

Ep #89: Gifts to Your Future Self



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to the *Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 89.

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

Hey, y'all, and welcome to December. If you're listening to this when it came out, originally, it's December. So, it's time for all of the things, right? We're on the cusp of all the holiday stuff. And, just about now, all the stress and frustration and to-do lists and deadlines are all overlapping with the parties and the shopping and the joy and the excitement, and all the things, right? Which can make us an emotional mess. We're having emotional overload right now.

So, what I'm going to do for you today, you're welcome, is take you on a journey out of that place, and into the future, where life is exactly the way you dream it to be, or better. That's right, friends, we're going on a trip to our future selves, and we're doing this just in time for the New Year.

And one of the reasons I want to do this exercise right now, and I want you to do it with me, and this is an exercise I've been using for years. But the reason that it's so important to me right now is not only are we about to have a New Year, it's 2020, friends, so we're starting a whole new decade.

And to me, that is the perfect time for a future self-exercise, because looking out into the future, to some point in the future, a year from now, five years from now, or what I'm recommending we do, right now, is go out 10 years into the future, it's the perfect amount of time to get a lot of traction on yourself and your lives, that 10-year period.

Now, in the moment, when you're writing this and you're doing this exercise with me, 10 years seems like forever from now, right? But think about 10 years ago, and 10 years before that. Heck, I'm often thinking, I'm not even

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old enough to be thinking anything was 20 years ago, but let's be honest, I could even be thinking of something 30 years ago, and likely 40 years ago. So, 10 years flies by, but a 10-year period is a great amount of time to make stuff really happen.

So, you may have heard this saying before, but I'm going to say it for you again, just in case you haven't. Or, even if you have, just to reinforce the concept, that most people overestimate what they can do in a year and underestimate what they can do in 10 years. And that is the exact experience I've had in my own life. I'll think about what I want to accomplish this year, and I'll make a lot of progress, right, in a year, because that's what I like to do. I'm an action-taker, for sure.

But, a lot of times, as they say, my eyes are bigger than my stomach for a 12-month period. Or, my eyes are bigger than my to-do list. But when I look at a decade, the amount of progress I make is incredible. It blows my mind. And I want you to be able to make a mind-boggling amount of progress, too, in your life.

And some of you've done this for years. Some of you've done it accidentally, but still made a lot of progress. And some of you just haven't taken charge of your life, and you're looking back over the last 10 years and you're really thinking, "You know what? I could have done more. I could have been in a different place."

So we never, ever want you to feel that way again. That's why we're doing this exercise. Okay? So, let's do it. What we're going to do, and you're going to listen to the whole podcast first, and over the next couple of days, you are going to write some letters to yourself. Okay? So, we're going to write a letter to our future self. We're going to write a letter from our future self. And some of you may even want to start with writing a letter to your past self.

So, I know, I know, some of you are groaning right now, those of you who don't like my journaling prompts and exercises, those of you who don't like to put your words and feelings on paper, and all the things. But, here's what

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I want you to know. It makes a difference. So when you're thinking, right now, here Tobi goes again with one of her woo-woo exercises or goofy concepts, I want you to see that this one is not even that woo-woo. I mean, it can be, if you want it to be, if you're woo-woo like me, but it doesn't even have to be.

Because all goal-setting involves going out in your mind into a place where you can envision a future, right? A future version of you. That's what the whole goal-setting process is about. We're thinking about where we want to be at some point in the future. So this isn't woo-woo, it's really no more than planning, except that when you can do the exercise that I'm suggesting, you actually can get bigger and better results.

And here's why. When we can embody the person we will become in our future, meaning we can step into her emotionally and we can feel the feelings that he or she feels, then we can go and get so much more traction on ourselves. Go so much further into that result, and create the outcomes or results we're wanting to create, at some point in the future.

And here's why. You may have heard me talk about the thought model that I use, that I learned at The Life Coach School, and it's really been the basis for my personal development work for the last three or four years. It's what I teach a lot of you. And it's what we use to manage our thoughts and our feelings to get the results we want.

And if you've heard me talk about that, you may already know this, but I'm just going to repeat it for you so that we're all on the same page, it's our thoughts that create our feelings, and our feelings create our actions, and our actions create our results.

So if that model is the truth, which it absolutely is, and we want to get a certain result in our future, then we have to be able to think the thoughts, that create the feelings, that get us to take the actions, to create those actual results. Okay?

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So the thing is, when we're in the here and now, today, we're looking forward at where we want to go, so often, we don't take the actions that would be required to get to where we want to go, now do we? And here's why. In the moment, we don't feel like taking them. Which means that we are not thinking the thoughts that create the feeling, that we need to take those actions, right?

And in the moment today, when 10 years is a long time from now, we're thinking things like we've got all the time in the world. And we have plenty of time just to get to a year from now, much less 10 years from now. That seems like forever.

Besides, when we're thinking about the future from the place we are right now, usually, we're not thinking the thoughts that are going to get us to where we want to go, right? We're often thinking the opposite of the thoughts that are going to get us the results we want.

So in the present moment, we are often thinking of all the reasons why what we want isn't going to happen, how it's not going to work, how maybe somebody else has already done it so we can't. How we're not smart enough or rich enough or pretty enough or thin enough, how we don't have enough money or we don't have the time, or a million other negative thoughts about the things we're dreaming of for our future, right?

And why do we do that? Well, because we're afraid. We're afraid we won't get there. And so, we have created a habit, most of us, of going to the thoughts that create negative feelings, and you cannot take a positive action from a negative feeling. So when you're in the moment, and you're in those thoughts of worry and fear and confusion and overwhelm, I want you to see that you, and only you, are the reason that you are not creating the future you dream of.

In fact, here's the scary part. What we don't even realize that we're doing to ourselves is we're thinking the same old thoughts that we've been practicing for years. And what that does is those same old thoughts create the same old feelings, which create the same old actions, which create the

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same old results. So we're essentially recreating our past as our future, over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over again.

And then we wonder why we never create the kind of future that we dream about. We never create the body we want. We never create the wealth we want. We never create the business we want. We never create the relationships we want.

And the reason why, and I hope this just blew your mind and this just gave you the clarity you need to see exactly what's happening, and why you keep creating a very similar life to the one that you've had in the past, okay? Instead of the one you really, really want.

Because it's so confusing. Like, we really do want it. We know we want it. But when it's time to think the thoughts to get there, we're not thinking the right thoughts. We're not creating the right feelings, okay? So it's really important that we see this, that when we think those types of thoughts, that what happens is not what we want.

And, we need to realize that we're not creating the feelings that would get us to take deliberate action, even when we don't want to, towards our goals. Okay? That's not what's happening for most of us. So, when we're creating those feelings of worry and doubt and fear and discomfort and confusion and overwhelm, again, just to be super, super clear, not a single one of those feelings moves us towards the actions that get us the results on that goals list, on that vision board.

There's no way that those two things go together. It doesn't work that way. Old thoughts don't create new results, okay? So, just remember this. This is key to this whole exercise. You cannot possibly think negative thoughts every day and create the future you say you want.

But, I have a nifty little trick that I learned a few years ago, and this thing is literally magical, and it's what we're talking about today. It's called writing a letter from our future self, and it is freaking genius, my friends.

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Because here's the thing. When we are in the future, when we go to that place in our mind where things have already happened, that we wanted to happen, guess what? We magically know all the answers of how we did it, now don't we? We have already lived the situations at that point in the future. So it's like being at the end of a movie and knowing how it turns out, right? So you're watching a movie, and you're terrified when you're watching it forward, right?

And you've never seen it before, you're terrified that the hero is going to be killed or go broke, or break up with the girl, or have some other tragic ending. But once you've already seen the movie and you watch it again the next time, you're no longer worried, right? Because you already know what the happy ending looked like, you've seen it before. Well, that's the exact same thing that we can do for ourselves with this concept of going into our future self.

Now, before you check out on me and think this is weird or silly or a waste of your time, or something you can just do in your head and not put on paper, I want you to see how very, very important this exercise is, okay? Because there is a ridiculous amount of wisdom that we can gain from our future self.

She's wise, she's experienced, she's knowledgeable, yet here we are, going through life all the time, every single day, not tapping into her wisdom. Not using her to make our lives easier or less scary. What the heck? And she's right there, the whole time. Okay? You have access to thinking and embodying your future self, every single day.

So to give you a glimpse of what this feels like, let's first imagine writing a letter to our past selves, okay? From right now where we are, whatever age we are, think about writing a letter to your past self, and some of you may want to actually do this, okay? To get you primed and warmed up, because if the future thing feels a little weird, this is easier, because we've already traveled that path, right? We've already got that wisdom and that knowledge. We've gotten to this point in the movie.

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We can look backwards and see what happens, so it's always easier to comprehend this exercise, when you're looking backwards, right? Most of us could easily write a letter to our 10-year-old self, or our 18-year-old or 21-year-old self, or depending on how old you are, even our 30- or 40-year-old self.

And it's so easy to tell that version of you what not to worry about, and how things turned out for the best in the end, and how those middle school years didn't mean anything when you turn 35, and how the failed relationship back in the day, or several of them, those relationships were the best thing that ever happened to you, for finding true love or for finding yourself, right?

Or, you can tell that younger version of you, from the older version of you, how sticking with what you were doing made all the difference, right? Like sticking with the degree, or the job, or the exercise, how it was all worth it and how it paid off in enormous ways down the road.

Can you see how hindsight is not only 20/20 about our past, but that maybe, just maybe, you could tap into that, quote hindsight, right now, just by envisioning and thinking like a future version of yourself?

And here's the thing about our minds. When we think thoughts, the thoughts create feelings, right? And our brain doesn't really know if we're thinking our thoughts about today, right now, or if we're thinking thoughts in the future. So if we go into that place of what our future self would think like, we can create those feelings right now.

And that's highly important, okay? Because you've got to have the feelings to create the actions and get the results. And so if we can go out to him or her, and we can create the feelings, and how it feels to already have the money or the relationship or the self that we want to be, but the feeling is created right now in our present, then having the feeling ahead of time moves us into those actions, which ultimately gets us those results we were thinking about. It's genius, as I told you, and it works like a charm, okay?

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Now, as you're doing these practices, and you're thinking back about your past self, it helps you start to see how grateful you are to that younger version of you, for the stuff you did. And we're going to do this again for our future self, so I want you to practice this part, too. So think about your younger self, any version of your younger self, and thank him or her for all the things that they did right, okay?

Because those things that were hard in the moment, are very much gifts to you today, right now, okay? So when I think about this, when I think of all the things that I'm so grateful for my past self that she did, that she followed through on, the list goes something like this. And there's way more than this, but to just give you an idea.

Thank you, past self, for doing the work to get those three degrees that at the time, you really didn't even know how they went together, right? But in hindsight, it is genius that you did a design degree, and an accounting degree, and an MBA, right? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Because that wasn't easy. It was hard.

Thanks for starting your business at age 27 and hustling and doing the hard work while you were young and energetic and maybe a little bit stupid. And great job picking a hubby that's a great dad and a hard worker. And thanks for starting the business-consulting business in '08, and starting Design You in 2018.

And, great job on the podcast, and the hard work that went with that and the life coach training you went through, and the health certification you went through. And thanks for starting that blog back in 2009 that got you exposure all over the world. And thanks for not being afraid to try new things and be progressive. And thanks for being a good mom and taking good care of your baby and yourself.

And the times that you didn't take such good care of yourself, thanks for learning from those moments when you weren't perfect. Thanks for not being perfect, because that's when you really grew. And thanks for making

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great memories with family and for all the hours and hours and hours of reading and personal development.

And thanks for hiring all those business coaches. And thanks for hiring all those team members. And thanks for taking tons of risks and spending lots of money on your business, when you didn't even know where it was going to come from sometimes, and thanks for going for what you wanted.

See? There's so many things that I can thank myself for. And it creates the warmest, fuzziest, I mean, like heartwarming feeling about myself, to myself. It's like celebrating your successes, but at a whole other level, because I can see the results that those things, that that hard work, that that perseverance created.

So, there are many, many things we do right. And when we look back over a year, or five years, or 10 years, or 20 years, it's so much easier to see them. And when you can go through this exercise about your past self, you've really primed yourself to be able to do this ahead of time, for your future self.

When we're in the moment of right now, we only see the things that are wrong or that can go wrong, usually, right? We feel the fear. And we rarely celebrate the things that we do or that we're going to do, and we almost never see the magnitude of what our actions will bring us, right?

So looking back gives us that evidence of what works and what matters and when we're at our best. So, it does take time to know what results and consequences are going to come from our choices, right? But as time passes, we see how all the choices, good and bad, made the biggest difference in our lives, or moved us closer to or farther away from our goals and our dreams.

And it's important for us to have perspective on this, because this is what I want you to be able to see ahead of time, in your future. This is why we want to do this exercise.

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So, you don't have to wait 10 years from now to see everything that worked, and then be excited about it. It doesn't just have to be a crap shoot of making decisions in the moment and seeing what happens. You can actually practice being your future self, right now, and you can start to see that we won't know exactly how it all will turn out, we can see how to get to some of those results that we really want. We can see what choices will likely make the biggest difference, long term.

Now, let me let you in on a secret. And it might not be what you want to hear, but it probably is the most important part of this podcast. And here's the secret. The stuff that makes the biggest difference long term for your future self is the most boring and monotonous stuff on the list, okay? The very stuff we don't want to do right now, that is the stuff that matters, that makes the difference, that moves the needle, Okay?

For example, in the short run, does exercising sound like fun to most of us? No. But longer term, the benefit of having amazing health, especially when you're 10 years older than right now and you're starting to see others decline in different ways, all around you, the fact that you followed through, all the time, consistently, on your exercise or healthy eating or any of the things that seemed boring and monotonous in the moment, those are the things when you get to your future self, you'll be most grateful to your past self for following through on those. Okay? Those are the gifts.

So, every day when it's time to go exercise and your mind says, "I don't feel like it." You can now override that thought with, "I'm following through, because this is the gift that I'm giving to my future self." Okay? So really, really important.

And the same thing in your business. It's the regularly showing up and doing the stuff that is uncomfortable in business every day. Say, spending money, hiring people, creating things for sale, pitching and offering your services, raising your prices, showing up on Facebook Live consistently, following through on tasks for working on your business, and not just in it. Those monotonous, boring things that we don't feel like doing are the biggest gifts to your future self.

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Those are the things that will make the biggest difference in your bank account, in your brand, in your wealth, long term. Those are the things that will get you to your goals, okay? So I found that you can pretty much know, right now, 100%, that anything that you find yourself not wanting to do today is the stuff that matters. That is the stuff you will be thanking yourself for one year from now, five years from now, or 10 years from now. Okay?

So, it's so interesting that the things we quit on in the moment, the little things we don't follow through on, are actually the big things. A lot of times we're looking for the big things that are going to get us to our dreams, and those are not the things that get us there. The biggest gifts you give to your future self are the consistently following through, little bitty things, that you almost never, ever want to do. Okay?

And if you're only thinking of today, and how you feel right now, the chances of you following through on those things are so slim, and the chances of you quitting on those things are crazy, crazy high. And that's, again, why this exercise is so important.

It's time. I want you to start this practice of embodying your future self, feeling the way she feels when she looks back on the gifts you gave her, on the work you did, on the risk you took, on the things you followed through on, so that you actually got to where you wanted to go.

So over the next couple of days, it's time to write yourself at least two letters, maybe three, okay? So you can start with writing to your past self, if that helps you. And then once you do that, the two letters to your future self look like this.

First a letter from your current self, right now, to your future self, writing to her 10 years from now. Now, you can pick a year or five years if you want to, but I think it's fun right now because we're starting this new decade to pick 10 years.

And what that letter needs to do is paint a vivid picture of the things that the current you did to become her, okay? And not only the things that you did,

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start with writing where she is, okay? So 10 years from now, you're painting a picture you're saying, "Oh my gosh, I love you, future self. You are so cool. Because right now, you are this and you have this, and your days look like this and your relationships look like this, and your health looks like this." Okay?

So be very detailed about exactly where you are, at that point, in your business and your personal relationships with your health and your wealth. And not only where you are, but then write the what did you do? What life did you create for yourself? What did those steps look like? Okay, so write it all out. Be very explicit with all the things you did, the choices you made, what you thought, how you followed through, how you made that happen for yourself, okay? And how those results that you have 10 years from now came to be.

And then, a day or two later, not the same day, I want you to write a letter from that future version of yourself. And now that you know where she is, you can see it, you've painted the vivid picture, write a letter to yourself today, from that place. And I want you to embody, in this letter, the gratitude you feel for your current self, from your future self. Because your future self is going to be so grateful to you for all the gifts you gave her.

And if you hadn't done all of the things in the present moment, 10 years from that future place, which is today, and eight years and seven years and four years and all the way leading up to that 10 years from now, if you hadn't followed through on all those things for 10 years, she wouldn't have any of the amazing things she has right now. Right?

So you, the current you, is essentially her fairy godmother. The current you is granting wishes to your future self every single day with your choices. So write to the current you, from her, who has already realized all those dreams that you created and those accomplishments and successes you created, and have her speak to the current you from that place of wisdom, where she already knows what 10 years from now looks like.

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She's already seen the end of the movie, right? She knows how it turns out. And have her tell the current you what to do and what mattered, and where to follow through, and what not to worry about. Her wisdom will give you so much clarity, it's mind-boggling.

She already knows what it was like, she already traveled the path that you took. She has seen how it all ends, the happy ending. And she can shed so much light on your fears and your confusion and your overwhelm, and when you want to quit, but don't.

She can help you see why to stay the course. She can keep you on track and encourage you. She is the key to not quitting. And she can tell you it's not near as hard as you think it is in the moment, and that's all going to work out, and how the things you are afraid of end up being so not a big deal.

And she can tell you how even your failures, because you're going to have them over the next 10 years, she's going to tell you how those failures were so important to getting you to the finish line, and how you grew the absolute most in those failures and in the hard times, okay? She's going to be able to tell you that, and basically give you a big hug from the future to keep going.

She is your inner GPS system. She is your guardian angel. She's your coach and your mentor all built into the you that you are right now. So listen to her, because she is right. She has your back, when your current self usually doesn't.

When your current you just wants to quit and lay on the sofa and go back to your comfort zone, your future self is the cheerleader, right? She's the one who's like "No, get up. Do the things, because I am living proof that they worked."

This process is so healing, it's so motivating. It's so inspiring. And this practice has made all the difference for me and for so many of my clients. We use this a lot when they're stuck in the moment, when they're really

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feeling overwhelmed and I'm coaching them, I take them out to the place of their future self, and they suddenly have so much less fear, and so much more wisdom that they can tap into.

So this is the practice that so many people, including me, have used to design the exact life we want. So the time is now, friends. What will your next decade look like? Will you finally create a life of financial freedom, or of time freedom, or both? Will you have the health and the joy you dream of? Will your relationships be thriving? What are the other things you're dreaming of that you haven't even ever had the courage to say out loud? Will you finally make those happen? Will you give every one of those as gifts to your future self?

You are in the driver's seat, and it all depends on what you're willing to do consistently to give your future self all the gifts and experiences and health and wealth that she once only dreamed of. You've got this, friends. The future is yours. Go do it. Okay, and I'll see you next week. 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.