

Ep #147: Get Out of Your Own Way with Timothy Rivers



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 147.

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.

Hello friends. Are you settling into the new year? Does it feel as exciting, and hopeful, and all the things you had wished for? Well, I sure hope it does. And today I'm bringing you an episode that I think is super full of hope, and inspiration, and joy, and authenticity, and just all the things that we want to be.

And this is a conversation with my friend Timothy Rivers. So, Timothy is a Design You member, that's how I got to know him. And I've just had so much pleasure working with him in our community and getting to know him. And in today's episode I learned so much more about him that I didn't know. But he and I just I feel like we have so much in common. I know you're going to feel so connected with him too. So let me just tell you for a second about him.

Timothy owns an interiors company, Timothy Rivers Interiors, that's in New York City and in South Florida. And he works with those areas most prominent builders and developers and partners. He's going to tell you all about it. He's been in real estate for years, interior design for years. And he's just a remarkable human and business person.

And so I'm just going to let you hear from Timothy because this episode is about seeing yourself as an expert, really kind of owning all of your greatness, and your talent and all the things that you are. And what limiting beliefs can really get in the way of that. And how Timothy really became aware of his own limits and how he was the only person holding himself back in any way. And I know this is so true for so many of us. So get ready to be inspired. I know you're going to love this episode. Enjoy my interview with Timothy Rivers.

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Tobi: Hey Timothy, welcome to the Design You Podcast. I'm so glad you're here today.

Timothy: Thank you so much. I'm happy to be here.

Tobi: This is so fun. Okay so we know each other because you're a member of my Design You coaching program. And I don't know you may give me insight on how you found me or if you want to, don't feel like you have to. But I have so enjoyed getting to know you and watching just the action you're taking. And I mean you've just been an inspiration in the work that you've done as we've been working together the last – I don't know – several months, which we can get into that in a minute.

But before we do that why don't you tell the listeners a little bit about you, who you are, where you come from. Because what we're really going to talk about today is this concept of seeing yourself as an expert or the expert and all that comes with that, peeling away all the beliefs and limits that we put on ourselves. And to really understand that I think people need the context of kind of your background and where you're from. And so set the scene for us, tell us about you.

Timothy: So I grew up in rural South Carolina in a small town with 1100 people. At some points I've had family members that were the mayor of the town, pastors of the churches, on the school board for the county and that sort of thing. So I grew up in rural South Carolina in a very traditional family. And my family was always very supportive and encouraging of who I am. I don't have any memories of my family ever saying to me, "Don't do that. You shouldn't do things in that way." And that really has allowed me to grow into the adult that I am.

I grew up on a farm, while we lived on the farm we didn't necessarily work on the farm. My family members all had professional careers. But I grew up in a very close knit environment. So I grew up seeing my grandparents, my

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aunts, my uncles, my great grandparents on both sides basically every day. So all of these people in this community, me being who I am, they poured into me. And family and my attachment to the environment that I grew up in has allowed me to become who I am.

While I loved it, I knew I didn't want to stay there my entire life but I still have a strong connection to that environment and everything that those people stood for and what they poured into me.

Tobi: I love that so much. And I can relate a lot being a southerner, being super close to my parents and my family. And so I can just imagine your parents and your grandparents just loving on you so much, which that's such a gift when we have that kind of experience with our families, right?

Timothy: Right. I didn't appreciate it when I was coming along, when I was growing up. But as I got old and I moved and went away to college and then I moved to Atlanta and lived in New York, and I realized how many people don't have that or didn't have that and how that impacts them. I was like yeah; I think I was a little hard on my family so I need to relax a little.

Tobi: Well, and I think what we don't realize, like you it took me a while to understand it is that even though we're going to talk about limiting beliefs today because we all have them to different degrees about different things. That kind of love, and unconditional love, and acceptance from our people really sets a foundation of confidence and of kind of belief in yourself and you can do it more than I think when you have the opposite scenario or when that's lacking, don't you think?

Timothy: Absolutely, because I grew up in an environment and with a family where success in some right was not an option. So you just were not going to be someone that just sat at home all day. I even have memories of being six and seven years old and my great grandmother who was still alive and very, very well at that point, she would come and pick my sister and I up a few days during the summer. And we would go to the tobacco

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fields with the people that worked for our family and we would crop tobacco by hand. And we would string it and hang it in the barn, so hard work.

And seeing what hard work on the back end can lead to in terms of your happiness and your lifestyle is something that I saw on a day-to-day basis.

Tobi: I love that so much. I knew I already enjoyed you so much, but it's so fun to hear how in a lot of ways we have a lot of things in common. And I can relate to that although your family story and my family story aren't exactly the same. My mom's parents were similar in that salt of the Earth kind of people and they both were very hard workers. My granddad worked for The Electric Company. But when I went to their house in the summers we did the same thing. They had a huge garden and so I learned to dig potatoes, and shell peas, and all of that stuff.

And there's nothing like that to just show you kind of what goes into so much of the stuff we take for granted every [crosstalk].

Timothy: Absolutely. Because I remember, this was two thanksgivings ago on Instagram as I was at my parents' house. I was with my parents and I showed a picture of you and your mom, you're making dressing in a silver roasting pan.

Tobi: Yes, that was my...

Timothy: And I was like, I've got to find one of those. I'm going on a mission, I was like, "I'm going to work with her." That roasting pan was a thing that made me say, "Okay, we really are a lot alike."

Tobi: We're similar because your family had that same – you all had cooked in the same roasting pans.

Timothy: Exactly. My grandmother had one and I don't know what happened to it. But I collected a lot of similar types of things and cast iron skillet. And my grandmother even had metal ice trays that are like that.

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Tobi: Yeah. It had a little release; you pulled the little divider or pulled the little lever. That's true yeah, how fun. And I forgot what that stuff's called. It has a name, Bakelite, I don't know, it has some kind of name, the metal. Anyway moving on, we can get lost in our conversation, we can enjoy each other forever. But I want you to also then tell people. So from that background that you described in this close knit family in South Carolina then you went out into the world.

And tell everybody now a little bit about what you've done because you've worked in, or you do work in real estate and in interior design. And you do a bunch of amazing highly successful really exciting things. So tell us about that so we can kind of see that journey of where you've come from. And then we'll start to piece in the parts that were the roadblocks and the limiting beliefs and how that has kind of been a part of your story.

Timothy: Okay. So my mom has a sister and my dad has a sister that both – they moved to Europe when they got married. Now, both of their spouses were in the military so they both lived in Germany. So when they came back when I was around five, six, seven, they came back with all of these amazing pieces of furniture, and accessories, and all this stuff that I'd never really seen before. So I would love to go to their house.

My mom's sister eventually opened a drapery workroom and upholstery shop. So on Saturdays I started going to the workroom with my aunt. And I would be responsible for measuring fabric and cutting fabric. And sometimes I would pull tags and nails out of pieces that she was about to reupholster. And that's really how that began, my infatuation and love for interior design and for things. So, sorry I got sidetracked, I forgot what...

Tobi: No, I love it. I'm with you because fabrics are my favorite part of the whole process. Textiles, and pattern, and color, and I don't know, it's like being in a candy shop for me, which is kind of what you're saying too. There's just something about fabric and textiles that just light me up.

Timothy: Right. So what was the initial question?

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Tobi: So yeah, so then from there you fell in love with design. That was your first entre or introduction to it. And then you went on. How did your career in real estate and interior design come out of that sort of seed that was planted in you?

Timothy: So also during that time on the local Fox station that was in the state capital of Columbia which was an hour away. There was this real estate company called Russell & Jeffcoat Realtors. And they had a TV show on Sunday afternoon where they would have slideshows of the newest listings. And if you're interested in this house call this person. And I was like, "Whoa, this is really exciting, it's really great." And that's how I fell in love with real estate.

So back to my family, I'm from an environment where we have a considerable amount of land in rural South Carolina. So most people in my parents' generation, they built houses on the family property. So I'm not from a family where people go and buy and built houses in subdivisions. You go to college and you come back and you get a job within an hour of where we live and you build a house.

So I grew up watching all of my family members come back, build houses and other family members that were great carpenters, and great electricians and watching everybody build houses. So those are the three areas that really laid the foundation for my love and infatuation with fabric, interior design, real estate and building houses.

Tobi: I love it. Okay so since then at some point you ended up in New York, right?

Timothy: Yes, later but yes.

Tobi: Okay, so you ended up in New York where you currently still live. But there's some more to that story I think, evolving. So how long have you been in New York? And you work in both real estate and interiors in New York and also in Florida as well, right?

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Timothy: Correct. So I went to college in Florida, University of Florida. And after I finished school there I knew that I wanted to make a lot of money. And I wanted to be around people that look like me, and I was young. And on the weekends I would go to Atlanta, which is a very common thing that a lot of people in the south do. Atlanta was the place to be in the 90s, early 2000s. So I started meeting people that were in real estate and they were like, “You can make a lot of money. You’ve got the personality. You’d be great at it.”

So I started meeting people and then I started selling new construction. So I was that guy that sat in the model home and I learned even more about construction, about what people really want in homes. And that’s how I really began my career. And then I started working for smaller more boutique builders. So at that point I was working for large national builders, like D.R. Horton that build 50,000, 60,000 houses a year. And then I went to work for smaller, more boutique condo developers and people that built custom homes and semi custom homes.

And then I got involved in kind of sort of – because I was selling really well, I started telling them what to build. And then I started helping them with the cabinets. And then I started helping them with the color schemes for the entire communities. And sometimes these were neighborhoods with 30 houses, then as many as 1100, 1200.

Tobi: Wow. Interesting. That’s so fun, yeah.

Timothy: Yeah. So from that I got tired of living in Atlanta and New York was on the list. And I dropped everything and I started all over then moved to New York. And New York is vertical living. So I started working with a brokerage and I was renting apartments. So, most people in New York rent. So I was renting apartments, I enjoyed it. It was a lot of work walking and moving around the city a lot. Then I started meeting investors and developers. And I helped them find buildings. So I would get paid when they purchased a building.

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Then I helped them design the renovations. And then I'd help them re, like list the apartments once they were finished. And now I've got a pretty extensive portfolio of buildings in New York that myself and a couple of other people on my team that we are responsible for renting and managing and everything related to the building.

Tobi: Yeah, incredible. And then you also do work in Florida as well. Is that because a lot of people are snowbirds and would go down to Florida and then you found yourself doing their Florida residence?

Timothy: Exactly. So a lot of my developers, most of them are in Palm Beach County, and then a few of them are in Key Biscayne in Miami, and a couple of other areas in North Miami Beach. And that's kind of just how it all started and it just snow – it's like it snowballed I guess that's what they call it. And that's how it all began and now it's going.

Tobi: That is all just so inspiring. I mean I know it's a ton of hard work but it sure does sound somewhat glamorous at least. You and I know the truth about these things. But at least there's a little glamor in there, right?

Timothy: I have to say that it's really nice getting dressed going to an amazing building to show beautiful apartments and pointing out the views. And knowing that you were not only involved in the purchase of the building but you picked up those clients. So you picked up that pain. You fought to get that countertop. And to see people fall in love and the developer be happy, it's a win on all sides.

Tobi: I love that so much. Okay, so hearing your story, anybody listening is probably thinking this sounds like the most confident guy I've ever heard of in my life. How in the world is he worried about seeing himself as an expert or having limiting beliefs? But we all have that. We all have that at some level. And so let's get into that conversation about – and we'll work our way towards the seeing yourself as an expert. But let's start with the limiting beliefs because when we were chatting before, a little bit before we started you was telling me.

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I said, “What was the biggest limiting belief?” And you really kind of know what that, you’ve done a lot of awareness work and you fully get where you were in your own way or where your thinking was holding you back. So tell us about what was the one or two key limiting beliefs that you had to overcome.

Timothy: I think at the foundation it was growing up in rural South Carolina, I always tell people in New York and in Florida that one thing I love about the south, and I’m not saying that the south is perfect in any way, shape or form is that manners and decency, to a degree it rules southern culture. And in a lot of cases you don’t necessarily know how people feel about you. But they will always be kind and polite to you in public in most cases.

So for me the initial thing I had to overcome is the idea that I had a role in this world. I had a position that I was supposed to play and I was supposed to take that and be happy with it and make the best with whatever life gave me, or I was able to come up with. Don’t shoot too low but don’t dare ask the universe or God for too much because while you are extraordinary, you’re still Black. That was the first thing that I had to handle.

Tobi: That gives me chills.

Timothy: Yeah. It’s my truth. I wanted to come on this being completely honest.

Tobi: I want you to. I love that. So just innately, that’s what’s so interesting about racism in America. And I don’t know if you know anything about the book, Caste. I recently read it, but it compares the Nazi Germany caste system, the Indian caste system and then essentially racism in America which is the unspoken caste system of America. Nobody wants to call it that. But what was so eye opening to me when I read that book was that sort of the culture of America was so – I mean I hate to use the word savvy.

But in a sense from their perspective basing judgment on skin color, it’s not something that can be hidden. In other places it’s outward you can’t not be

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Black. You can dress a certain way and people would know if you were poor or what part of your background is. But that's the sad and fascinating part is that our caste system if you want to call it that, in America is unavoidable. Because even at a glance people can understand what your skin color is.

And so I've learned so much about that. But hearing you talk about that, even as a Black man you were super clear on what you thought that meant for you, right?

Timothy: Absolutely. The great thing about my family is they were very honest about the world that I was being born into. While they wanted to educate me, it's really interesting, it's like they wanted me to be great but they were afraid of me being too visible and being – it's like my family would have been happy, I feel like me being the high school principal. But they were afraid of me leaving and going to Florida, and then leaving and going to Atlanta, and then the thought of having a child by himself in New York City was too much.

Tobi: Because they just loved you so much and wanted to protect you like all parents, like good parents do. They were afraid of how someone might treat you, yeah.

Timothy: And my father said once I would be thrown into situations there was nothing he could do about and that freaked him out.

Tobi: That brings tears to my eyes, as a mother that is your worst nightmare. You're fine with somebody – I mean you're not fine with it but you would much rather someone harm you or mistreat you than mistreat your child that you absolutely adore. And so yeah, the thought of that loss of control with you going out into the world I'm sure was just both wonderful and exciting for them, that they were so proud of you but also terrifying at the same time.

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Timothy: Right. And I think it's, you know, I'm 41 and it's still something that I've learned to be myself but also filter what I share because my mom is always ready to go on defense, and to become nervous, and to become anxious about oh my God, oh my God, oh my God, so yeah.

Tobi: Well, and the beautiful thing that even though that we would never want our parents to worry about it. The beautiful thing to me of your story is that they love you that much, that you have that kind of family that they literally love you so much that their worst nightmare your mom's probably just like my mom. Who's the same way who sits at home, although obviously just inherently because of your race you have so much bigger things that she has to worry about that I don't have to worry about, like driving in the car and getting pulled over which is so much more terrifying.

But as a good mother that adores our children, it's kind of like their job to sit at home and worry about what could possibly happen or go wrong with their children so they can be prepared, right?

Timothy: Right, absolutely.

Tobi: Yeah. It sounds like you have an awesome mama. So then, so you knew, clearly aware of kind of what you decided your role should be as a Black person. And then what else, what else played into the limiting beliefs about yourself?

Timothy: Well, I think it's once I began to come into myself and to understand and appreciate what I enjoyed and which direction I wanted to go, I became afraid of okay, now I have the courage to get out there and to really try. Are these people going to laugh at me? Are they going to say, "Go back home." "You're a fraud." "You're not one of us." That was the next big hurdle.

Tobi: Yeah. And so what does one of us exactly mean? How are you different from maybe these people that you were thinking you would work with or that wouldn't work with you?

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Timothy: Well, obviously race because I think that sometimes – and for me I want to backtrack for a second. That’s what was so powerful about moving to Atlanta is it was a progressive say, and I was able to be surrounded by people that look just like me, that were doing extraordinary things. That were heavily involved in government, in politics, they were business leaders. They were business owners, home owners that owned some of the most amazing real estate. And that also really helped me to gain my confidence and to overcome some of those hurdles in my mind.

Tobi: Yeah. But when we were talking briefly beforehand you were like, “I was afraid white people wouldn’t want to work with me. My sexual orientation, my skin color, or Asian people might not want to.” So you were already kind of like summing people up as we do with our own insecurities and deciding – pre deciding for people, not even letting them decide. You were pre deciding who you thought was going to accept you or want to work with you, right?

Timothy: Right, absolutely. And the extraordinary thing is over the course of my adult life one of the biggest lessons that I’ve learned is – and that the universe and God, whichever you choose to say has shown me it never fails. Okay, so when I was a waiter in college I had this manager tell me, “Timothy, I get so angry with you sometimes because you have so much personality and you just to choose to carry it around in your back pocket.” And a lot of that was because I was afraid of people, why does he talk like that? Why does he dress like that?

Well, all of these judgments that I felt that I was going to receive from other people that, you know, obviously we want to be embraced and accepted. It was that fear.

Tobi: Yeah. And I think something that’s coming to my mind and I’m curious if it’s true for you because in the beginning you were like, “I had these parents who didn’t hold me back. Everything was possible, they love me. They wanted me to do great things.” And I had the same thing. And so

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you started by saying, “I didn’t ever have those parents who told me not to be who I am or to be different.” And I relate but still on some level southern culture, even if it’s not necessarily our parents. And sometimes our parents accidentally do it just because they’re southern as well.

I found as a girl, a woman but even as a girl with a big personality, which was also not really normal in the south at the time. I was whether consciously or subconsciously by my surroundings, sometimes my parents sort of tamped down a little bit. So when you’re saying you’re putting that in your back pocket, it wasn’t that they were afraid that I couldn’t be anything I wanted to be. But it was sort of like, “Don’t be so loud Tobi, be a little more ladylike. Don’t make anybody uncomfortable.” And the southern way is that.

So do you think that played a role in why your personality was tucked in your back pocket? Because it was like, “Timothy, don’t be too much for people.”

Timothy: Right. Just be middle of the road or under the radar and take your crumbs or the bigger chunks of crumbs that you’re able to accumulate and create the best life that you can. But what I can – and this is the point I was trying to make earlier is what I have realized 100% in life is I always get what I want when I am willing to show up and just be me.

Tobi: That’s so good.

Timothy: The universe always rewards me. The universe always gives me what I need and 99% of what I want on time just from taking the risk and being willing to say, “You know what? I’m just going to be me, like it or love it, it’s just it’s me. It’s me in the world, that’s it.”

Tobi: Yeah, I love that so much. I mean I can’t even tell you how much. One of the things you had sent over when we were talking about what we were going to talk about and it was this. You were saying, “Kind of opening myself up, being willing to open up to what’s possible for me.”

Timothy: That was a big thing for me.

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Tobi: And I love what you're saying because the interesting thing is we come into these situations like you've described and we sort of believe that it's the outside world that's holding us back because we've put all these rules like you've already described. But if we're really honest in most instances nobody's really doing any of that. I mean there of course are situations where people are perpetrating their atrocities and all kinds of things.

But in the day-to-day for most people including people of color, not everybody but your story is that most of the time it was not other people holding you back. It was just you holding yourself back.

Timothy: And me being afraid of – there was always this paranoia when I was younger, I was afraid of embarrassing my family, embarrassing my parents. And I was always afraid of someone saying – everyone calls my dad Tim. So my dad's Tim, I'm Timothy. "I saw your son and he was this." And that was the beginning of me kind of like going into a shell.

Tobi: Yeah. People are watching, people are judging, people are kind of monitoring, keeping score a little bit, they know what I'm doing. Yeah. But I love so much that what you came to realize is for the most part the only person holding you back is you.

Timothy: Absolutely, no question about it.

Tobi: And that sounds so simple but it is literally revolutionary if we can absorb that at our core.

Timothy: It really is. It really is. I just think of, like sometimes I find myself beating myself up thinking about all of the years that I was afraid of just being present and visible in the world. And feeling like what I could have lost. Obviously I'm where I'm supposed to be at the right time. But I think about the years I spent as a prisoner of life, afraid of the simplicity. I remember when I was in college and we were at this club and it was like if

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you're under 21, there were sort of one night a week freshmen and sophomores could go.

And I got on the dance floor and danced with somebody and it was something I'd never thought, for two years in college I'd never thought I have the strength and the courage to do. And it wasn't nearly as hard as – I didn't know what I was doing but just...

Tobi: Running a real estate company in New York City per se, it wasn't nearly as hard as that, you just literally...

Timothy: No, it wasn't.

Tobi: Yeah, but it felt monumental.

Timothy: It really was. It really was, just stepping into the light and just not being afraid. Because what I do know is that my family and my environment, my parents they sent me to band camps and all of this stuff. We traveled a lot which is a typically – it is a typically southern, particularly in the era that I was born if you're Black. And I've had all of these amazing things that I've had access to, these amazing people.

And I feel like I have a responsibility at this point to show it, to not be afraid to offend people or to make people uncomfortable with the reality that I am worthy of being who I am. And it doesn't take away from you. It doesn't mean that your happiness is going to be compromised in any way, shape or form. But I, so if I am worthy so is everyone else.

Tobi: I love this. I mean honestly this is moving me to tears in so many ways because I'm thinking of all the different sort of – I don't know if we want to call it marginalized identities and judgments we have. Everything from weight, to skin color, to disability, to all of the categories and all of the things that we judge ourselves so harshly for, that a lot of them are patriarchal, racism, politics, money, capitalism, all the things.

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And so much of that is what stops us, our fears around these cultural beliefs and systems. But at the core what you're talking about is just we're humans with incredible gifts that we all have, the absolute same equal worthiness to show up and be fully that, fully seen, fully realized. Those gifts, those talents, the ideas, the creativity, and that's to me what you're talking about.

And it's so moving because even as just a pretty affluent background white girl with privilege from the south. Just hearing you talk there's so many moments my mind goes to of when I – if I can only be that size now. How I didn't show up because I thought I was fat or I thought my thighs were too big or whatever. All coming from this message of it's how we're supposed to be and how we're supposed to look and all of this stuff.

And kind of even just, though it's so different relating my own little moments and my history of just how much more fun I could have been having or how much more relaxed I could have been, or in the moment. And that's how I'm kind of relating to the story you're telling. And we are the ones creating all of that. We did that accidentally with our thoughts, and our mindsets, and our belief systems that were taught to us through our parents, or our culture, or our neighbors, or our pastors, or somebody.

Timothy: Yeah. And I just want to add that I'm almost embarrassed to say but despite all these things that I was doing in my life, I was probably 30 years old before the light bulb went off in my head that people liked me. And that people did, not everyone, but people generally liked me, and accepted me, and were not judging me. And they were not as critical of me as I was of myself. And that freedom, it just allowed the ceiling to get higher, and higher, and higher in terms of what I would dare to think that I could do.

Tobi: Wow, I love that so much. Yes, it is so true that we believe all these things. We believe we're being judged. I mean that in and of itself, isn't that

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probably – it seems to me most people’s biggest fear is being judged negatively by other people.

Timothy: Yes. When I was younger I was the person, if I would go somewhere, I would walk into the room and the first corner I could find that’s where I was going to be until it was time to leave. Because I was just so paranoid and so afraid of this what I call trash at this point that I have allowed into my mind. That really was not in alignment with who I really am as a person that affected how I showed up in the world.

Tobi: So good. So when you started, so in your 30s you started to kind of get a glimpse that, I guess how I would describe it is that all these beliefs were optional. You could just lay them down if you wanted to. You could just stop believing these things if you wanted to.

Timothy: Right. And I think for me, even when I was living in Atlanta I had incredible success selling new construction and helping developers like I said, and builders design the homes that they were building for spec and also for clients. But it really happened when I just showed up in New York City and I said, “I’m an accomplished real estate broker and I’m going to do well in New York City.”

That was another level of identifying myself and accepting myself as an accomplished person that has so much to share, that can help people make informed decisions about one of the biggest decisions they’re going to make in their life.

Tobi: So good. So when you really started then, you’ve got a glimpse in your early 30s, around 30 and then I guess it sounds like over that next decade because you’re now 41 you said. That’s how you’ve honed this belief in yourself or this willingness to admit that you’re an expert, to own it. So if anybody else is thinking I relate to every word he’s saying, but I’m more like he was at 30. I see it, but how do I get to this next level?

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What are the things that you think allowed you or that you did specifically, were there practices? What did you do? Did just passing of time help? How did that unfold over that next decade?

Timothy: Well, I'm going to go back three years before I turned 30. I think what the biggest thing was I did the work. I made mistakes. I showed up. I learned, learned, learned, learned. I didn't just pop up and say, "I'm a real estate expert." I took every class that I could find. I read every book. I had every conversation that I could. Identified with every expert in the market that I was living in at the time which was Atlanta, and I followed every house that they sold. I followed every building that they represented, if it was new construction for condos or something like that.

So I really totally immersed myself in learning and knowledge so that despite the fact that I'm Black, I'm southern, I'm from a small town, I'm gay. There's nothing that you can take away from what I'm bringing to the table about this given area. It doesn't mean you want to work with me.

Tobi: No, but gosh, you're so inspiring. And I saw this in you in Design You because the minute you came in and you're like, "I love this part, and I like this course and I like this thing. But here's all the stuff that Tobi doesn't teach me in Design You, I'm going to go find it." And so the next thing I know you're coming back and you're like, "And anybody who also needs to go deeper in Facebook Ads, here's a really cool course on [inaudible], or here's a whatever."

And I loved that about you because instead of sitting there and going, "Well, this program isn't everything I need it to be. It isn't soup to nuts it's absolutely 100% delivered to me with a bow on it so that I can just do nothing and show up and it work." And you and I are so alike in this. You're like, "No, you've got to dig in. You've got to get a little gritty. You've got to go look for some other resources. You've got to be savvy enough to kind of fill the gaps and put things together."

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And I've seen you take so much action which has been so beautiful. I mean I say all the time that's where, and that's what you just described. The transformation of who you become is in the doing of the thing. It's not sitting on the front of it trying to know it all perfectly before you take the first step.

Timothy: Right. You have to do the work. You have to just get in there. I have friends and people that I know that say, "I want to do this. I want to do that." But they spend 20 hours a week watching Netflix. And there's a time and a place for that. But for me the time that I put into learning, and education, and research on anything that pops into my mind is probably one of the biggest factors that has led to be me being as confident as a professional. And then into my personal life is – because my grandfather used to say, "Once you know it no one can take it away from you."

Tobi: Yes, it is so true and so good. I think personally for me, same as you, almost all my confidence comes from those very things, learning. And not that you have to get degrees, I've learned just as much from a seminar as I have from college, although I do have a lot of degrees and a lot of certifications because I personally enjoy that commitment to knowing well, if I want to learn this thing this is how I know. I've kind of checked all those boxes. But I see you doing that same thing and I agree with you.

There was a commercial on TV when we were kids that said, "Learning is power." It was probably like a Schoolhouse Rock or something. And I think you're so right about that. The other thing that I notice is if, for most people like you and like myself that I see committed to learning, I think what goes hand-in-hand with that is a growth mindset.

Timothy: Right, absolutely. I think a lot of people – there's an expression that I heard that says, "Most people die at 25 but they're buried at 75." And I think a lot of people think for example, I'm going to get into IT. And once I get my associate's degree or my bachelor's degree I'm done. You will be so far, so low on the totem pole in terms of progress and recognition if you

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have that outlook. No one's just going to hand you everything that you need. You've got to do the work.

And sometimes it's, you know, I've always been the person that I would spend my last – when I was in college, I would spend my last 25 bucks I'd be at Barnes and Noble or what's the other store that we had? Books-A-Million, and I would spend my last 25, 30 bucks on an interior design book because it was important to me. And I'm always that person that's willing to bet on myself. I have literally sold houses to keep going mentally and financially because that's what had to be done. No crying, no attachment, okay, boom, let's put it on the market, let's sell it, onto the next.

Tobi: This was fun. I'm going to be willing to move on. I'm going to think of it positively, I'm not going to be devastated by it. I might cry for just a minute but then move on.

Timothy: Yeah. I won't get stuck for a year or two and saying, "I can't be who I am and who I want to be until I get another house."

Tobi: Yeah. Well, and I think that inherently in growth mindset which is what you're describing is you have to be willing to let go of the previous version of yourself to become the next version of yourself.

Timothy: And I have to say that it's always been there but for the first time in my life I'm so excited about the uncertainty of what the next level of who I am will be. And I'm not trying to completely control it. I'm doing the work to get there. But I'm excited about the uncertainty of what's next.

Tobi: That's huge. And that's why you're thriving in this pandemic, and in the racial climate we're in, and everything else that's happening right now and the past 12 months we've been in. And the future is when you can find yourself, not only at peace but excited and willing to forge into uncertainty. I think that's a total game changer, it's a whole other level of growth.

Timothy: Yeah, because you said something that was really powerful. You said maybe two months ago you said, "There's always a solution." And

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something that I used to do in the past is, and I'm being honest, if I had problems, if I had a closing that was delayed and I was really excited about it, I felt like I couldn't live until this problem was resolved. So emotionally I would bury my head in the sand and I wouldn't be present until this thing gave me permission to live.

So now I have an approach where it's more of okay, this is the problem, how am I going to solve it? And I break things down into a small task. And I say, "Okay, today I'm going to think about this. Tomorrow I'll think about this." I'm not going to mess up my Saturday thinking and worrying about something that I can't handle until Monday. I'm going to find a solution, again that's going to allow me to just keep moving.

Tobi: So good. I just read a book. We actually read it in Design You for our book club called Burnout. It was written by these two sisters, so good. But on the very back last page it says, "The difference in joy and happiness", is what they were talking about. And that's what was coming to my mind as you were describing that because you said you used to be shut down by these kind of happenings.

And they said, "Happiness comes from happenings, or the things not happening and joy is this overarching sort of inherent mindset of satisfaction and fulfillment." That's not dependent on like you said, whether the closing happened on time or the inspection went through, or the sofa came in, whatever. Yet so many people are literally living moment to moment based on happenings.

And that's why 2020 I think threw everybody like that for a loop because all of a sudden all these "bad things were happening." And their wellbeing, their joy, their demeanor, all of that, or it might not be their joy, but their happiness was dependent on what was happening or not. Were we seeing people? Were we traveling?

And what you're describing to me sounds much more like this joy that you're like, yeah, all these things may still be happening or not happening,

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and I'm not happy about all of them. But I can still have joy. I can still move forward. I don't have to be stuck. I don't have to think about it in a way that shuts me down, yeah.

Timothy: Yeah. Because for me they're just a few things that I need on a day-to-day basis and that is I need to know that my immediate family is well. I need good food. I need quality rest and a strong internet connection. Anything else outside of that I don't really care.

Tobi: I love it. And if one day the internet's not working as long as you can be with family or find the good food then you can survive for a minute.

Timothy: Right, yeah, absolutely.

Tobi: Yeah. But I love that so much. Well, and the other thing that I was noticing back to our topic of seeing yourself as an expert, and I hadn't really thought of it this way because we talk about this a lot. We talk about it in marketing, or social media, or showing up, like creating a course like you've been doing. And people struggle with what we call imposter syndrome or all of those things. But it sounds to me like your remedy; it's my exact remedy too by the way, which is a novel idea. The way to see yourself as an expert is to become an expert.

Timothy: Absolutely, yes, totally. Because keep in mind when I was selling new construction for all those years, I knew I wanted to eat. So I had to start to come out of my shell. So I had all these years of literally like most weeks, I would have the opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with 40, 50 people that were coming to the model homes. So I really became an expert at communicating, and showing up when I was tired, and overcoming objections.

And I became an expert at making the developer happy and the client, because while I worked for the developer, I had to have all of these experiences of just rolling up my sleeve to become an expert in so many different areas.

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Tobi: Yeah. And I think the other thing that I'm noticing is what maybe stops people is they think, well, I have to go from being a beginner to the ultimate expert of all things. And what you're really describing and I think this is so true as well is that it's kind of like becoming a little micro expert in a whole bunch of different things. So when you were in Atlanta you weren't an expert yet in real estate fully before you were going to show up in New York but you were an expert on model homes.

And so as long as we're in the realm of talking, or teaching, or helping someone with that particular thing that you had so dialed in then you could show up just and be a rock star. And so yeah, maybe you don't know all the other things you want to know. And I think that's where people get confused and that's what I love, this kind of insight I'm getting just from hearing you talk that it's not that you have to be Albert Einstein, or that you have to be Bill Gates, or that you have to be Oprah or anybody else that's this huge figure.

You can literally be an expert, kind of like people even talk about being a micro influencer or a micro blogger, it can just be a small area, that you can literally be an expert in how to frame posters art and make it look really good on a gallery wall. And that one thing is enough to create a course, or a program, or teach somebody something, or sell it to an individual that you do that one-on-one for them. And I think that people miss the point a lot because we're believing, it's almost this perfectionist mentality that we have to be all of things.

And what you're demonstrating with your story in my opinion is that you just sort of collected as did I, categories of expertise and once you knew you had enough information to really be good at a particular thing you went and used those and you're resourceful. Is that correct?

Timothy: That is absolutely correct, it's absolutely correct. Because again when I knew that I wanted to sell new construction I didn't wait for someone to "give me the opportunity." While, I did have help, what did I do? I started

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shopping new construction, every free minute that I had, so when I started interviewing with developers and builders I knew their product as well as they did. And that wasn't something that someone told me to do. I could literally tell every developer in Atlanta what this person's building in this neighborhood and what they have coming up.

I became an expert. I allow myself to do the work to become an expert before I even got there in just a small scope. Even in terms of just knowing floor plans, price points and lots, yeah.

Tobi: Yeah. So good. So any advice as we wrap up? You've done such a beautiful job of demonstrating with your own personal story which is amazing, how you grew, how you opened up, how you dismantled your own limiting beliefs. So if people want to get to this level in their own life and feel this level of confidence, do they just pick one area that they'd like to know more about and just sort of start to double down on knowledge? Or is it more mindset shifts first? How do they do this work do you think?

Timothy: I think it's both, but I think that it is really important to, as you say, pick a thing and try it, even if it is a "failure" in theory you learn so much from everything that you do. And even if you don't make a lot of money from the first attempt, what you learn can be perfected even more in the next try, in the next try. But I think that you have to just start.

Tobi: And you did that so beautifully. I think if you're willing, share just for a minute the example of the course you just created, your first – I don't know if it was your first, but to my knowledge it was your first online course for your customers, your design customers. And you did exactly what we're talking about. So to give people an example, what was that like for you?

Timothy: Well, it was my first time doing it and I completely – my intention was I wanted to create a course that I could put together pretty quickly that would also be powerful and resourceful, that I could sell. So that would be a big jump in terms of revenue for me to put more money into marketing for the first quarter of next year. So my intention was to put all of this money

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into branding, and marketing, and messaging next year. And it didn't turn out exactly as I thought it was going to turn out but I was still very, very happy with the results overall and also what I learned.

So I create a course and it was on holiday decorating, and I spent a lot of time learning, for me it was important to learn everything that would go into it so that when I spoke with people that I would hire to help me I at least had a reference for whether this sounds right, or whether or not, yeah, no, you're really not where I want you to be or the person for me.

Tobi: Meaning like when you hired virtual assistants, or copywriters, or other people, they knew that you were clear on what you were trying to create?

Timothy: Exactly, because it's kind of like what you said, do I want someone to just do what I tell them or someone that can help me with strategy? And for me to spend the money I had to know enough about what was really going on to feel confident spending the money, to entrust them to implement what I'm asking them to do, or to even trust their recommendations in terms of strategy.

Tobi: Yeah. And what I love that you did that was so smart because you have a high end audience, you have a high end real estate clientele, you have a high end interior design clientele. What I love that you did is you created what I would consider a relatively expensive course.

Timothy: \$1497.

Tobi: How much?

Timothy: \$1497.

Tobi: Yeah. So over a \$1,000 which I loved because so many people think they're going to go create a \$49 something. And you created this over a \$1,000 thing which was amazing. And then what I loved about listening to your experience and kind of you reporting back to us in the group is you're

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like, “Well, I made a handful of sales but then I also got a lot of other work for my one-on-one business.” So it was a beautiful marketing tool.

But now when I was reading your bio and your information before, prepping for us to be on the call today, I read about how you already have another course planned for the new year that you’re creating that’s sort of a bigger more signature course. And you had to go; I’m sure, through this first one before you could fully understand what that could look like, right?

Timothy: Right, exactly. So the next course is really going to be more of a soup to nuts kind of course, educating people. Something that I’m really are supportive of is the power of home ownership. And I think that it is not just cliché to say that it is the foundation for creating generational wealth and financial security. For me owning, because I do tend to get bored pretty easily so I have apartments and I own houses in different places, I kind of bounce around a little bit.

But I think it’s really important for people to have – and this again this goes back to my family, a safe place that is theirs, that nurtures their soul, that they can relax and they don’t have to worry about someone else having control over. So the next course is really about what we often call homebuyer education. And it’s going to be called something like before you call the builder, let’s handle the business first.

Tobi: It’s so great.

Timothy: And it’s something that preparing the legwork before you jump into purchasing or building a new home.

Tobi: And what an expert you are on real estate, building, interior design, the whole thing, all of it. So it’s going to use all your skills. That is just remarkable.

Timothy: So it’s going to be my flagship course that it’s going to be there. And I’ve got a free webinar that’s going to be offered as a lost leader to get people into the funnel to eventually purchase the course. But a lot of this is

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just me sharing experience from selling thousands of condos, single family houses since 2003 that I've learned from every deal that's gone right and every deal that's gone wrong. It's me pouring that into one unit that people can partake in.

Tobi: That is so good and I just kind of want to say to wrap that up. When people are on the front end of doing work, getting an education, doing the research, learning about making a course, any of the stuff we've talked about today, they're on the front end of doing that work, the work, like you keep calling it, doing the work. And I agree with you, learning, researching, all of it. I think so many people can think it's so hard, it's so much, there's so much I don't know.

And I just want people to see because it's so true in almost any instance I can think of with a few outlying exceptions, that all that work you've done culminates in the opportunity to then do dozens or hundreds of things that are going to create the wealth, and the prosperity, and the revenue streams, and all the things that you want. It's in the collecting and the learning, all of that that sets you up to then be able to do kind of whatever the heck you want, right, on the flipside?

Timothy: Absolutely, yeah.

Tobi: It's like that story of people, it took them 20 years to become an overnight success. That's what we're seeing, when we don't see the person until they finally hit it. You didn't see the 20 years of them collecting, and learning, and doing, and failing, and trying, and being wrong, and looking stupid, and all that stuff. But if you're willing to go through all of that then you find yourself in a place with all of these assets and intellectual property, which is what you're describing. And then it's kind of like the world is your oyster, you can do whatever you want at that moment, yeah.

Timothy: Absolutely. The thing I love about Design You is that I'm preparing myself and it may not happen as quickly as I would have liked. But to capitalize on the work that I've done in terms of intellectual property

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that people can access at a moment's time, that will not require me hiring a car service to take them out to look for an apartment, or getting in the car and driving people around to look for a house in the suburbs.

If you don't want to work with me as your broker, if you don't want to work with me as your designer, that's fine but here are all of these things where is tested and true that I know what I'm talking about. Take this, be happy, be well, purchase it, be happy, be well. And you will be empowered as a result of the work that I've done without me having to be there.

Tobi: And they can trust you and the information because basically you just made their life a million times easier because you spent 20 years doing the legwork and investing the time, energy and money so they don't have to. And now it's a win, win for both of you which I just think is incredible. I love that so much. I think that's a beautiful place to wrap up.

But I think it's just so encouraging for people to see sometimes when we're doing all these things, or learning, or going, even going through a program like Design You we think is this going to work? And am I really going to be able to create a course or do these things? And I think your story is such a beautiful example of, it's not one thing. It's not one course, or one book, or one job that is the pivotal thing, like you've turned on the light switch. It's the combination and culmination of all the things together that you collectively use to create unique product services offerings.

Timothy: Right. I had a restaurant manager, because I was a waiter for years when I was, like the last few years of high school, college and graduate school. And I had this manager tell me when I was leaving one restaurant to go to another that, "It's all a building process, one thing leads to another. And what you do in 1999 doesn't just magically disappear when you get to 2005." That's why I say that just getting started and realizing that you've got to pick these nuggets up along the way.

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And we're going to have a bag to pull from to have things to sell, to be able to have expertise. And you're going to have some bumps and bruises but you've got to just, if you want it you have to get out there.

Tobi: So good. Okay, if everybody wants to find you, or follow you, or know more about you how do they do that? Because they're going to want to, they now are like, "I've got to know this guy."

Timothy: So I am trying to be more active on social media but on Instagram it's Timothy Rivers Interiors. I'm also on Facebook and my website is timothy-rivers.com.

Tobi: Awesome, thank you so much.

Timothy: Thank you so much.

Tobi: This was such a pleasure. I can talk to you for a long, long time. We have so much in common. We will, we will be talking more. But I just, I thank you and I'm grateful because I thoroughly enjoyed this and getting to know you better, so thank you.

Timothy: Thank you so much.

Tobi: Thank you.

Timothy: Thank you. Bye bye.

Tobi: Bye.

Timothy: Bye.

Okay, pretty amazing. And I could not agree more that education, and learning, and growth mindset are key to really seeing yourself as an expert. But I think it's not just that, just as we talked about in this episode. It's really also just deciding that you are all the amazing incredible things that you are. And yeah, we've got all the other parts too. But that doesn't diminish

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really who we are and how we have such an opportunity to show up in this world.

So I hope that hearing this episode early in this year in 2021 that this inspires you to get out of your own dang way and step into all that you absolutely can be this year. Okay, so go do that right now, go just start this year off with a bang, become who you were meant to be. And we'll meet you back here, the same with place with another episode next week of the *Design You* podcast. Bye for now friends.

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.