

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin



### Full Episode Transcript

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**Tobi Fairley**

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You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 145.

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's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey friends, and Happy New Year. Can you believe this is a new year? We're so glad. We've been looking forward to a new year for quite some time because of everything that happened in the last year. So this year is a chance for a fresh start like every year is. And it's always one of my favorite times of the year. And today I'm really excited to bring you this episode with Wendy Conklin. So Wendy is a spectacular creative, she's a chair designer. She has a whole slew of courses that she's created. And she worked with me in *Design You* by the way to do a lot of that work.

And she's just a tremendous person and she's done so much. And today what we're talking about is really learning how to think critically, which I think is a lost art for sure. It's not something we practice very often. We've gotten so lazy a lot of times as humans where we just want the answers given to us. We have what is called how greed, that we should be entitled to the how to do things. And I think Wendy is just such a beautiful example of being willing to think differently.

We're always saying we should think out of the box. But almost nobody really does it because it's uncomfortable. And it feels vulnerable and it feels hard. And so today Wendy and I talk about how to think critically, how she used those very things to dial in her offerings for her audience. And in about a 12 month period with brand new courses she'd never even had before, that she'd never even considered having before she joined *Design You*, in about a 12 month period she made over \$200,000 with those courses all because she was willing to think differently.

So get out your pen and paper friends, this is one of the ones where you're going to be like, "I need to know, I've got to know the secret to the success

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

in the online space or in adding other revenue streams.” And this is your episode, so enjoy my conversation with Wendy Conklin.

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**Tobi:** Hey Wendy, welcome to the Design You Podcast. I’m so glad you’re here today.

**Wendy:** Thank you for inviting me. I’m excited to be here.

**Tobi:** So fun, okay, so we know each other because you were in my Design You program for over a year, a while. And we’ve just gotten to know each other really well. And mainly I’ve just really enjoyed watching what you’ve done with your business in the last, what is it, is it 18 months, two years or so?

**Wendy:** Yes.

**Tobi:** Yeah. So for those who don’t already know you, because you already had a thriving business before you came to Design You. But you have a different kind of business now. But tell everybody about you, who you are, what you do. And we’ll get into that whole kind of process of what you did to build this new thriving version of you.

**Wendy:** So I am a chair stylist. I design boutique style dining chairs and little French armchairs, it’s the kind of antique styles that I really love. So that has been my business. I started as a hobby in 2012. And so I hadn’t even thought about doing anything beyond that. I was just trying to make more money doing that. And that’s why I joined your program, I needed really a lot of direction. And then after joining shortly you kind of challenged me a little bit to, “Well, why not think about doing a course?”

And I thought well, why would anybody want to learn what I do? You know how you get in your bubble and you think nobody wants to do what you do? But then you ask people, “Would you want to know?” And then you’re overwhelmed with the response of, “Yes, of course.” And so I think that’s the way it is with most people that they don’t think what they do is

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

interesting or that anyone would care. But everyone actually does care is what I have found. People find things interesting that other people do.

And so yeah, while I was in your program I decided to do an online upholstery course for beginners. And I really didn't even know at the beginning if there was anything like it out there. And I kind of searched around on Skillshare because I was like, "Well, how are other people doing this?" And I couldn't find anything. And so I thought, okay, well, I've just got to figure this out then. How would I want it to be if I were teaching it?

So I had a great website developer who was helping me with my sales page. And then I found a copywriter who was helping me with my copy and sales emails and things like that for when we launched. So I had a great group of support people and then the Design You program and you guys, everyone helping me there, giving me ideas. And no one ever knows how it's going to go. And it's so fun when you're taken off guard and surprised at how well something goes. And just the response was amazing.

At first I just opened it up and said, "Okay, I have a wait list, anyone want to join if you're interested." And I was thinking nobody's going to join. But I had about 1200 people sign up on the wait list which totally blew me away. So kind of the rest is history. My first launch went super well. And each launch has been a growing experience, learning something new about my audience and what they want. And my goal is really to try to pay attention to what are people asking me for and is there a way I can serve them by offering something?

A lot of people get stumped on where do I find my fabrics? Or where do I find my chairs? People ask me those kinds of questions all the time. And so I had a free webinar about how do I find my best antique chairs. Because my original business is on Etsy and where I do a lot of antique and vintage chairs and I customize them for clients. And then I have a line of antique inspired dining chairs are on my website. And so people ask, "Where do you get your chairs?"

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

And so I've done a free online workshop and I sprinkle it here and there whenever I'm opening my upholstery course. And I give everyone a free workshop and I tell them all my tips and tricks of how I hunt them down, what I'm looking for, the keywords I try to use. And I'm getting better and better at it all the time. So I'm adding new ideas. And it's really not hard, you just have to know what to do and try different things to see what will come up. And so that's kind of where I'm at right now.

And I'm still developing more courses. I'm still working on chairs for clients. So it's a very busy business.

**Tobi:** I love it so much. So there's so much there that you said that I want to get into, a lot of different things. And you and I have talked many times about how people don't really think very critically in their business. We do just get lazy a little bit or we just haven't really put the time into it. And you were kind of saying the same thing.

You hadn't really considered that other people might want to know how to do this which is so funny to me because we're like, "Well, we wanted to do it. Why would we be the only person that wanted to have this type of business or whatever?" But it doesn't occur to us. And if it does I think the natural first thought is always well, won't I kill my business? Won't I cannibalize my business? If I teach everybody to do this sort of secret thing I do, my secret source, won't that kill my business?

And the truth is exactly the opposite of that of course. And we can get more into that because I love how you were just saying literally on your webinar that's free, you tell all your secrets. And let's talk about both of those things. Let's start with talking about critical thinking and then move into kind of that really kind of what a lot of people would consider a risky or risk taking kind of move to start showing your card. So when you first started shifting what did that look like to you to start thinking differently about your business, if we're calling it kind of critical thinking?

**Wendy:** Right. Well, I think it at first, and I remember we had a conversation about this too. And it was those first questions. Well, first of

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

all, who would want to do this? Second of all, am I going to lose a lot of business? But then at the same time I started thinking good grief, I can't do more chairs. I mean I'm already still booked, why would I want more chair orders because there's only so many that I can honestly do? And I do have people who come to me and say, "I can't afford your chairs."

But teaching them how to do it is a way I can serve them and help them live a better life too because I believe that all of us should live with things that bring us joy. And so that's kind of the premise of my underlying beliefs that whatever we live with should bring us joy. And if I can help other people do that and I can still make money too. And then they're getting served with what they want and what they need, it's just a win, win, win for everybody, honestly.

And I have had people who have ordered chairs from me, I've done custom orders then they decided to join my upholstery course and they took it. And then they decided to join my – I have a little business course for people who want to do a business with chairs and they have even joined that. So that's what's so amazing, is there are some people who want it all, it doesn't matter what you give them, they want it all.

**Tobi:** Absolutely, yeah. And I think that several things that were so smart there is that once you opened your mind and really I love what you're talking about with serving people because to me that is the key. As long as we are serving with our gifts, it doesn't matter if we're doing it for you or teaching you how to do it. There's always going to be some segment of the audience that wants one or the other or all of it as you're saying.

And I think that what I find so often is when we start showing people what really goes into what we do it actually just makes the value of the thing that we're selling so much more palatable to people because they're like, "Well, no wonder her chairs cost a couple of thousand dollars. Look at all of the work, and the expertise, and the genius that goes into it." So in so many ways when you start thinking this way it actually grows the main part of your business that was already there, right?



## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

**Wendy:** It really does, I mean because some people are like, “Oh my gosh, this is a lot of work.” And then they would rather order, they would rather have me do it. But another thing I have found that is personally so fulfilling is seeing the people in the private Facebook group in my upholstery course, seeing them post their first chair that they just redid. And I can tell how excited and how proud they are. And they’re like, “I made a gazillion mistakes but look I did it.” They finished and there is something about doing hard things that is good for all of us.

And so for me I have my list of hard things that I have to, I have to figure out how to do a course. I have to figure out how to serve people. I’ve got to figure out how to really listen to them. I think sometimes we’re a little afraid, maybe other people have the thing that makes them successful but do I have it? And I’m not sure if I can trust my ideas, trust my thoughts. But I think we have to do those hard things. We have to take little risks. We have to try stuff. We have to be willing to play with it and see what happens.

And no, it’s not always going to be successful but with every single thing we do learn. And so that’s the thing. So being able to give people in this course a way to try something new, to learn something. And when we learn new things we’re so proud of ourselves, we get more courage to try other new things. It’s that growth mindset that, you know.

**Tobi:** 100%, yes, I love it.

**Wendy:** And I mean that makes us more creative as we – creative thinkers. We get more ideas. The more you try, the more risks you take the more creative you become. I believe that’s kind of the foundation for being a more creative thinker, be a more critical thinker as well.

**Tobi:** I agree with you, yeah. And I think that what you’re essentially saying is everybody thinks the goal is create this one thing, it’s a course, or it’s a business, or whatever it is. And it just becomes super successful. And I think what you’re saying that I agree with so much is that’s not it, that’s not the point. The point is who you become and learning to create and if you do

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

that work you can keep creating forever. And if something is amiss, it's no big deal, you rework it or you don't or you do something different.

And I think there's so much, not only confidence, but just opportunity. When you train yourself to be that way you stop worrying that you're kind of this one hit wonder and you hope the person on the other end wants your one thing. And you kind of get that confidence that I see in you now of I can go listen to what they want because I know I can create something to meet these groups of people where they are at all times, right?

**Wendy:** Absolutely. I think it is about the journey. It's always about the journey, isn't it?

**Tobi:** Always.

**Wendy:** Because you grow, you stretch yourself and I mean research tells us this, when you do this, when you put yourself in situations to try new things, to think in a more novel way because our brain loves novelty. Even in the simplest things during the day, you go for a walk and you always take the same route. But let's say you decide you know what, today I'm going to do something completely different and surprise myself. And just those new things excites your brain to think differently.

And so just maybe you always eat the same thing for breakfast, I do, I have the same thing every morning. But maybe one morning I wake-up and say, "I'm going to do something completely different." And it just makes you look at the world in a different way. These small little things that everybody can do to help them become more creative. I mean they are the simple things that sets your journey for the day that sets your thought patterns for the day. I mean it's so much mindset. It's being open and not being afraid of the outcome, because it's about the journey, I think.

**Tobi:** Yeah, and we do a ton of that mindset work that you're speaking to. We do so much of that in Design You as you know. But I think one thing I'd love to talk about which really kind of is a mindset in and of itself is kind of – you've described a couple of things here. And we even named part of it,



## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

risk taking. And I think it is risk taking depending on how you think about it. But is there a difference between risk taking and experimenting? Because in a lot of ways if you wanted to have the mindset of it's just an experiment, that sort of takes a lot of the pressure off of trying new things, doesn't it?

Because I watch a lot of perfectionists come in and they're like, "I've got to get it right and if not I'm a failure." And I only have a certain amount of money set aside and what am I going to do if it doesn't work?" And of course you and I know that kind of thinking kills any kind of course, or business, or program, or plan because the whole thing is about being open to experimenting. So can you talk a little bit about your mindset there? And did it shift as you were in Design You?

Or what does that look like kind of now compared to maybe even where you were at the beginning, this experimenting idea?

**Wendy:** Right. So I do think and I believe that it is. I think if you can think of it more as experimenting. I think I kind of term it, I play, and that takes the pressure off because you're tinkering with things. And so definitely, I mean I had applied it in other areas of my life, maybe my previous career too. But I hadn't really thought about it deeply, thinking about your thinking. I hadn't thought about it a lot in my chairs and designing, and then doing courses, I hadn't really purposefully.

And so joining the program and deciding, okay, I'm going to do this course. And I thought, okay, well, let's play with this idea. And it does totally take off the pressure because I'm not afraid of failing. Yeah, I've had to invest some money in that first part. And I was hoping I would make it back. But I knew even if I didn't it was going to be okay because I was going to learn a lot. And it was a purposeful mindset to say, "This is playing, I'm tinkering, I'm going to try and we're going to see what happens and then I make adjustments."

And that's the way it is with everything anyway. I mean you can release something that you think is absolutely amazing. But then a couple of months later people are saying, "I kind of wish you would have added this,

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

or I wish it didn't have that." And so then you can go back and change it and because we learn with everything. You take the pressure off when your mindset is about experimenting, when it's about playing. And I play these games in my mind to help me have the courage. So I will say, "Okay."

Well, and I remember saying this in the program, I was like, "Okay, if this fails I'm going to go back and tell Toby, "Well, it failed but at least I tried."" And it kind of took off the pressure. It was almost like I could blame somebody, but I wasn't going to blame.

**Tobi:** Totally. I'm thrilled for all of our members to blame me because at least it just gives – you're right, I love that because you're like – I think a lot of times we do put so much pressure on ourself, especially kind of under that label of perfectionism. It's so easy for us to fall into the, I should already be good at this, even though you've never done it before. We have this thought of it can't be that hard and I should be good at this. And that's a question I'm often asking people of, "Why should you be good at this yet? At course number 10, okay. But course number one, no."

And I think that's something I've watched you do so well is that you have just been – I mean gosh, it's only been – how long has it been since you launched the very first course?

**Wendy:** Almost exactly a year ago.

**Tobi:** Okay. So when we're recording this, this is going to come out a little bit later but when we're recording this, so by the time they hear it maybe a year and a month or a year and two months or whatever, but anyway. So essentially a year, one year. And you were literally one year ago or 18 months ago going, "I have no idea what I'm doing, I'm going to try it, if it doesn't work I'll blame it on Tobi, I'll just sink or I'll play." You were going through these mindsets. And here you sit less than 18 or 24 months later and you feel – how do you feel now?

Because I know you feel completely different, almost like an expert in a lot of ways, don't you, at a less...?

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

**Wendy:** It just when you are willing to do this it builds your confidence. And when you put the pressure on yourself to be perfect it kills all your creativity. It kills your ideas because the pressure is there and you're so worried about the pressure. You're worried about what other people think, or you're worried about losing a bunch of money, or you're worried about whatever, just failing yourself. But I think when you can decide because I think it's a decision. I think you make a decision, I'm going to try and at least I can say that I tried and then we'll go from there.

And that's, you know, to me the biggest regret of my life would be never trying. Why live and never try things because I'm afraid, I mean what kind of life is that. And so you know what, when I go down some day and I'm no longer here, I want my kids and anyone else who's here to say, "You know what? She really tried a lot of stuff." And I wear that as a badge because the more you try, the more you do things, even if it doesn't turn out the way you want, because not all my courses have turned out the way I thought that they would or thought they should.

But they've turned out better actually when I had a new set of eyes or new perspective to look back on it later. I thought oh, and see, this goes along with the whole journey thing because you can look back and think I learned this. But this really works a different way than what I thought. And I think being able to decide you're going to try, decide you're going to experiment. And then take those risks because it builds your confidence.

You will, when you try one thing, even if it doesn't turn out the way you want, you still have built confidence because you can look back and say, "Gosh, look what I just did there. I mean who else is doing this?" You start looking around and then that can start to make you feel a little bolder. I need to sit down, I need to take the time to brainstorm. I need to set aside that time so I can do some heavy thinking about ideas.

I mean there's all kinds of things that you can do to spur the creative thinking as far as even taking long talks, not having in your headphones, not having music, but just be. Just be in silence because as your mind

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

wanders it naturally solves problems. You get ideas that pop into your head. I mean we all know this happens in the shower. We know it happens sometimes in our dreams. It happens sometimes...

**Tobi:** In the car.

**Wendy:** In the car when you're driving, if you can turn off the music or have instrumental. I think they say that works the best. And it does for me, either silence or instrumental low music. My brain is working all the time to solve problems. And sometimes a great idea pops into my head and I think oh my gosh, I should do that. Or I should create a course on this. Or I should add this to the course. Or this is what my people are wanting. Why didn't I see this before?

And we get so busy and we're so consumed with sometimes the worry of I hope I'm doing this right or whatever. But when you can take the time to let your brain fully take in the ideas, work through them and then the great ideas comes to you. I mean you increase your confidence that way too. I mean there's just so many great things.

**Tobi:** Yeah. And I see a couple of things that were so helpful I think to you and your journey, and your progress. A couple that stand out to me. One, you were like, "Okay, I'm going to spend x amount of money but if I don't make any money back I'm totally okay with that investment having been for this learning experience." Or almost like a hobby or whatever. And so many people approach it in a different way because you said it wasn't like you were rolling in extra cash at that moment. You were trying to make more money.

You were feeling like you weren't making enough but you're like, "Okay, I'm going to commit this amount no matter what, I'm okay, I've pre-decided I'm okay with that money being spent." And I think that is so different than people coming in more from a scarcity place going, "Well, I'll spend this much if I have to but I don't really want to. And no matter what, I've got to make it back." And you didn't put all these parameters on yourself. You're like, "I'm going to invest it and we're going to see what happens."

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

And here you sit a year, a little over a year later and you've literally made multiple six figures from a small – I mean did you spend \$10,000? Did you spend more than that originally?

**Wendy:** I spend eight, 8,000.

**Tobi:** Okay, \$8,000 originally. And here you sit a little over a year later having made more than a couple of hundred thousand dollars on this 8,000. I mean of course you invested more along the way, but the initial investment was that. So I think that is so helpful. And then the other thing is that you were willing to take action without knowing all the steps. And so many people are like, "Well, when I know from step A to step Z then I'll feel confident enough to take the first step."

And I think what you did so well as you're like, "Well, who knows where this is going to go but I'm just going to get started." And what you were just describing of those future ideas and even the better ideas and having at some point the maybe million dollar idea. Those don't come until you sort of prime the pump. And so if you had never taken the first idea until you knew all the steps, I don't think you would have evolved into this person who's this idea generating machine. I think it's like yoga, it's the practice of teaching.

**Wendy:** It's practice, yeah.

**Tobi:** Right, it's the practice of teaching yourself how to think and how to dedicate time to thinking. Those two things, willing to commit the money and just willing to take action without knowing the full roadmap I think are two huge game changers for you compared to some other people I see that try this work.

**Wendy:** Absolutely. And getting back to scarcity thinking, that kills creativity too. I mean you can't be creative if you're going to let your mind go there. So you have to decide. I'm going to play, I'm going to experiment, we're going to try and we're going to see what happens and where this journey is going to lead me. And yes, the more – and it is just like practice, you have

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

to practice creative thinking to become more creative. And it is like a muscle. And I mean some people feel like they're just not creative. Everyone has the capacity.

Some people have more ideas because they've been practicing longer, they're not afraid to try. But if you want to be more creative you have to surround yourself with creative people, people who are more creative than you. Make friends with people, talk to them, because as you hear how they think about things and their ideas that opens your eyes to a new perspective. You can watch movies about super creative people, people who invented things. You can listen to podcasts about them, you can read books about them, documentaries.

And all of those things inspire me. I just watched Dolly Parton's documentary on Netflix. And I texted my girls and I'm like, "You guys have to watch this. I feel so inspired." If you're feeling down or not creative enough, watch that and see how she rose from poverty to where she is today. I mean that woman, she is a smart cookie. And the way she thinks about business, I just got so inspired watching it. And so those kinds of things, surrounding yourself, inputting those things into your mind helps you with ideas.

So I know during Covid we can't really be around people so much, except for six feet apart.

**Tobi:** Yeah, but we can Zoom.

**Wendy:** But we can Zoom.

**Tobi:** We can be in Design You.

**Wendy:** Absolutely.

**Tobi:** You could get another group of people together. You could surround yourself with people all the time.

**Wendy:** Yeah, absolutely, may not be physical but whether it's through groups or whatever, talking on the phone, the ideas that you get from other



## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

people and seeing how they approach problems, how they solve things, what ideas they're thinking up, it opens your eyes too. And so I just really think that you've got to seek out creative people to be around in order to challenge yourself to think about things differently too. I mean but I mean I know you're a big journaler. I think through things like journaling, free writing.

I do a lot of brainstorming on large chart paper because I used to be a teacher, so it's very natural to me to do a big web. And I just have colored markers, and really the color makes me happy and it helps me to think about things. So I'm brainstorming in that way. But when you do those things good ideas come out. And then you've got to – I set all my ideas up on paper and I have it in a place where either it's in my shop or it's in my house where I walk by it several times a day.

**Tobi:** I love that.

**Wendy:** And I see the idea and so it's always kind of in the back of my mind. And I'm like okay, well, I'm not sure that's a good idea or not. And then the next day I'll come back, I'm like, "You know what? I should add this to that." And so just more ideas pop into my head. Later I'll come back by and I'll think that is a really good idea. I need to do that because my brain has had time to kind of relax. And I mean doing those kinds of things makes you more creative, it makes you a better thinker.

**Tobi:** Yeah, and to be clear, there are moments when we have these ideas. I know you're this way probably too that we're like, "Oh my gosh, this is it, this is the million dollar idea." And then later on you're like, "Yeah, maybe not quite." But it still was part of the path that got you to, over to another area. So I think you're also saying you're not so attached to every single idea the way it comes out, or you're not afraid to change it, or tweak it, or massage it, or whatever is needed until it's kind of ready to be born, right?

**Wendy:** Absolutely. And I think that just goes back to what we were saying before, it's all about playing, playing with the ideas and just seeing where

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

these ideas can lead. Maybe one idea wasn't the best but it led to something else that was the best.

**Tobi:** 100%.

**Wendy:** And if I go on a walk, I often have my phone with me turned off. But when I think of an idea I pull up my notes page and I just voice record it in there.

**Tobi:** I do that a lot too.

**Wendy:** And then later I'll look back and that was a really good thought I had about that, what can I do with that? How can I develop? And then I set aside the time to really think deeply. And that is a purposeful thing, it's not by accident when you decide you're going to brainstorm or free write or journal about ideas, to get these thoughts out of your head. But it is, you set aside the time, no distractions and you work. And let's say it's a 30 minute time, I mean when you're in that flow, time stands still.

**Tobi:** A 100%, yeah.

**Wendy:** And your ideas come forth and then, you know, they're there on paper, no matter how you choose to do it, whether it's on chart paper, sticky notes, whatever it might be. I mean those ideas are there so that you can, you know, then pass judgment on them later, what's good, what isn't good.

**Tobi:** Exactly, self-editing in the midst is just a big old problem, that doesn't get you anywhere. And if you're being a perfectionist in your journaling, or in your brainstorming, or in your ideation, again you're killing the process. So you have to show up totally free. And if at the end of that session you don't have anything it doesn't matter because it may be that one step that's leading you to the next time you show up and do a session. And I think there's a few things that are really important that you've mentioned kind of in this little section about being super intentional to set aside time.

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

So I think a lot of people also, you know, there is that quote that's like something about like don't die with your dreams still in you or something to that effect. And I think the difference in people who make things happen and people who don't, are they think that I'll get to that later, or I'll work that in around the edges. Or when I finish these other things then I'll have time for that. And what you're saying is you have to decide now to start putting that in immediately.

You're never going to have enough time that you just suddenly have brainstorming happening all the time regularly. It has to be a plan and a consistent thing.

**Wendy:** Absolutely. And you've got to – everyone just thinks at different times of the day better. I'm an early morning...

**Tobi:** Exactly, yes.

**Wendy:** I don't like to get up but I do think because I think, my brain is really clear. Some people are night owls. You have to pick the time of day that works the best where you know you're going to get your best ideas, have everything set up. And decide I'm going to put on a timer or whatever you need for 30 minutes. I mean 30 minutes, that's it, that's all you need, or 20 minutes maybe to really spend that focused time, turn off your phone. Turn off whatever and just really dive deep.

And designers do this really well when they're brain storming design plans for people or trying to throw fabrics together. I mean that's what I do whenever I am trying to design for a client with fabrics. And maybe they want a whole bunch of different kinds of fabrics together. I mean that takes a lot of thought, it's a lot of brainstorming and it's a lot, okay, does this work? Does that work? And my brain is a 100% in it, you've got to be a 100%.

**Tobi:** And I love that you're equating that because I was thinking that earlier when you were talking. And so often people think this is different, they're like, "No, but that's fun when I'm doing fabrics or whatever. But this

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

is hard,” or, “I’m not good at this,” or, “I’ve never done a course.” I hear more often than not people say the thing that stops them is because they’ve never done it before. And what I like to remind people is what you just said, the process is the exact same thing.

And if you come to the process with the mindset of I’m not good at this, I’ve never done it, you’re probably going to have kind of writers block. But if you literally just come in there and you’re like, “This is going to be so fun, who knows what will come out of it. I’m just going to get some stuff out, who knows what it’ll be.” That’s the same thing when we’re playing with – we don’t know when we come to the work room of like, I have to have this exact situation and come out of a design session.

No, we’re going to play with things, we’re going to look at ideas. We might pull up some stuff on the internet to inspire us. We might throw in something we had pinned on a mood board. And we’re just there like you said, to play, and I think making sure we don’t psyche ourselves out because we’ve told ourselves or decided that in creating something, a course, or for sale, or some other part of our business that it’s any different than being creative in the ways that we’re already accustomed to, because it’s the exact same thing.

**Wendy:** Yeah. I think we’ve told ourselves that there are rules that you have to follow. There is a certain way, there’s a certain path. And what’s so great, if you can embrace the idea that there are no rules, you can do whatever you want. And isn’t that freeing? Okay, if I can create whatever I wanted, what do I want it to look like? How would it feel to the people who are viewing it and learning? I mean that’s what’s freeing about it is when you can embrace the I get to set my own rules.

I don’t have to do a course the way so and so says we have to do the course, because that’s the only successful way. I balk at things like that.

**Tobi:** Me too.

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

**Wendy:** I do believe that you need to do you. Do you, do your course the way it works for you, and your personality, and your followers, and the people you're going to be serving? How is it going to help them? That's what you should be thinking about is them. And I used to be a teacher so I think about, and I tell people, "If you're creating a course think about okay, if I was going to teach a kindergartner something new, how would I do it? What would I break it up into? What kind of fun activities?"

Let's be kids again because not only am I going to play as I design my course and my ideas. I want my people I'm serving to play. I want to pass that on to them so that they can play around with fabrics. They can play around with ideas, with designing themselves, because it's fulfilling for them too. And I think...

**Tobi:** I love that because it also goes with your brand which is called Chair Whimsy and that whole idea of just whimsy I think you embody that. Don't take yourself too seriously, we're going to have a good time. It's kind of like making a cake, if it flops, throw it in the trash and make – who cares? It still tastes good, eat it and then do the next one. And it's so funny because you're right, we have put so many rules. We don't know what the rules are but we've decided that there are some.

And I think you're so right and I get that question so often when people are like, "Well, just tell me what to do, Tobi, should it be a course or should it be something else? Should it be videos? Should it be six modules, should it be two, should it be eight? Does it have a workbook?" And I'm like, "You decide, if you hate workbooks, don't make a workbook. If you love to write, write something. If you like to be on video, great. If you love audio, it's podcasts, I mean whatever you want it to be you decide."

And I think that for some people that stresses them out but it only stresses you out if you're believing there's a right or wrong way to do it. Because then you're feeling like well, there's a right way but she won't tell me and so she's setting me up for failure. And what you're saying and what I'm saying

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

is there is no right way. Any way works, it's just creating something you're passionate about in a way you love to deliver it.

And most of the time the audience, research shows, your research, my research and a lot of other people's research is people don't really care if it's a video, or an audio. They don't really care, just tell them what it's going to be. And as long as it's great, they will buy it, they will take it, they will consume it, they will use it, right?

**Wendy:** Right. And I think as long as what you're creating brings you pure joy, it's going to show to the people that you're giving it to and offering it to. And I think the only thing I've probably taken a step further and I would say the only wrong way is feeling like you have to follow someone else's rules. It's almost like expert fatigue where you open Facebook and there's all these ads of how to create the right course and how to do this exactly the right way. Because we see it all the time so there's no wonder we're all worried about doing it the right way.

But I think my personality has always just like want to do the opposite of stuff like just to show you, no, you don't have to do that. And I'm proving to myself you don't have to. You should do what's true to you, what brings you pure joy, what is natural for you, go that way because your followers they already like you for who you are. So why not create something that fits you and then you're showing your best assets to everybody?

**Tobi:** I love that too and I think that that's probably one of the reasons you were such a fit for Design You and that you really were thriving in the environment of Design You. Because my favorite thing is exactly what you just said. My favorite thing is to give you permission to create whatever you want. And then for me to be here in the background coaching you through your mental blocks, or your mindset issues, or your fears, or helping you solve a problem. But I'm not a one size fits all because that's only going to work for the people who like the same things I like.

So if I'm like, "Well, you have to do video, or you have to be on Facebook Live to sell it, or you have to do a webinar." And people are like, "Well, I



## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

hate all those things.” Then they’re going to quit. But if we say, “Here’s 50 different things that you can know about putting a course together, or a program, or whatever it is you’re going to create”, pick and choose the parts that work for you. It really doesn’t matter as long as you believe in it. As long as you finish it. As long as you’re willing to sell it and put it out there and be passionate about it.

And I think again I completely agree with you, I completely agree. And that’s why I love to remind people that they have to love it and want to do it or they’re not going to finish it. I mean not that it’s not going to be hard at moments. We’re going to hit roadblocks where we’re telling ourselves it’s hard. But we’ve got to love the process we’re picking. And then really that mindset work we do in Design You is the key to overcoming any obstacle because the solutions are almost never that hard.

Usually after we get past our tantrums and our whining and how hard and miserable this is. We’re like, “Oh my gosh, that was so easy. I could have done that three weeks ago.” And yet I’ve been having a tantrum. What’s happening in the six inches between our ears is the only thing in between us and the next step, it’s not the I’m doing it wrong. Would you say that was true for you as well? Because I think it is.

**Wendy:** I think so too, I definitely think it is. And what you just said about doing the thing that you’re passionate about and putting it out there. That’s why you can’t follow other people’s rules, because other people’s rules don’t necessarily align with your passions, what you really love and what you would love to see and how you want to inspire people. That’s why you have to set your own rules. That’s why you have to just put it out there. I mean who cares what – I mean if you’re so caught up with what other people are going to think, maybe you’ll never do anything. I don’t know.

At some point you just have to go with your gut and you have to be yourself. I mean you cannot do this and be successful, I don’t think, and try to be someone else and try to do things a certain way, do things by the

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

certain rules. You have to create your own rules. You have to be who you are. And the more you do it the easier it gets, I think.

**Tobi:** I agree 100%. And I was just thinking as you were saying that. I think one of the other roadblocks for people is not only what other people are going to think about me and afraid I'm going to fail. But kind of just an unwillingness to be seen and showing up. And I think that obviously if we don't show up we can't have success, we have to show up, or we're just the best kept secret all the time. And so many people listening are that very thing. They're like, "I don't get it, I've been in business for x number of years and it just never takes off."

Well, you're the best kept secret because you're not showing up. And the thing that you just said is so encouraging, you're right, it's going to feel awkward at first. It may feel slightly awkward forever. But just like anything else you do, the more you do it the better you get. And people say to me all the time, "You're so good at teaching." Or, "You're so good at video." And I'm like, "Yeah, but I wasn't. I was terrible at it when I started. I've just been doing it for a long time." And I think that's what you're saying.

You were terrible maybe at something in some way in the beginning. But now you've been doing it a year with a lot of these things. Some of it you've been doing much longer than that with your previous careers. And you just get – you either get good at it or you just forget to be afraid. At some point the anxiety goes away and you find a groove, right?

**Wendy:** Right. And you decide that you're just going to show up, especially just online with your followers on Facebook and Instagram and doing lives or doing videos for them, or doing your posts, whatever it is. Be who you are. You don't want to live in a house that, you know, that you don't like, you know what I mean? I don't know if that makes sense. But you don't want to create something that isn't fully who you are. That's why you have to be yourself. You have to talk the way you talk. You have to stumble over words, you have to because no one wants perfection anyway, I don't.

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

I like people who feel genuine who are just who they are, you know, mixed up words and whatever, hms and everything else. I really – because you get to see the spirit and the heart of that person. And that's what our followers love about us. They want to know us. And I think for the longest time I felt like I had such a roadblock a couple of years back with social media, feeling like, well, this isn't real. All these friends, are they real?

But over time in posting comments and responding back to people you start seeing the same people showing up all the time just encouraging you, cheering you on, giving you the encouragement. I get emails sometimes from people that just blow me away, that they even took the moment to tell me something so kind and so nice. And it just warms my heart. And I think people are just starved for real relationships. And it can be very real. I think it depends on how you're willing to be seen. Are you willing to be seen?

Are you willing to just be who you are? Because people will like you, you'll find people who love you just for who you are. And I think that that goes along with some of the fear too that oh my gosh, they're going to get to know me. And what if they don't like me? But the right people will, the right people stick around. And I think people need to feel a little courageous about that that we all have good traits. We all have good things and interesting things about us. So just make yourselves known, make yourself seen.

I'm not everybody's cup of tea. My chairs aren't loved by everybody but there are plenty of people who do and that's who follow me.

**Tobi:** I was going to ask you that, that's such a great point because I think the other thing I notice is people want everyone to like them. And we have this – we talk a lot in Design You about attracting the right clients. But it's just as important to repel the wrong clients. And people are like, "Well, I can attract all day but I hate the repelling part. I don't want to feel rejection. I don't want to hear that someone thinks my chair is ugly, or my course is stupid, or they didn't get results."

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

And I remind people, all of that is going to happen. But the minute you sign up to have a business you're signing up for that, right?

**Wendy:** Exactly. I remember you saying, "It's good when people unsubscribe from your email list." And I was like, "What?" But it is and yes, you want the right people on your list who want what you want, you're all on the train together. And those who don't want to be on your train they hop off, that's okay. And then other people jump on because they find your train and they're like, "I want to be with you. I want to follow you, I want." And so for me my messaging, and it becomes more clear the more you do it, the more you practice, same thing, practice.

The more you put things out there, my messaging and what I feel aligns with my brand is bringing joy to the world, bringing joy. I don't sell chairs. I sell joy. And I figured that out a couple of years ago that people don't buy my chairs necessarily because they need a chair. They want joy in their life. So when they walk in their kitchen they see those dining chairs, it just makes them happy. And that's what they're buying from me. And even my posts, I really strive to be positive, because that aligns with who I am, it aligns with my brand. It aligns with what I want to be.

**Tobi:** I love that so much. And I think it is, it is through the writing and the starting to talk to people that you get clarity on that message too, right?

**Wendy:** Absolutely.

**Tobi:** Because even in Design You a lot of people are like, "Well, I don't know my ideal client yet." Or, "I have no idea what my niche is or what my voice is", or whatever. And I always just continue to encourage people that, exactly what you just said, it's through all of the action taking, the interaction, the asking questions, the getting to know people, the repelling people, all of it that helps you identify who you are, what your message is and what you love, right?

**Wendy:** Wouldn't it be so amazing if we all just decided to show up for who we are?

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

**Tobi:** Yes.

**Wendy:** I mean what would happen if we just decided that's what we're going to do? I mean I just don't think people can begin to fathom how that will change their business, how it helps them themselves become who they want to be.

**Tobi:** Well, and I think your example of Dolly Parton was such a great one because she is a very specific. I mean, and very specific sound, very specific look, very specific personality. She has a strong point of view and she knows that she's only – I mean musicians for sure know this, that their genre, their character, the whole thing is only right for certain people.

**Wendy:** She evens says that in the documentary. It's so interesting. And it's like we're all afraid to say it because we think it might be true. It is true. You are not for everyone.

**Tobi:** No, exactly.

**Wendy:** It is true.

**Tobi:** Yeah, totally, I love it so much. Well, this has been so fun. Thank you so much. Every time I talk to you I just, I enjoy it so much. But I just think you are in general, I mean just kind of like Dolly, just sort of in the badass category basically. Because you've been willing to do exactly what you've done and I think that's why it works so much. I mean and when everybody comes to find you, if they don't know you already and they see your chairs, and they see you and your videos. And your southern voice, and you're a Texas girl, and you're in Austin.

All those parts of you are what make you such a fit for the people that are a fit. And if you hadn't been willing to show up and just do this then all of those people would not be having you in their life, having the joy you create in their life. And I think it's incredible, I love it so much.

**Wendy:** Thank you. Thank you, that means a lot.

## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

**Tobi:** Well, tell everybody, since we're talking about finding you, where can they find you, if they're like, "I want to take her course and I want to follow, I want one of her chairs, and I want to see this lady", where do they find you out in the world, the online?

**Wendy:** Well, my website is chairwhimsy.com. And I have my chairs on there but I also have my courses under a certain tab there in my menu. But you can find me on Instagram at Chair Whimsy, on Facebook, Chair Whimsy. So in all those places you can find me. And people call me Chair Whimsy instead of Wendy, which is totally fine, I answer.

**Tobi:** I love it. Well, and that means you've done a great job with your brand, they're like there's Mrs. Chair Whimsy. I mean that means that they fully understand you and your brand by what you've created. That's so good. Well, I know you're going to inspire a lot more people, even people that are still in Design You who are like on the cusp but they're afraid.

I think every time they hear success stories like yours it just reminds them to just show up, and play, and experiment, and be who they are. And so you give a gift to the world even by sharing your story and your success, so thank you also for doing that. I'm super grateful.

**Wendy:** Thank you for having me, this was really great.

**Tobi:** So fun.

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Alright, isn't she the best? I mean Whimsy is the perfect example of Wendy and her personality. She's so fun. She's just got such a bright spirit, not only bright work and bright chairs, but a bright spirit. And I just love my time with her always. And I hope you loved today's episode too.

So if you want help, just like I helped Wendy, if you want help creating a business with thriving revenue streams that are really balancing your cash flow and making a difference so you can design the life you really want this year, not the one you've been saying you were going to design, but actually



## Ep #145: How to Be a Creative Thinker with Wendy Conklin

putting it into practice, now is the time to do it. Get ready, we're going to be opening the doors really soon. So get on our wait list at Design You and get ready to work with us because as you may not have learned, we shut the doors last fall and we only open about once or twice a year now.

So if you want to get in and start working with us get on that wait list so the minute doors open in a few weeks you will be the first to know about it and you can get in and start working with us to design the business and the life you really want in 2021. Okay, bye for now friends. I'll see you again really, really soon.

Thank you so much for listening to the *Design You* podcast, and if you are ready to dig deep and do the important work we talk about here on the podcast of transforming your mindset and creating a scalable online business model, there has never been a more important time than right now. So join me and the incredible creative entrepreneurs in my *Design You* coaching program today. You can get all the details at [TobiFairley.com](http://TobiFairley.com).