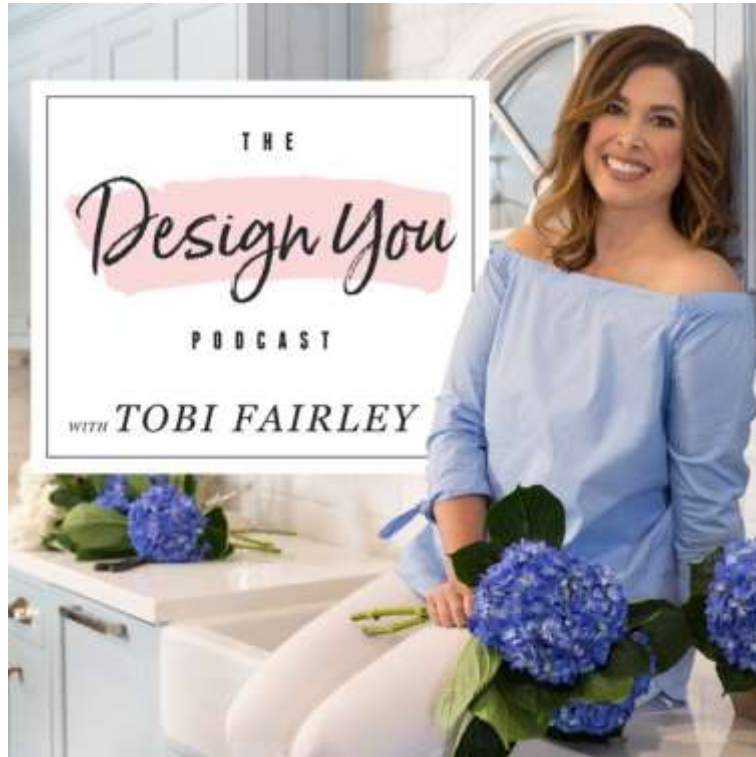


Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Tobi Fairley

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 47.

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.

47, y'all. That's almost a year. Woo-hoo. A year of the podcast. I'm so excited. I mean, I remember when I was just thinking I should do a podcast, and here we are almost a year in. So what's going on in your world today? Well, if you're one of those people digging out from the snowstorms from last week or the snowstorms from this week, I'm so sorry and if you're in a tropical climate in your bikini, then I'm really jealous.

Because it was hot here this morning and it's cold here this afternoon, so I can relate to every weather, but would rather be in a tropical climate. I bet some of you would too, right? So whatever you're doing today and wherever you are, I'm so grateful that you're joining me this week to hear what's on my mind.

So before we go any further, I wanted to highlight one of our great listeners and our review of the week. I love to do these, and this one is an iTunes review from Poppy. And she says, "Tobi's podcasts are a great help in trying to thoughtfully run a business yet maintain or recover a fulfilling personal life." Wow, I can relate, Poppy.

"She breaks down the thinking time this requires into manageable chunks. This has been a huge help to me and will be for others for keep fitting in just one more thing. The year-end review has already changed my 2019 and has it feeling clearer."

Well, I am so glad, Poppy, and I get it. For years I was one of those people fitting in just one more thing. Thankfully, not anymore and I hope that all of you get to the place where you're not doing that either because stress goes way down when that happens, right? So thank you so much and if you are listening and you haven't left me a review and you want to be the reviewer

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

of the week because I just might talk about your comment, then head over to iTunes and leave me a review. I'd love to hear what you think about the podcast.

Okay, so today's topic. We're keeping on this idea of optimal health, which is my goal for 2019. So today I'm going to talk about urges and cravings and buffering because they're things that I'm working on in my own life right now. And as we said last week when we were thinking about some really clever new ways of changing our mindset so that we can be healthier than ever and happier than ever, hopefully too, this really is a piggyback onto that conversation, onto that topic.

So what the heck is buffering anyway? And really, why are you talking about this, Tobi? Well, buffering is anything and everything we do not to feel negative emotions, including but not limited to overeating, overdrinking, overshopping or overspending, if you call it that, Facebook and social media scrolling, or even when you have a Facebook addiction or an Instagram addiction, you're constantly on it and you lose track of your life because of it. It happens. Binge-watching Netflix or other streaming videos to the point that they're numbing out the feelings that you don't want to be feeling.

Also things like drugs, sex, sex addiction, porn, cigarettes, or my personal favorite, overworking. Overworking has buffered many a negative feeling for me. So you get the point that whatever you do in your life and most of us do this in some way or another, to give yourself the warm and fuzzies, thanks to, technically, a chemical hit, a dopamine hit, so whatever you do to get that dopamine to numb you out from feelings of boredom or confusion or sadness or fear or anxiety or worry or overwhelm or whatever your go-to emotion seems to be, that is buffering.

And trust me friends, there is an epidemic of buffering in our society today. So we're talking about health, wellness, weight loss, optimal health, all that stuff this month a lot on the *Design You* podcast and in my coaching program, but it's not just about eating because as we just talked about, some of you may have the perfect diet and may not need to lose a pound,

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

but you spend way too much time scrolling Facebook or binging on Netflix shows instead of doing what you really need to be doing in life, and the reason that you are doing that is because you're trying to numb that uncomfortable feeling that you wish would go away.

And our culture really even promotes buffering. Society, television, social media, they're constantly telling us that we should be happy, and if we're not happy, then we should eat something or drink something or buy something or travel somewhere. Whatever it takes to get pleasure, right?

And what is dopamine anyway? We didn't know what buffering was, maybe we've heard of dopamine. What it is is it's the chemical in our brains, and you know how nerdy I am into brains these days and mindset, but it's this chemical that's in our brain and it's released during pleasurable situations. And it also stimulates us to seek out the pleasurable activity again and again and again.

So that's where the addiction can come in. So basically, it's really the thing that causes us to become addicted to things, food, shopping, drinking, work, all of it. Now, that's not to say that we're all addicted to stuff just because we're buffering. We can be buffering and not be to that point of addiction, but we can definitely be in that "seek out pleasurable activity" mode, particularly when we're experiencing an emotion that's less than pleasurable and we want a distraction from it because we just don't like to feel it.

So instead of just dealing with it and instead of wanting to just deal with it and get the emotion over with and really go into the root cause, most of us don't do that at all. We just avoid it altogether by this other thing or things that are distractions, and that's what we call buffering. So there's something that you should know about us humans. We're driven by something called the motivational triad, and we have been for centuries. Really, I guess since we came to be as humans.

And the motivational triad is this; it's what causes humans to primarily do three things. Number one, seek pleasure, number two, avoid pain, and

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

number three, conserve energy. And it really causes us to do those three things above all else.

And so these things were really important when we were cavemen or settlers or any other time that it was hard to stay alive because there were definitely those times when we were running from dinosaurs or lions or bears or trying to make sure we didn't starve to death. So there was a reason, originally, that we needed to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and conserve energy.

But today, the motivational triad causes us problems because we don't really need to do these three things to stay alive anymore, right? And with the invention of social media and Netflix and fast food, it is so easy to overdo the motivational triad. So what do I mean?

Well, being hungry now in today's world, it's painful, it's kind of painful. It feels uncomfortable. So we seek food to fix that and eating is pleasurable. So we hit another of the three, of the triad when we eat because we avoided pain by eating and we got pleasure by eating and then if we still want to conserve energy, part number three, that's definitely going to happen when it comes to fast food.

It doesn't really require any energy to drive through the drive through and to shove all those calories in our mouths, right? It's not like chopping an onion or cooking a meal. That takes energy. Fast food, no energy. So our bodies are basically wired so that in today's society, we essentially want and we're meeting our needs by fast food and eating that stuff that doesn't require any energy.

And those companies that create all of that food absolutely know that and those companies and their advertisers really love to exploit that because it's a money-making situation for them and it makes tons of money, but it also makes us very unhealthy. And then when the fast food is not really food at all, sort of, as Dr. Mark Hyman, who's the functional medicine doctor calls it food-like substances, so when the food is laden with all those chemicals and it's not really real food anymore, it's not whole food, that's for

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

sure, it's processed, guess what? It's full of stuff that makes us want to eat even more.

So if our brain wasn't already saying yes, yes, yes when we eat it because of the dopamine it gets because it feels so good, then there's even more chemicals in the food that enhance and increase our addiction to them. So yeah, instead of eating whole foods and things our bodies know what to do with, our bodies really don't know at all what to do with these processed food-like substances.

So when we do eat them, they wreak havoc on all kinds of things, including our hormones. So that's why there's a lot of diabetes today, because hormones like insulin, or even other hormones you may not have heard of like leptin or ghrelin, that are supposed to give us cues of when we're hungry and cues for when we're full, they really get messed up with all the chemically induced foods and food-like substances. And it creates an over-desire for these foods.

So the hormones are supposed to tell us when to stop, but they don't really work that way anymore, so we just don't get full. And, I mean, how many of you have gotten to the bottom of some French fries at a fast food place and a milkshake before you could even think twice. And then, you might not even be full yet, right?

Like, you just go, and then all of a sudden you're like, whoa, I just ate like 600 calories in a bite. So yeah, occasionally – okay, I'm not trying to bash the fast food things forever. I get it. My kid eats Chick-fil-A like every other day. But what I want you to understand is, when we're trying to avoid stressful emotions by buffering and we combine that habit or that act with the food-like substances that are chemically laden – so we're stressed out, we're over-stimulated, we start buffering, and then we get these foods that are addictive. Guess what? It's a recipe for disaster.

So, think about it, when you're really stressed, when you're over-stimulated, which we all are all the time – we're constantly on our phones, we're constantly checking emails, somebody's needing us every second –

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

all of that cause negative emotions or uncomfortable emotions, more often than not, actually. And we definitely want to escape those.

And we don't have time to do it most of the time – or we don't believe we do – the healthy way, like to take a walk. So what do we do? We go to one of these things like fast food or Netflix or Facebook, and they're all right there available to us all the time numerous times a day. So we find ourselves buffering these emotions multiple times a day really, a lot of us.

So basically, a lot of buffering, especially if we are talking about the overeating or the overdrinking, really isn't even in our control a lot of times anymore because we don't know the tools to manage our minds if we haven't perfected the things we teach here on *The Design You Podcast*, the mindset model. And we don't realize we're making matters worse by messing up our hormones, eating all those burgers and fries and chicken nuggets so that our body doesn't know when to tell us we're full, because it's like, "No, I haven't gotten any actual nutrients yet, so keep eating. We might get to one eventually."

But the fast food doesn't quite get us there, so we overeat and we've really created what I would call the motivational triad on steroids. And good luck trying not to buffer with things that feel really good, especially really good tasting fast food or alcohol, if you have to fix the problem with discipline or willpower. Because especially by the night time, when we're exhausted from being over-stimulated and stressed out all day, how much discipline and willpower do we usually have? Not very much.

In fact, I did a whole episode on discipline willpower. You should listen to it. We'll link it in the show notes. But you're going to lose that battle every single time; you really are.

So, what are we supposed to do about this? I mean, I know I've given you a lot of stuff today, even a lot of kind of techy stuff, the motivational triad, the buffering, the chemically laden food-like substances, I get it. But, to me, this stuff is really important and I do really nerd out on it.

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

But I want you to understand what's happening in your lives and why buffering is the worst choice we could make. So what are we supposed to do about it, this vicious cycle of buffering, how do we deal with urges when they arise, how do we deal with these uncomfortable feelings when they come up? What are we supposed to do besides turning on a good, you know, series like *Downton Abbey* or something else?

My latest one I love to watch is *Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. So if you're like me and you're binge-watching something, like, what the heck are we supposed to do instead. And by all means, please don't include fast food, binge-watching, and wine. That's the worst-case scenario.

Okay, but seriously, let's think about this. Let's talk about this; what do we do with those urges? Because it's in those moments when we're feeling uncomfortable or bored or stressed, or whatever it is, that we often get the urge to do something. And often, those urges, like maybe eat chocolate cake, aren't really things that serve us very well.

It's fine to eat chocolate cake if you've planned for it and it's somebody's birthday, but to, like, eat it just because you're feeling uncomfortable or find yourself in front of the refrigerator getting ice cream every night, not really going to be the way that you get to optimal health and wellness. So, here's what I want you to know about urges; they seem so powerful, right? That's why we buffer, because we're uncomfortable and that urge to do something so we'll feel better seems so powerful and so convincing, and really, almost even scary. Like, "You better eat those potato chips you're craving right now or you will die."

It feels like that. So many times that I've literally felt controlled by the urge to eat something or to drink something or to check and see if anybody liked my Instagram post, and check it again a second later to see if any more people liked it, right?

And we agree with the urge at that moment and we think that if we don't comply that either the urge will kill us or the pain of the emotion that we're trying to avoid will for sure kill us, one or the other. We're dead either way,

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

we might as well eat the chips, or the ice cream, or hop on and check Facebook just this once, one more time. But either way, it's a lose-lose situation in our minds.

So, whatever the buffering was going to be, it pretty much always wins, right, every single time. But here's what I want you to know; it's funny but it's not funny. It's funny when we think about it and we can talk about it here, but it's not funny because of the consequences of the buffering. And this is the thing I want you to know about urges; urges that come up, especially when you're wanting to get rid of those emotions, have absolutely no power over you.

No matter how urgent they seem, no matter how scary they seem, no matter how real they seem, all of that is just in your mind. Urges are nothing but a thought. Urges cannot force you to eat the chips or the cake or the ice cream, or to pour the glass of wine. I promise you, urges cannot hold a gun to your head. They're not a person. There is no negative consequence of any kind, other than a little bit of discomfort that you're going to feel, when you feel the actual emotion you were trying to avoid.

But other than that, there's no actual negative consequence that can come up from not complying with an urge. But guess what – there are dozens or hundreds, or maybe millions, of consequences when we do give in to the urge, right? With giving into the urge – think about it, if we smoke, we can get diseases like cancer and other things.

If we give in to urges to eat unhealthy foods all the time, we can gain weight, we can get diabetes, we can get heart disease, we can get Alzheimer's, all kinds of negative consequences. And when we give in to the urge to watch Netflix or scroll social media like Facebook incessantly instead of what we're supposed to be doing, there can be a lot of consequences too. Our families can suffer, our work can suffer, our relationships can suffer, our self-esteem can suffer, our finances can suffer, and really our health can suffer too, right, because we could be doing something for our health instead of scrolling Facebook for the 15th hour today, right?

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

And there are so many more negative consequences to letting the urge win that we couldn't even name them all if we tried, literally. But what we don't know in those moments, in those moments when the urge seems so powerful, is that since the urge has no control over you, you can literally just allow it to be there. You can literally just allow it to be there until it passes, and nothing bad will happen, other than you may feel a little uncomfortable. That's it.

So in the moment, we're like, "Forget about it, I'm eating the ice cream." But guess what – later, we're like, "I can't fit into my pants and I hate myself." That's a bigger consequence than had we just been uncomfortable and not eaten the ice cream, I promise you.

But it never feels like that in the moment, so I want you to know this ahead of time so the next time it happens, you can be like, "Wait, urge, you have no control over me. You have no power over me." A little discomfort until the urge goes away is far less painful in the long run than having diabetes or having financial problems or having relationship problems, right?

And the other thing we need to know is that when we give in to an urge, it makes it worse. It gets stronger the next time and it becomes harder to resist the urge every single time it comes back because our brains are like toddlers. They absolutely are like toddlers, even as some people call it, toddlers with a knife.

And think about a toddler that wants candy. Say you're at Target and they have an absolute screaming fit for candy. And you're like, "You're not getting the candy, it's almost supper..." and they just have a total meltdown and you're like, "Okay, fine, take the dang candy, whatever it takes to get you to be quiet so I cannot be humiliated. Just take it, fine."

And guess what – what does the toddler learn when we're like, "Okay, fine?" he learns, or she learns that having a fit equals candy. It's like a great plan for the toddler, "If I just have a meltdown, I can get the candy." Well, guess what – our brains are exactly like this. And this is the same thing they learn every time we give in to an urge, whether it is to eat

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

something or to check a social status or likes or to watch TV or to overwork or to obsessively clean something, whatever your urge is, it learns the same thing.

If your brain has a meltdown or a tantrum, it's going to usually talk us into giving it a big old hit of dopamine, right, like basically give it a big old bite of candy, because we do give in more often than not, and just like the parent who desperately wants the kid to shut up, we want the urge to shut up, so we give it what it wants.

And we create a monster. And then we wonder why we have such a hard time resisting things. And this isn't just about food or a glass of wine, I promise you. It literally is about all of those things on the list and anything else you do that is really a net-negative consequence for you. It's not doing something positive for you.

So that's not to say that social media is all negative, but it definitely can go that way if we're spending a lot of time on it, looking at it, caring about how many likes we get and all kinds of things instead of what we should be doing, like maybe working. If you find yourself having the urge to refresh your screen one million times to see if anybody liked it, you are giving into an urge and you're buffering a feeling, I promise you.

And I know you do it, because guess what, I do it too. So if, in those moments, you can learn to just allow the urge to be there, it will pass, I promise. It takes a few minutes. It might take longer than a few minutes. But I have learned this skill myself, I have been practicing it like crazy in my own life because I really wanted the freedom to not buffer. And it is very freeing. And I used to give in every single time. And my life is so different now that I have learned this skill of allowing urges but not rewarding them.

Now, if you can get to 100 urges that you've allowed and you've written them down, literally one through 100, you're going to start to see how much progress you're making on this. Urge number one is going to feel impossible. You're going to be, like, this is miserable, like you're white-knuckling it. But you just let it pass, "I see you, urge, I hear that you want to

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

eat ice cream. I'm not going to fight with you. I'm not going to resist you. I'm just going to be, like, I hear you."

You know how you do that if you're a parent? You do that with your kid, when they're like, "Mom, mom, mom, can I please, can I please, can I please?" And you're just like, "I hear you, I hear you." If you say no, it starts a fight. That's what resisting an urge is like. You just allow it. You're just like, okay, and the kid's like, "What do I do? She didn't say no, but she didn't say yes. She's just like, okay." Well that's exactly what happens with an urge.

So if you can get to 100 of them, it's going to be so easy to be, like, "I see you over there, it's fine." But urge number one through, I don't know, five, or 20 is going to feel like what in the heck am I doing? So I want you to start writing them down because when you do get to that point where you can allow them and you don't resist them and you don't try to distract yourself and avoid them and you just allow them to be there, you're going to see how much freedom you have and how much power you really have over the urge instead of the other way around. Most of us think it's the exact opposite.

Now, again, avoiding them with a distraction or in some other way, that's really not helpful, because, guess what, they're going to show up again later. So just let them be there. Just acknowledge them. Just really allow them, because if you try to avoid them, guess what, they get louder and louder and louder because you didn't listen the first time.

So listen to them, "Yep, okay, I'll think about it..." and then do nothing. It is so helpful in life and you will start to see that when you can allow or just not resist them, you can stop buffering. You can start to see that you have the urge to buffer, you know that it's to cover up a feeling that, in the past, you would have had no idea that's what it was about.

You can even say, "Okay, what is it that I'm feeling? What's the big deal? Maybe I'll just deal with that and not eat the ice cream or not scroll Facebook." But I want you to start to see that this kind of awareness is

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

going to move you towards optimal health and wellness in your life, and probably optimal profitability too, because we spend so much time buffering in our lives and it wastes a ton of time and it keeps us from being our best.

And I want you to notice too that urges often are really accompanied, or kind of even part of a craving. Here's what I want you to know about cravings. Cravings, if we're talking about food in particular, are never about hunger. If you're craving a certain food, it's all emotional. If you're truly hungry, you're going to be so happy to sit down and eat chicken and broccoli. But if it's something specific you're thinking, like I really want sushi or I really need a cupcake or what I had planned for dinner doesn't sound good, that's a craving. That's an urge/craving.

If you're thinking, I don't feel like eating what's on my plan for tonight or what we already had bought groceries for, I feel like pizza instead, that sounds really good – anytime you hear yourself say, “Sounds like...” or, “That sounds good...” or, “I feel like...” both of those are coming with a craving and they're really signs that you are about to buffer.

Again, okay, so anytime, absolutely anytime you hear yourself saying sounds good or doesn't sound good or I don't feel like or I feel like, all of that is mixed up in urges, cravings, and buffering, okay. And realize that if you are buffering, you're creating a new problem, remember. So while not dealing with the original problem, you're also creating a new problem.

Buffering to cover up a feeling that you didn't want to feel, so, “I don't feel like eating what I had planned...” means you're going after that emotional change you're creating the bigger problem, okay. And that has a negative consequence involved. So we don't want to do anything to ourselves that has a negative consequence.

My mentor, Brooke Castillo, calls that consequences that buffering create net-negative situations, meaning a lose-lose situation, or really, what I even call a lose-lose-lose situation, because you treat a negative emotion with a negative behavior, and then you get a negative consequence. It's all negative because you have the negative emotion, you do the thing, eat,

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

drink, whatever it is, and then you have something left at the end of that, like weight-gain or a hangover or debt if you're over-shopping, or some kind of marital crisis, or a health issue.

So we have to stop doing this to ourselves because most of our issues, especially health issues, are self-inflicted because we don't want to feel an emotion. We let these emotions have so much power in our minds. So, when you learn to have a mindset shift instead, it's going to allow you to not have that behavior.

When I did this, when I learned all the great mindset shifts and tools that I teach you here on *The Design You Podcast*, I realized that if I had just known, all those years, to fix the actual problem – which what was the problem? It was my own willingness to be uncomfortable – then I would not have to have had the carnage, essentially, that was caused for years by overeating or overworking, which were my go-to buffering activities.

So I would have never have had to go on a diet or get healthy again. I would have been healthy because I wouldn't have had the net-negative consequence or I wouldn't have had to fix all the things that my overworking did to me and my family, and really, even my job. So I could have been living free for years by now.

When I realized that, it really blew my mind; free from extra weight, free from the strain and stress of overworking that it caused me and my family. And there are so many consequences to this, y'all. And I didn't have to have them, and you don't have to have them either anymore because now we know.

Now, that doesn't mean go beat yourself up. I didn't beat myself up for all those years of buffering. I did what I knew at the time. But, as Maya Angelou says, "Once you know better, do better." So this is your chance to do better. Do better now. It's not about could have, would have, should have. It's about, what am I going to do today now that I get that the easiest thing to do is just feel the feeling?

Ep #47: Cravings, Urges, and Buffering

Okay, so it got my attention, and it also got my attention that, if I kept up this behavior, I could create bigger problems, right? Think of all the people you know that have created diabetes or cancer or other things with their choices. Smoking causes cancer. A lot of foods and sugar likely causes cancer we know now, right? And it definitely causes heart disease and diabetes and other things. Alcohol causes diseases. There's so much that we're doing to ourselves through buffering.

So, do you do this? Do you buffer your negative emotions? Do you regularly give in to urges and cravings that are keeping you from the life or the body or the finances that you want? Well, you don't have to do it anymore, okay. Those results don't have to be your results anymore. Urges have no control over you. You can completely become aware of buffering, that you're doing it, or even that you're about to do it, and choose not to.

You can recognize cravings for what they are and not give in. And you won't be perfect at first. You absolutely won't, but if you practice this concept, if you start practicing and writing them down so you know when you get to 10 or 20 or 50 or 100 urges that you've allowed, guess what, you're going to start to get really, really good at this.

So I use my journal to do it. I hope you will do that too. And you're going to be so stinking proud of yourself when you start to see how much control you actually have over food, alcohol, Facebook, Netflix, and all these other things that we often think just happen to us. They're not going to be happening to you anymore, okay.

So I hope you loved this episode. I know there was some techy stuff in it, but it's super important and I can't wait to hear from you what you think about it. And I also can't wait to see you back here next week with another episode of *The Design You Podcast*. 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.

[The Design You Podcast](http://tobifairley.com) with Tobi Fairley