where you're vision casting and you're dreaming first and then creating or casting that vision of what you want your future to be.

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So this is a time to remember things like maybe something you've always wanted to do but you never have made it a priority. A lot of times it's going back and thinking as a child I always wanted to be a teacher, but I'm doing a job I don't like, and maybe I don't mean a school teacher even. Like for me, that's a true thing. I always wanted to be a teacher as a child and now I teach other designers and creatives how to change their mindset, how to change their business model, how to change their schedule, how to change their life.

And so digging in in this kind of exercise really helps you figure out what you might want. So some of the things we ask you or you ask you and I ask me in this vision casting and dreaming section, it's really this. It's about deciding who you want to become, how you want to live maybe that you're not living, what are you most interested in doing before you die or before the end of next year? Because we're not promised a lot of time necessarily, right?

Or maybe we don't want to miss out on things with other people. That's a big one for me because I don't want to miss out on my daughter before she goes to college in a few years or my parents while they're still young and healthy. So what is it that's most important to do before you die or to experience in your life? What kind of relationships do you want that you maybe don't have right now? What do you want to create financially? How do you wish to be remembered?

I mean, some deep, deep stuff y'all. But if we don't ever think about this stuff, we're usually not moved into action to creating the life that we really want. So this part almost brings tears to my eyes when I think about how emotional and how powerful it can be. But we act like we have all the time in the world for important things, right? And what do we do?

We put off the important stuff and we cram our lives full of the trivial, don't we? The day to day stuff that we just wear ourselves out doing that doesn't really matter. So reminding ourselves at least once a year, what we really want, what's really important to us, what we want our lives to look like, it's such a great way to regret-proof your future. To not get five, 10, 30, 40

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years down the road and look back and think, why didn't I do something? Spend time with people, make more of my life, make more of myself, do something different than I did? Go after a goal or a dream.

So this is that part. So then wrapping up part seven is with a commitment to really making these things you discovered in that section, those most important things start to happen in the new year. And it's a great way to build momentum and build excitement and get us primed and ready for success as we set our goals, hopefully one at a time, in the new year and as we go just tackle those goals like a beast.

That's what I like to do. Just go all in. So I hope that you love this process as much as I love this process because I look forward to it each and every year and I am dying always by Christmas to get to New Years. I don't want to wish away life and I sure do love my family and I love our special Christmas traditions but I especially look forward to these New Year's rituals.

And I become more of the person that I want me to be every single year because of this exercise. And guess what friends? As I said earlier, I have a present for you because I polished up this process and I made it into a fabulous workbook for you. Absolutely, yes I did, and that's just my big thank you for you, for being a listener, and I gave it to my *Design You* members as a thank you for being part of my community.

And I just love that I can share things that I use to be my best with all of you. So thank you so much for being a listener of *The Design You Podcast* and for those of you who are members of my coaching program, thank you for that too. And to get this gift that I made you, I want you to go to [tobifairley.com/40](http://tobifairley.com/40) because this is episode 40, or you can just go to my podcast, [tobifairley.com/podcast](http://tobifairley.com/podcast) and click on episode 40 and you'll see a link in the show notes.

So either way, but [tobifairley.com/40](http://tobifairley.com/40) is the easiest way to get to it and you can download your own copy of my year-end review so you can set aside some time before the new year, or even if you're listening to this right after,

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or gosh, it doesn't even matter if it was June and you listened to this episode. You absolutely can still get this out and do a review so that you make the next 90 days, six months, 12 months, the best that it can be for you.

And on that note, I do just want to circle back for just a second and tell you thank you again for listening because I want you to know that the podcast is one of the big things I did in 2018. It was one of my goals, I made it happen, it has been a huge success with and because of each and every one of you. So I thank you so much for listening and for your support. And if you want to keep this podcast growing, you can do two things for me for 2019 or do it today in moving into 2019.

So if you want to, join me in my new *Design You* podcast community on Facebook. And that's where you'll find me and a lot of other like-minded listeners and we can all connect there and support each other. This is going to be really fun for the new year, it's going to be a great place to support each other as a community in our goals, in our year-end review, in our resolutions and all of the things that we're working on.

So to find the podcast community, you just go to Facebook and go to facebook.com like you normally would, but it's facebook.com/groups/designyoudesignyoucommunity. And once you see that and get to that address, that site, you will just request to join. It's open to everybody but we keep it as a closed group so that we can just let everybody in and we can keep it a safe and fun place that we can communicate and grow together there.

So just request to join and we'll let you in. And this community is a great place for you to tell me about you and also to tell me more about what you want me to talk about on the podcast in 2019. So be sure to do that. And then the second thing I would love for you to do is please go to iTunes and leave me a rating and a review.

So in iTunes just search for *The Design You Podcast* and subscribe to the podcast and then click ratings and reviews, and you can leave a rating,

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give me however many stars you want, but what I especially want you to do is I want you to leave me a review, which is a comment, because I want to hear from you. I want you to let me know what you love most about the podcast so far in our first 40 episodes because we'll be closing in on a year of the podcast here in the spring of '19.

So tell me what you think. I might feature you as one of my favorite reviews of the week on the podcast here, and mainly, I just want to know that this podcast is making a difference for you. So let me know what you think. Okay friends, that is all I have for today and be sure and listen next week if you're into the new year rituals like you probably are if you listened to today and I'm going to teach you another of my favorite New Year's rituals and that's how I pick a word of the year each and every year.

I've been doing this since 2012 and it's my other favorite New Year's habit or practice and I can't wait to see you again then so I can show you exactly how I do that. Okay, so for now, happiest of New Years. Wishing you a wonderful, prosperous, amazing 2019, your best one yet, and I'll see you back on the podcast really soon. Bye for now, 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](http://tobifairley.com).