

Ep #59: The Seasons of Reinvention with Whitney English



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 59.

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 there podcast friends. I'm so happy you're here today. It is time for another *Design You* interview, and today I'm talking with Whitney English. Whitney and I have been internet friends, as I call it, or internet dating as I also call it, for years and we've never actually met in person but it's so funny how it's such a small world when you connect on Instagram and Facebook and you feel like you really know people, and we've had many phone conversations and other interactions and so I'm super excited to bring her to the podcast for you this week.

So in this episode and in this fun conversation, Whitney and I talk all about how she built the very successful Whitney English stationery company, how that she then built the Day Designer, which so many of you have had and probably do have now. Her amazing planner that she designed and then she sold that company and what that was like.

We talk about how to keep going when things get hard, we talk about reinventing yourself, which we both are fans of doing many times in our lifetime. We talk about being vulnerable. We talk about everything and we even talk about how she really had a little yearlong mini retirement after she sold the Day Designer, which I'm sort of not so secretly jealous of.

It would be fun to take a year off in my opinion, and she was able to do that and she talks to us about that and what she did during that time, so I hope that you love this conversation as much as I do. Get ready to hear our fun talk with Whitney English.

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Tobi: Hey Whitney, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I'm so glad you're here.

Whitney: Thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Tobi: We have an online relationship, you and I.

Whitney: We do, yeah.

Tobi: We internet date each other, which is so funny because it's so fascinating to me that we're in a time where we haven't actually hung out together and spent time together. We've spoken on the phone several times but we really know each other from online and email and Instagram stories and all that goodness, but I still feel like I know you super well. But in case my audience doesn't know you, why don't you tell them about you? Who you are, what you do, I mean, you've done a ton of amazing things, but just give us a little intro of who Whitney English is.

Whitney: Okay. I have a degree in interior design that I graduated in 2001, right before September 11. So we know what that did to the design market, and ended up going a completely different direction. Started a wholesale stationery company when I was 22. It worked really well until it didn't, and then went down in a ball of flames. I learned a lot from that experience. That's part of my story, learning from failure and having the right attitude about that.

And then at the same time that was going down, I pulled this idea out of my pocket. I had always wanted to do a planner for years. I ran that stationery company for 10 years, knew how to print stuff, just never really found the courage to do the planner. And I did it and I trademarked it. We called it Day Designer. A lot of people do recognize me from that because we've sold millions of those now.

They were licensed to go into Target and then about three years ago the company that put them into Target came to me and asked if I could talk more about this later if anybody's interested, but they asked if they could

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buy it and I said yes. So I'm kind of right here. That almost brings us up to speed.

Tobi: That's so awesome, and there's some stuff I definitely want to talk about because we were chit-chatting a little bit about how you had sort of a - let's see, what did you call it? A mini retirement. So I definitely want to hear about that because I know you and I both have some things in common that we tend to find ourselves in overworking situations and then we need to go back the other direction and reset.

So I'm actually kind of jealous of hearing about the mini retirement, so we can talk about that. But so many amazing things that you've done and it's so interesting that you say the stationery business went down in a ball of flames because I don't - I mean, I know you're right because I know that industry changed and everybody was able to start printing things on their own and that's a whole story into itself, but I don't think about that as any sort of failure when I think of you.

Like, when I think of your person, I think that's the first actually I heard of you or learned of you because I had a friend back then that owned a small stationery boutique here in Little Rock, and I think that's when I first heard of you. And then I got to meet you and reached out to you on social media or you me or something, I think I did you. So yeah, I know that that industry changed and you changed but gosh, I certainly - I do not think, "Oh Whitney, she's that girl who her stationery company bombed," because it was super successful, right?

Whitney: I mean, it was. I did my first million I think, whenever I was 26 years old. I mean, it was amazing until it wasn't. So anyway.

Tobi: But what I love about that is so many times people will have something that they consider a failure, like you're saying, and they stop right there. And they're like, that was the most painful thing ever, I'm never going to do that again. And for me, it's more like well that was a season. That wasn't meant to be my whole life and it was a season and it ran its course and then it was time to do something else, and I think that's one of

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the things I've seen you do so brilliantly and that I've admired so much is how you're not afraid to continually reinvent yourself and not think that anything - it's not like oh, poor Whitney having to reinvent herself again.

It's actually to me, that's what life is about. Whoever decided years and years ago that we were supposed to stay in one job for our entire life and never change I think didn't really understand sort of these seasons. So talk a little bit about that whole reinvention. You told me a fun story about a lady you met recently, so let's talk about what that is because so many people want to reinvent themselves and they don't have the courage to.

And I love that you said those words, "I had the courage to launch Day Designer," and then it was another super successful business. So you've done that twice and I'm sure you're going to do it again really soon because you're starting again, right?

Whitney: I am. Fingers crossed, I'm in that season again. I feel like - so yeah, the fun story is that I had a group. I host these little mastermind retreats in Carlton Landing, which is a town halfway between Arkansas and Oklahoma. Right between us. And so I did a couple last year. Just the greatest smorgasbord of entrepreneur shows up and I know you do stuff like this too so you know the vibe, just the energy is so good and so life-giving.

And one of the girls who showed up was - she's well into retirement age. She's at least 60 plus I think and I hope I would not offend her by saying that. And anyway, so we had a gathering of those group of women at my home just two days ago and I walked her to her car and we were just chatting and she said that she never thought she would be her age and reinventing herself again.

And I can't remember how many times - it was at least four times, but I took so much comfort in that because you've got this very dynamic, outgoing, beautiful woman. She was wearing a camouflage skirt, gold shoes, and a silk botanical print bomber jacket from H&M that was the child's size, with

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all this huge chunky gold jewelry. Absolutely gorgeous. And I was just like okay, this reinvention thing, it's not going to stop happening.

And then she said it always gets better. So I just took a lot of encouragement from that and you know, I don't need to feel shame about the fact that - and sometimes I feel like that's an actual struggle but here I am reinventing myself for starting something for the third time. And I've started lots of little things but I'm starting what's supposed to be the next big thing.

Tobi: I love that and you know, I haven't completely reinvented like, completely absolutely 100% thrown out my design business but I really feel like I have done the same thing when I had - or especially from what I thought my career would look like. I thought it would just be the traditional design thing for years and then the recession hit and then I started the business consulting and the design camps and all that, and then about three or so years ago I was kind of hitting a little bit of midlife and a little bit of what do I want to do now.

I hit some road bumps in my marriage, which thankfully are all figured out because we all go through stuff, right? And so that's when I started diving into the health and wellness and I got nutrition certification, I got a life coach certification, and in those moments, I remember thinking people are going to think I'm an absolutely nutcase. They're going to think I'm a total flake. What is this lady doing?

First she was a designer, then she was a business coach, she thinks she's Oprah, she's always giving self-help advice now, she's a life coach, and there's that part in us that feels shame and feels silly and feels afraid, but then when you put whatever those gifts and talents are out into the world, to me, and I'm sure you've been the same way, I get immediate response from the people that we're supposed to be serving. Is that the experience you've had?

Whitney: Yeah, and I think that you're brave. I know how hard it is to put yourself out there like that and there are a lot of - I had a really bad Monday

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this week and I Instagrammed, "Show up anyway." I'm in the middle of this launch and it's just one of those weeks where I don't have an option. I can't wait until I want to feel like it. I have to just do it and it does feel like people sort of pick up on that courage and then I love it.

If I have a bad day I'll sort of imply something and people always send a sweet message and say keep doing it, you've got it, you're putting so much good into the world, like, thank you for - because I don't have the biggest following and I don't think I want to be Oprah. But yeah, it's encouraging to interact with them and get that feedback for sure.

Tobi: Well yeah, and I think that's a great point too because actually I do think you have a big following and a lot of people listening would look and be like, oh my gosh, she's like a celebrity, but at the same time it's really not about the size of the following as much as it is about the quality of the connections and the difference you make for the people in your tribe or in your sphere, right? That's what I found, for sure.

Whitney: Yeah. And I have a lot of really good kind of Tobi relationships. Like, people that I've been in touch with for a really long time and never met in person but if they're looking for a flesh mount modern farmhouse light fixture and they send me a message, I'll send them a link. So it is funny how those relationships, how that community builds over time. I love it.

Tobi: Yeah, me too. I mean, there's definitely - people often talk about all the drawbacks and the negativity of social media and of course, there are always. There's two sides to every coin and there's definitely that, but I just think the ability to connect with people everywhere, across the entire world in an intimate way so that you truly feel - and I feel like we know each other and we're friends and we could literally call each other up and just have a conversation like two old friends picking up a topic, which is even what happened today before we started recording the podcast.

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I think that's one of the amazing, amazing things. And I'm sure you're like me. Most of my social communication has now ended up in the direct messages part of Instagram stories. Is that true for you too?

Whitney: Yeah, almost entirely. And if it goes - somebody says oh, well we need to book something, I typically just say well, text me because I don't ever answer my email. The communication channels have changed and that's interesting, for sure.

Tobi: Yeah, they have, and I've also been watching you and I think this will be the fourth or fifth interview because I'm doing a lot more interviews for year two of my podcast, which is so fun and people really love them, kind of every other week or every third episode, but you'll be probably the third or fourth one I've done in a row that we've talked about this but I just want to touch on this about what an amazing job you're doing and I'm trying to do the same of just being vulnerable and putting the real version of you out on your stories on Instagram.

So talk about that a little bit, and that's why I feel like I know you because I literally watch your stories while you're putting your makeup on some days and you know like, part of that's like, oh weird, another parts are like, oh my gosh, it's like I'm in her - I feel like I'm on her bed with my pajamas and my coffee talking to her. So talk about how you've had - I'm sure there was some fear there.

I did one last week or a couple weeks ago that I was like, okay I'm Instagramming from the bed, at least I'm not in my pajamas. I put on Lululemon, but how have you really had the courage to put yourself out there in that very, very real, not perfect, not completely polished but very authentic way?

Whitney: Yeah, that is a hard one and I don't have a good answer. If I'm honest, I'll admit that I still struggle with it. I started doing the Lives in the morning when I do my makeup because I'm standing in one place, which is unless I'm working, it's pretty rare for me to be standing in one place. And I

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don't know, is it weird? I'm looking at myself in the mirror. Why not look at myself on my phone? Why not kill two birds with one stone?

And I even thought to myself, this is weird, and then it was just like, Whitney, nothing is weird in the land of social media. It's not like you're posting a picture in your underwear, which is also apparently not weird anymore.

Tobi: Exactly. Yeah, look at Jenna Kutcher. She grew her Instagram to a million people when she started posting pictures of herself in her underwear.

Whitney: Unbelievable. That is not my brand. Go Jenna, go. But I do feel like it's still hard to be - some days I wish I could be totally authentic and whenever - I'll have a bad day and I have a couple best friends that - I just want to take to social media with this. I just want to cry. Who does this? Jen Gotch does this where she went through this whole crisis, running mascara down her face and then she recovered from it and now she talks about how mental health is so important.

And I'll tell my best friends, "I just want to be like Jen Gotch today. I just want to be on Instagram and have the ugly cry." They're like, no, don't, I'm coming over and taking away your phone. And so - and Brené Brown says you have to be careful about who you let in, so even though I'm willing to put my makeup on in front of people, I think if there is an answer in this, it's about finding the boundary that works for you, which is the most ambiguous and not helpful answer at all.

Tobi: No, but I think you're right and I love when Brené talks about that. I feel like it was actually in *Rising Strong*, which will lead us to another question I'm going to ask about in a minute and that whole idea of reinventing and coming out of the hard stuff, but I do remember where she says the number of people that have really earned the right to hear your most personal things would fit on a Post-It note.

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And obviously that's not the number of people listening to us on social media, but that doesn't mean that you can't still share a much more authentic or transparent version of yourself than we are used to sharing that has been historically, especially in interior design and in creative industries, we want to make everything look perfect all the time, and I think people just got tired of that. Don't you?

Whitney: It's affirming to see somebody else struggling with something and know that you're not alone. We're more connected than ever but less connected in real life. We're in this crazy little season where it is sort of feeding us this idea that - and it's just micro content. It's just - I mean, Brené Brown wrote a book and hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people are writing an encouraging Instagram post once a day. It's just not as much content without a PhD.

Tobi: But could be equally helpful or life changing for people in so many ways. Yeah, I think that's a great point. Well, let's talk about - so since we've mentioned Rising Strong, I was telling you earlier that a lot of times I get questions from people that are in either my paid communities or my free Facebook community or just that I encounter in life or on social media that say what do you do when things get hard, because there's a lot of hard in life in general and especially in building a business, and we're going to talk more about entrepreneurship in a little bit.

But I think that I would love to hear your thoughts on this because I mean, you've - there's the high highs of the million dollars at 26 and then the next million dollars, and then there's the low lows of what happens in between. So what is it do you think that's helped you - because it's easy when everything's going great. It's easy when you're the - what do they say on Project Runway when you're in? It's easy when you're in but it's not very easy when you're out. So what do you do to get through the hardest times?

Whitney: So, JK Rowling has this quote and it is, "And so rock bottom became the foundation on which I rebuilt my life," and I also think about the scripture in the Bible where it talks about building your house on the rock

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and not the sand and we talk about hitting rock bottom like it's a bad thing when in reality, it's a really good - before sinking, we need to find the bottom so we can push back up. It's like if you're in a boat and you can't - it's dark and you're sinking, you're drowning, you can't figure out what way is up, you don't know what direction to swim. But if you can find the bottom, you know where to go.

Tobi: Wow, that's so good. I'm letting that sink in. That's so amazing because when you're sinking it's like we're paddling like heck to not hit the bottom. Just keep your head above water, and that's not always the best plan of action, and I know exactly what you're talking about because my greatest changes that I'm most grateful for, the biggest growth have all happened in the more rock bottom moments.

The rock bottom moments financially, the rock bottom moments in my marriage, the rock bottom moments in my work-life balance. All of those were the moments that you look back on like a silver lining and you're like, thank heavens that happened. So good.

Whitney: And I'm not saying like, go all self-sabotage and put a bag of - tie a rock to your foot and jump in a lake. Not saying go find rock bottom, but there's something about being there where all of a sudden the tension and the stakes are - there's just a clarity of purpose where you can just say if I do not push off from this point, here's what I stand to lose, here's the cost. And it's in that tension that I find a lot of motivation, although I feel like motivation is just kind of a cheap word. But all - clarity of purpose is probably what it is.

Tobi: Like resilience almost.

Whitney: Or just what direction do I need to go next? I know I'm at the bottom, so up. Now I know.

Tobi: When you're at the bottom, all of the stuff that seems so important like is somebody going to judge me for putting makeup on on an Instagram story is so the farthest thing from your mind. All of those things just fall

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away and you suddenly go okay, these are the only three things that matter to me right now. I agree completely. So good.

Whitney: Yeah, so me putting my makeup on on Instagram, that's exactly where it comes from is like, well, I don't think anybody - I haven't done an Instagram Live in a really long time. I don't think anybody's like, going to troll me. I was like, what do I have to lose? Nothing. Just do it.

Tobi: And if they don't want to follow you anymore then great because that's kind of how it's supposed to work. You repel the people that aren't supposed to be in your tribe and you attract the ones that so resonate with what you're doing. Yeah, that's so good. I love that. So basically, what you're saying is just kind of the way you got through the hard times was not being so afraid of rock bottom or allowing it to lift you back up.

Whitney: Yeah. I mean, so often we resist failure. We do - sometimes we do the stupidest stuff to resist failure like we make bad decisions that actually drag it out as opposed to ripping the Band-Aid off.

Tobi: Like you've heard the terms throw good money after bad. If the ship is sinking, sometimes you just got to let that puppy go down.

Whitney: Yeah. Just find the bottom. So we've had spots in our marriage, we've had finance spots, and I'm just - my husband does not like conflict but if I feel like we're on a downhill slide to someplace not good, I am going to accelerate that. We're calling the therapist, we're pulling the budgets out. We are not collecting \$200 passing go. We are dealing with it right then. And my husband's more like, well, if I just don't deal with this today maybe it'll go away. Like no, rock bottom never goes away. We have to find it.

Tobi: Head in the sand does not fix the problem. I'm very much like you. I agree. And the thing is if you don't really know where you stand, you can't grow or change. You have to know the truth, right? You have to absolutely know where are we actually, what is the worst-case scenario. And I think that so many people that I work with, especially entrepreneurs, small

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business people, interior designers, they have no idea what their finances are and they find some sort of weird comfort in just ignoring it.

And that to me is the worst place to be because even if my bank account says negative \$20,000 or it's about to be because we owe that much money and maybe money is not coming in, I would so rather know okay, I've got to go figure out how to bring in \$20,000 pronto, as opposed to just going I hope this doesn't come to a head.

Whitney: Yeah. I've struggled with that in the past too and it's hard. But I think like Tony Robbins or somebody says what you focus on expands, and so it also just doesn't make sense to ignore it if you want more of it. Money.

Tobi: So anything else that people need to know about getting through those hard spots other than they pass and if it doesn't work out they can totally reinvent themselves again?

Whitney: I don't have anything off the top of my head.

Tobi: That's all great nuggets. I love that. My mom has always said to me when I was in my most afraid moments, which those moments of like meltdown are usually not near as bad as what you think. They're usually drama filled, but in those moments, she's always said to me, you've built it once, you can build it again. And I think that that is so important to hang on to because we act like all will be lost if something doesn't work out. The shame, the humiliation of failure.

Let's talk a little bit more about that too, not that we want to have such an upbeat podcast on failure, but I think that there maybe are a couple other lessons. If you already touched on we can move on, but you said even in that sort of - the failure of the - or the running its course of the stationery business and then the selling of the other business, anything else amazing and just like, in the life lesson category around failure that you think people need to know?

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Whitney: Maybe if there was anything else I would say is it matters what we believe about ourselves. What we allow into our minds and I think there's probably a lot of - you've already said it, perfectionists listening and we want it to be perfect and there's a term. It was in The Birth Order Book and I Googled it and there's not a whole lot of other information out there about it but he identified that first-born children are often what he calls defeated perfectionists.

Like we don't think we can win or we're not going to be able to do it, so we just don't start. It starts to look like procrastination or laziness and it's not. I actually do want it to be perfect but I'm just not going to put the effort into it because I'm afraid that I don't have what it takes. So it goes back to what I believe about myself and my capabilities and if I sit here and play the man, Whitney, you screwed up again card, or I can't believe you did that, or look at you, your clothes are on the floor, if I'm playing that game in my head, I'm never going to get to the other side of failure. The reel, the laugh track in our heads or whatever you want to call it, that needs to be positive.

Tobi: It reminds me of Brooke Castillo that I learned life coaching under who's just a genius and she calls that failing ahead of time and I thought that was so fascinating because she's like okay, yes you have to fail to get to where you want to go because failure is part of growth. It's not a reason to stop, it's not a negative, it's part of the growth process. But she's like, why in the heck would you just fail ahead of time?

You could go ahead and try it because who knows, it might actually work, but that fear and that perfectionism keeps you from even starting because of what might happen. So you just fail ahead of time. And when I hear that, it always lights a fire under me because I'm like, she's right. If I'm going down, I'm going down swinging, but I'm not going to sit on the sidelines and fail ahead of time because what might have happened if you tried. It's kind of what you're saying.

Well, let's talk about entrepreneurship because we also were thinking a little bit when we were brainstorming about what we want to talk about, and

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I think you're such a great person to talk about this because you've built multiple businesses, but there's so many things about being an entrepreneur that nobody really tells you. It's kind of like all the stuff they don't tell you about having a baby, if you're a woman, and then you're like, oh my god, why didn't anybody tell me this was going to happen?

But that's pretty much an equivalent to building a business and becoming an entrepreneur. So let's talk some about that. What are some of the things that you found most surprising or challenging in the past about running businesses or that you kind of didn't know? Because I mean, one of the first things that comes to my mind is just the sheer number of things that you have to handle and go all in with from finances to managing employees to all that stuff, there's just so much more to it. We see the pretty shiny glossy side of oh my gosh, I'll have time freedom and I can make my own decisions, but that's the tiniest part of the whole thing, right?

Whitney: Yeah, I think I might have been born with an entrepreneurial mindset. So I mean, from a very young age I was trying to figure out how to make money. I was babysitting. My parents had to make this rule where I was only allowed to babysit one night per weekend because if they - I just would have babysat all the time because the money was so good.

Tobi: That's awesome.

Whitney: Yeah, so they were like, you have to socialize some too.

Tobi: You and I are so cut from the same cloth. I think it every time we chat. That's so funny.

Whitney: I do think that the mindset is one thing that nobody really tells you. I remember taking entrepreneurship classes in college and I took business classes and accounting classes. Totally flunked accounting, by the way, but nobody tells you that you're going to have - mindset is probably one of the most important factors about entrepreneurship because you just have to figure out stuff on your own.

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There's sort of this willpower thing of like, I don't have an answer so I'm just going to have to Google it. You have to be really good at Googling things too as an entrepreneur. They don't tell you that either.

Tobi: Google is your best friend.

Whitney: Oh my gosh, I always say if you Google hard enough you can find it. Anything.

Tobi: Marie Forleo says everything is figureoutable.

Whitney: Yeah, and it's all out there for the taking. It's crazy. I don't know how I could have been an entrepreneur before this information age. That has definitely helped things.

Tobi: Something that I talk about with a lot of the people I work with is this whole idea - in fact, I just did one of our - a live call in our community yesterday and I started it out before I even took questions of addressing this whole idea of being stuck because so many people say they're stuck and I don't know if I'm like you and I was just born with this kind of way of thinking, if it's personality type thing, if it's just something I've developed over the years, but - certainly not trying to be like I know it all because there's plenty of places that I do have challenges and I get overwhelmed and other things.

But I said I don't really have an issue very often getting stuck. I might hit a roadblock in one area or I might get tired of thinking about one thing, but there's so many steps that I know I can take so if I kind of get stopped on one area, I don't think about myself being stuck. I'm like, well at least I can go over here and do this thing while I'm thinking about that thing.

So what about getting stuck? Have you had that experience? Do you find yourself getting stuck? I mean, it sounds to me like you're a lot like me, that you're just like, well, there's got to be a solution, let me just go figure it out. One of the things you also said to me earlier was that why not just ask somebody, and I'm so comfortable just asking other people, and so many

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people are afraid to just ask. So what about getting stuck and being confident just to ask?

Whitney: Well, I always say to myself, what's the worst thing they're going to say? And it's the same answer every time.

Tobi: I'm not telling you that.

Whitney: Right. So that answer never changes, so why do I allow - that's a constant. It's not a variable. Why do I allow that to influence - then it just comes down to fear, but it's like what are you afraid of? No? Two letters? So I do actually have that conversation in my head quite frequently.

And I have just in terms of motivation and getting unstuck, I have really - I've worked on my self-awareness a lot and my enneagram, my Myers-Briggs, that whole nine yards, and I just sort of know how to hack myself through it. I am definitely ADD and have struggled with minor depression, which sure feel stuck, at least to me. But I've got a to-do list and I know it's got to get done and if it gets done later it's going to be more painful than if it gets done sooner.

And so how do I have to break that down to - I do the stupidest stuff. I make have done lists, or I'll open my planner and I'll start just writing down if I answer an email, I go to my to-do list and I write down answered email, put a check mark beside it.

And I'll do the smallest stuff first. I will change my environment. I will - getting in the shower helps too. If I just can't get out of - I do struggle with that. I struggle with this minor depression where there are just days where if I have - Monday was one of them for me. If I get a blow, I feel like it's going to take me down. I feel like it's going to at least get me stuck for that day. So I just have to figure out how to hack my way through it.

I also have these really great best friends that are like, just amazing and one time I called one of them. I was like, I have been working on this project for four hours, and she was in the middle of Target or something

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and she stopped. She was like, "Oh my gosh, this is a 15-minute project. What are you talking about?" You should have called me three and a half hours ago.

And I just told her what the problem was and she was like - sometimes you need that creative - I'm a creative problem solver. You are too. That's one of the things that makes you a great designer. And sometimes you just need somebody like that to...

Tobi: You're too close to it yourself. You're in the trenches and then the minute you start finding that hitting resistance, what you resist persists, they say, you just keep struggling and struggling and struggling, yes, absolutely.

Whitney: And movement. Action begets action so somebody a long time ago said you've got to eat that frog, and it was like, do the hardest thing first. Maybe that works for some people. It does not work for me. If I'm having trouble getting out of bed, the first action I need to take isn't make your bed. The first action I need to take is put your feet on the freaking floor, Whitney. I will break it down into such miniscule action in order to just get action. I allow every single movement to count as a giant win if I am starting to feel like I am stuck.

Tobi: That's such good advice because so many people discount all that stuff. Well, that was nothing and that was easy and they don't count any of that stuff, and they're only looking for the frog eating and they're not capable of eating the frog that day. And so they're just hopeless. And for me, I don't usually consider myself stuck but my go-to emotion and place is overwhelm, and I was even feeling this myself yesterday because I've just been out of town a lot on the weekends this year.

My daughter has been playing traveling volleyball and it's just been way more than I anticipated and it's not that I work all weekend. I've really made strides in the last four, five years to not, but I do use an hour or two sometimes to catch up on an email or to organize my pantry or to get our groceries bought, or the things that make your weeks successful. And

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when I don't have all my weekends, I am in serious trouble a lot of times and I get overwhelmed.

And so for me, the things I do is I immediately go to my calendar because I'm very anal about keeping my calendar and my schedule and I have to remind myself, and I even think my mom's the one who reminds me of this too, in the sweetest way, she's very supportive. But I'm like, okay you're the ding-dong that put all that stuff on the calendar, you can move it back.

And so just yesterday I looked and I was like, okay, you have a four-hour session with a consultant you hired on Friday. You're the one paying that money, you let them know that you need to push that back until the end of April. There's no reason in the world to stay up all night trying to be ready. You're tired, you're exhausted, you're not in the frame of mind. And just moving that one thing was like, opened the gate to me.

Then I got like, 50 small things done and I felt like a different human being, but it's so weird. And I'm sure when people are stuck, maybe that's their definition of stuck. Overwhelm might feel stuck or depression might feel stuck like you said, so I think that's a good point because I maybe wasn't opening my mind really to how stuck can feel so different to other people than it does me. Those are really awesome tips.

So, anything else about the whole entrepreneurship thing? Anything financial? I think people are so afraid of finances and the money. One of the things you and I talked about that I think you're so good and I'm good at is making money and I think a lot of people fall into the trap of like, what's called trading dollars for hours.

Sort of just kind of having an hourly rate and not really being able to create wealth or to create - like you did a product that's going to sell and have such big potential, so what about that thinking? What kind of mental shift or approach do you have to take to really get comfortable? I mean, obviously you said you did it since you were a babysitter, but how do you learn to be a person who's good at making money?

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Whitney: Well, it's not an overnight thing. I'm on my third reinvention and I can tell you right now it's not like I have a magic wand that makes money appear in my bank account. But it does help to put yourself - just realizing that people have money and they are waiting for you to tell them why they need to give it to you. That's all a sale is, is why do they need to give you that money, and they're waiting.

If you're a business owner, they are waiting for you to give them a good reason as to why, and that's just marketing. And so if you're trying to figure out what their reason is, you start looking at their problems because their problems are what they're going to be willing to pay solutions for, and the solutions are what are going to create value in their lives.

So I think a lot about that. What's going to - and I think about this with my audience. Like my email list, my Instagram audience, things like that. What are they struggling with? And I think this is where the vulnerability thing can help as well. Whenever I'm vulnerable, it's solving a problem for them. It's making them feel not as alone where they are. And so I'm providing value in their lives. Any place you provide value, you're creating trust and any place you create trust, they're going to be willing to hand you those dollars.

Tobi: That was just reminding me because you're the person who probably three or four years ago introduced me to Donald Miller and StoryBrand, and you had taken his course in person. So I bought his online course and then just recently I read his book as a group with my book club in my coaching program. And there's so much just goodness in that book, and you're actually friends with him too? You know him personally?

But when you were just talking about that, it reminded me where he talks about so many businesses make the mistake of making themselves the hero, like they're going to ride in and save the day, and he says that if the customer is not the hero of their own story and you're just the guide, it's never going to work. And kind of what you were saying about being vulnerable and open and what it was making me think is yeah, a lot of us are so insecure that we think we have to have all the answers all the time,

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we think we have to be right all the time, we think we're going to look like a fool if we don't know everything they're talking about.

And really, the way that the StoryBrand concept puts it is you're just guiding them. They're figuring it out and they're the hero of their own story. So does that play into kind of what you're talking about?

Whitney: Yeah, for sure it does. I had a thought while you were talking, I lost it.

Tobi: I do that all the time. It'll come back. It will definitely come back, and thank you by the way, for introducing me to that, to him, and that concept, and he has a great podcast and there's just so much genius in his approach.

Whitney: Yeah. So this is what I was going to say. Entrepreneurs email me - this is probably in the frequently asked questions file and they'll say, "Whitney, I am following my passions but it's just not working. Why am I not making money?" I'm like, well, what do your passions have to do with your customer's problems? If you're following your passions, you're probably not providing value for anybody except yourself. So I'm really not big on that follow your passions thing. I really think it's bad advice. I would tell someone to follow their knowledge base.

Tobi: That's interesting. Or if you are going to follow your passion, you better be dang sure that your ideal client avatar is you basically, and you've got to find people that are like you, almost exactly like you and then your passion project might resonate. But to think that it's going to resonate with a broad audience, that's a really, really great point. I love that.

Whitney: And an example I would give - I use this example all the time is let's say you have somebody who really loves interior design but doesn't have a degree in it, doesn't know how to navigate that or hasn't had the life experiences that make you a great designer, but they're a good writer. They might need to go be the editor of a magazine, a haven magazine instead of a shelter magazine, instead of an interior designer.

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So following your knowledge base instead of your passion, what your strengths - like, what do you know and do best? Because that's where you're going to be a guide who has authority. You've been there, you've done - like Don says, you've been there, you've done that, you know how it feels. It's empathy in authority.

Tobi: Well, and the beauty of that is I think a lot of people have a hard time getting in touch with their feelings and their passions, so when I ask them to figure out what their passions are, if I'm like, what do you even want to do? What do you like? They're like, I have no idea. But I think now that I hear what you're saying, it's so much easier to ask someone well, what do you know? What are you educated on? What experiences have you been through? What do you know that you could teach someone else to fix for someone else?

That's completely different than being able to get - if you're not a very self-aware person or if you're not very touchy feely or you don't like to go in deep, that's going to be an easier place to start than going what am I passionate about?

Whitney: There's this story about Picasso met a woman at a bar or something and she asked him to draw something.

Tobi: I love this story, yes.

Whitney: Yeah, so he took the napkin and drew on it and said how much is it and I can't remember what he said. It was like, \$55,000 or something, \$5000, and she was like, "What? That took you five minutes?" And he said, no, it took me however long, 50 years or whatever.

Tobi: And whatever the number is, it could be \$5000, it could be a million dollars, but his point is, yeah, it took me a lifetime to draw that one drawing, yeah.

Whitney: And as entrepreneurs, we should be selling that lifetime of experience, and that follow your passions thing, that I think originated from

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Steve Jobs saying something in a commencement speech and America just loved that and started claiming it as the best advice ever, you know, we can't sell that. We have to have experience, authority, and empathy. So wherever we have walked and whatever we know is where we're going to be able to make the most money going forward.

Tobi: Yeah, where the follow your passion thing has helped me a lot is that I think there are a lot of people who stay in jobs they don't love or they're afraid to put something, like I said, the life coaching and all of that stuff out into their business because they're embarrassed they're going to look like a flake or whatever. And that's where the follow your passion piece has served me well because it's something that I'm pouring myself into. And then I can turn it into a business, but at the same time, I think you're so smart in that just because you're passionate about it does not mean it's a good business, does not mean there's a big enough audience, does not mean that you're solving the clients problems.

So maybe even the sweet spot might be where your passion meets your knowledge base and then lay that filter over your customer and go, okay, what problems can I solve with this? But I think, at any rate, for some people the knowledge base is going to be so much more helpful than their passion because they have no idea what their passion is. And I see people get so frustrated and feel so inadequate because they can't decide or name what their passion is. And I think this is a beautiful alternative of, okay, well that may not even matter or it might present itself if you start taking some action, and that's a great way to take action.

Yes, so, so good, well, this has been so much fun and just so full of just such actionable ideas. And I think people are going to love it, but before we go, what about this mini-retirement? What did you learn in mini-retirement? Because I secretly crave mini-retirement. And I sort of created a version of it when I stopped a lot of the crazy travel and started living life the way I want to, but I want to hear about the mini-retirement.

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Whitney: So, I created this planner and it was in Target and then the company that put it into Target wanted to buy it and a couple of things that – I've sold businesses before. I've bought and sold a lot of – this is the third reinvention, but there are probably about 30 LLCs out there that I've had my hand in at one point in time or another. So I have some experience buying and selling smaller businesses and in doing that sort of learned that the right time to sell is when you have a buyer and you never get poor selling early.

And so we had a buyer and my husband and I just had learned the hard way that that means that we need to make a transaction happen. So we had financial advisors and everything and lawyers, the whole nine yards. And I wanted it for two reasons. I wanted to be a mom and I had been working since my youngest was born and I really wanted to spend time with him. And I had been praying about that. Like, I had been asking the Lord for two years, like please, you know my heart is not in running this business right now.

And so I'm just so grateful and so thankful that he facilitated this transaction happening. But I didn't even know what I was going to do when I sold it. I do still consult for the company that bought it, but I ended up reading a book called Jim Trelease's Read-Aloud Handbook, which is about reading to your kids. My kids are currently nine, eight, and six.

Tobi: They're still pretty young then.

Whitney: Yeah, they're pretty young. And so whenever I sold my business, almost three years ago, my youngest two didn't know how to read. They were about four and five at the time. And I read this Jim Trelease Read-Aloud Handbook and I loved it. I ended up reading my kids 1000 books that year. And I kept track of them and there may not be entrepreneurial value in that experience, but it was such a blessing to be able to just take that year and do that. And sure, hindsight being 20-20, we probably left many on the table. We probably could have sold the business for more. We probably, you know, if I'd kept it – there's a few things we've seen happen

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and, like, we could have made a lot of money, like they're making a lot of money. But I will never look back at the decision to sell that business with regret because of that time that I got to spend with my kids, which I would not have had.

Tobi: That's amazing. And you told me that you made yourself not do anything for a whole year, like don't start another business, don't even think about any of that for a whole year, right?

Whitney: Yeah, and I just kept a list, like of everything from start a media franchise, like Harry Potter or something – she's a billionaire, that sounds like fun – to podcast, you know. And then after a year, we kind of started dabbling in things. My husband sold his business a year after I sold mine. So then we're kind of both in this season of reinvention and we both contribute equally to our household's income.

We also kind of got to this point, not that it was rock bottom, but it was like not working was no longer an option. So we got that joy and that little season together as a family and we moved in a different direction, and it's awesome.

Tobi: So good. Well I can see how that happens when you're at that point of burnout and you're like, oh my gosh I hate everything about this business, I wish I could just get rid of it today, it's killing me. And then, it's not that long after you make some changes that you're like, wait a minute, I'm kind of bored. I kind of want to do some – oh, and I would like some money too, right. So it's interesting.

So, you are in the process of reinventing. Anything you want to tell us before we wrap up? I know you're launching some new things, or people should just go check you out at whitneyenglish.com or on Instagram or what do they need to know?

Whitney: Yeah, I am most frequently on Instagram @whitneyenglish if they want to follow over there. Say hi, let me know that you found me through

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Tobi: And I feel like our people are probably are very overlapped. My people probably...

Tobi: My people are your people.

Whitney: Yeah, exactly. We should do lunch. But Instagram, and then I'm launching, for the first time in four years, a business e-course, which is basically everything I feel like I know and can possibly synthesize into digestible videos. And then I'm writing a book about goal setting and I'm decorating my house, I love it.

Tobi: And you're starting to, like, dabble back in interior design, which you never really did, right? You have a couple of clients and you're – or multiple, I don't know. I see you doing some projects online.

Whitney: Yeah, I have three ideal clients right now, and so I don't think that's an avenue that I see myself pursuing fulltime, but I will spend 12 hours with a client, literally, a full day of shopping or fabrics or whatever, and my husband's like, "You have really great energy right now for working." I love it, so it's refueling me. It's like the passions that refuel you, that's what I'm following for my fuel and my energy right now. And I might try to design a fabric and wallpaper line at some point in time.

Tobi: Which you would be very well equipped to do because you made all that stationary and all those patterns and all that stuff.

Whitney: I love patterns. Yeah, I love that stuff.

Tobi: Well, what I love about that is because you haven't been traditionally in the interior design business and you're not so ingrained in the way that business works, you're much more of an entrepreneur, which is how I consider myself. I love that you're like, "Okay I can do this over here and do it sometimes and it can be a piece of what I do," but you see the potential of a lot more growth or money or other things in other possibilities that you could do on a larger scale probably.

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So I love that because I have such a hard time – and that’s really the work I do in my paid community right now, my *Design You* community, is helping people see they can create a whole value ladder of services and save their high-end service for only the people that really should be in that, only the people that really want to spend the money or the time or whatever. And I love that you just naturally gravitate to going, “It’s probably not going to be my fulltime thing because I’ve got other stuff that I really see the potential in.” So I think that’s great and it’s such a good example to these other people that I talk to all the time to be like, oh my gosh, if Whitney sees it that way, I can totally have a handful of those types of clients and do other things with my gifts and my talents, so good.

Well, thank you so much. This was just super, super packed with great information, a lot of stuff. I’m going to go back and listen to it myself. There was some really, really good stuff in there. I love it when people bring a different perspective to the table than the way I think about it, so thank you for all the ideas, the thoughts, the sharing, the vulnerability, the nuggets and the realness, because I think it’s going to help a lot of people. So I’m really thankful you were here today.

Whitney: Well thank you for having me, I enjoyed it.

Tobi: You’re so welcome and I’ll talk to you on the Instagram stories really soon. Bye, Whitney.

Whitney: Bye.

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So wasn’t that amazing? I hope you got a notebook out and took notes. And the good thing about podcasts is you can go back later and listen to it again, because I think there was so much value in the advice she had. And as I said in the podcast, I really love it when people bring a different perspective than what I have about certain situations, which she did a couple of times and it was really fun.

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So I'm going to have to listen to it again myself and let all the juicy goodness sink in, but thank you for listening. I can't wait to hear from you. If you listened to this episode, let Whitney know and let me know out on social media, especially on Instagram. We would love to hear from you.

And if you want to continue to connect with me and other people like me, please check out and join my *Design You Podcast* Community on Facebook. It's a free community. I mentioned it a couple of times, I think, in today's recording. But it is a place where lots of people that listen to the podcast come together and we get to continue to have these same conversations but much deeper. And I have some really cool stuff planned with some of our podcast guests coming up really soon in the *Design You Podcast* Community.

So you just search for us on Facebook, *Design You Podcast* Community, and you do have to apply to be a member, but we'll let you in, so just click you want to join and I can't wait to see you and interact with you over there in *The Design You Podcast* Community. And thanks again for listening today. I will see you again very soon.

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