

Ep #151: Why Authenticity is the Key to Success with Jessica Zweig



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 151.

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.

Hi everyone. I hope you are enjoying this year that is flying by already. I am greatly enjoying it. I'm learning so much as always, growing so much. I feel like the last 18 months or so have just been growth times a 100. How could it not be? We've been through a pandemic. We've been through an election. We've been through gosh; so many things that have challenged us and that have opened us up and reminded us what's important and what's valuable. And gosh, I hope there have at least been as many highs as lows for you.

I know it's been a hard time for a lot of us. But today I think is an episode that's going to put it into a little bit of context for you maybe, I hope so. So today I have Jessica Zweig. And I really, really enjoyed this conversation. So Jessica's the founder and CEO of SimplyBe Agency, a personal branding firm based in Chicago. She works with people all over the world. And she'll tell you in the interview, she's got a lot of accolades and all kinds of things that are very noteworthy.

But it's her message that I'm most interested in. And we're having a conversation because Jessica has a brand new book coming out the week that this interview goes live and we'll tell you all about that. But we're going to have this brilliant conversation, we've had it, you're about to hear it, all about authenticity. And when you hear the word 'authenticity' you might groan a little bit. And before this interview with Jessica I'll say I probably would have groaned a little bit too, ugh, here we go again.

Because it is a term that we've heard so often in the existence and culture of social media especially, be authentic, be authentic. But nobody really knows what that means or how to do that. And even when we hear it, be

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yourself, be real I don't think I've had anybody really break it down in the way that Jessica does in this interview. And I loved it.

I got so much from it. I connected with it as you'll hear. And her definition is something that I'm going to probably pin it up on the wall. Because it is so helpful as an actual tool and really how we show up day-to-day in our own lives, in our social media, in public, behind closed doors. It's a tool that I think will serve us if we allow it to. So I hope you enjoy this conversation as much as I did.

I think you're going to want to listen to it at least once, maybe twice. It sounds like we're probably all going to be rushing out to get Jessica's book. I hope by the time you hear this I've gotten my hands on it or maybe even read it because it promises to have so much wisdom and so many assets and tools that we can use. And we give you a glimpse of that today. So I hope you enjoy this interview with Jessica Zweig.

Tobi: Hey Jessica, welcome to the Design You podcast. I'm really glad you're here today.

Jessica: Me too Tobi, thanks for having me.

Tobi: You're so welcome. So why don't you tell everybody a little bit about you and then we're going to get into a really – I think I'm going to call it a really needed conversation for 2021. I think it's exciting, I'm sure it'll be amazing, all those words. But I think I'm going to go with a needed, a required conversation for 2021.

Jessica: I'd agree. I love that.

Tobi: Yeah. So tell them a little bit about you and then we're going to get into this topic.

Jessica: So I am the CEO and founder of SimplyBe Agency. We are a nationally recognized personal branding company. We specialize in brand

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messaging and strategy development for entrepreneurs, executives, CEOs, solopreneurs, creatives, really helping focus the individual platform to help scale and drive their success. And I've been featured in Forbes and Inc. and Crain's and Business Insider as an expert in this thing. And I scaled my business to seven figures in 18 months.

And I like to start with the accolades to be honest and let everyone know upfront. Let's talk about the success I guess. But really at the end of the day there's always so much more to the highlight reel. And I've been on this journey as an entrepreneur for about 15 years, SimplyBe is my second company. I started my first company when I was 26. I ran that for seven years, we grew it to – it was the largest online platform for women in the city of Chicago for seven years in a row, it was an online magazine.

And I really kind of blasted off into my entrepreneurial career at that time but I was green as grass, I didn't know diddly about running a business and made all my mistakes. And went broke and was a horrible manager and I had a toxic relationship with the business partner. And was super unhealthy mentally, spiritually, physically, really running from a place of ego, and to be frank, inauthenticity. And it took a true emotional nervous breakdown when I was about 31 for me to realize how out of alignment I was with my true self, and with my purpose, and with my authenticity.

And I ended up leaving that business. It took a long time to make that decision. I hired a life coach and did a ton of soul searching on that decision but it was the most important decision I ever made. And I know that people listening to your show, they're entrepreneurs, they're creatives, people who run their own business. And when you say, "I no longer want to do this thing," that you created it's like giving away your baby. It's really, really challenging. It was the most heartbreaking at that time decision but it was right.

And as Glennon Doyle says, we can do hard things. And so I did that thing. And I went off to start what was SimplyBe Agency. And I realized at that

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current juncture in my career the power of my own personal brand that I had built as face and founder of this very popular magazine in the city. And really kind of took that asset called Jessica and leveraged it in a way that really helped catapult an entirely new business. But I made the decision, Tobi, at that moment that I wasn't going to lie to myself anymore. I wasn't going to lie to my community anymore.

I was going to come clean about what I had really been through and what I was really learning. And it was interesting that that side of my 'brand' was more infectious, was more relatable, was the thing that actually allowed me to connect with my core clients, with my core eventual team members, with my core community, the press because I was coming from this place of truth.

And yes, I had the skills of a marketer, that's what people were hiring me for, the branding expertise and social media knowhow. But it wasn't only what they wanted, but that wasn't what at the end of the day what they were hiring me for. They were coming to me because they could see themselves in me. And there was a commonality in our authenticity. And when you really unlock that in yourself and you give yourself the permission to be who you are truly meant to be and who you truly are in the world you become quite magnetic in fact.

And it's a strategy as much as it is a soul, you know, scratch in the best way. And so I wrote this book that I'm about to launch and my methodology at SimplyBe Agency is really at that apex of who are you in conjunction with what you do. You are more than what you do. You are a fully complex human being that by the way, not everybody is going to like and that's okay. That's actually good. And really setting people free and giving them the permission to live these big bold lives if that's what, you know, big and bold can mean a lot of different things.

But I think at the end of the day we all want our lives to matter and we all want to make a difference. And we all want to live on our own terms. And

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so when we architect a brand, when we in other words tell our stories effectively, which is what branding helps you do, you become pretty unlimited. And life starts to feel a lot more aligned. And so that's really what my business is here to teach and my back story, high level, wave caps for sure. But that's a little bit about me.

Tobi: So good and so much of it that I really, really resonate with. And I want to dig into some of these because the topic that we alluded to earlier, you've hit on many times now which is this topic of authenticity. And really you told me before we started that you're really on a mission to redefine this word 'authenticity'. I'm glad because I agree with you that it's one of the many words that have really become buzzwords, overused, a little clichéd. And I think in that kind of – I don't know – path of these words that we lose the meaning of them or maybe we never really knew it or we thought we knew it.

And I want to talk about that a little bit, redefining authenticity because what resonated with me a lot that you said, several things, stop lying to yourself, completely makes sense to me. I've been on a similar journey. The word 'truth' and even, I mean even that almost needs some clarification in the realm of our brands and social media. Because I hope and I think you're talking about the actual truth, not just the pretty polished only highlight reel. And we love that and that's aspirational and I know a lot of us don't want to look messy.

But even just in what we've been through in the last year and a half, I'd love for you to talk about redefining authenticity even in, you know, or last year or so. Because I've stepped into a whole new version of my truth in the last year as a lot of people have. But I know there's also been a lot of people afraid of that. So I want to get into that conversation. So I say all that to say can you start us on this kind of task of redefining authenticity and let's get into some of the realness of our truths and how they start to show up in our brand and on social and in those spaces where we show up every day.

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Jessica: Yeah. So beautiful. I often say that building your personal brand which has such a stigma, it's about being seen and being famous on Instagram, and influencer marketing. And bullshit, that's a space of it and certainly it gives this space a bad name to some degree. Building a personal brand is an inside job. It's about really doing the work on your own shadow, on becoming as integrated, what I mean by integration I mean owning your greatness as much as owning your darkness and being unafraid to show up as a fully imperfect human being.

Tobi: Wow, just for a second before you go on, let's stop there for a minute because that is what my hope was that you would say and that is so the opposite of what most people are thinking when they're imagining the amazing way they're going to show up on social. And I know there are some extremes of over-sharing in other things. And I know you're not saying be a train wreck necessarily, although I'm sure there's even moments where sometimes that's even appropriate if you're being fully authentic and you're going through something.

So I love this concept of fully integrating your whole self and showing up in that way, the good as much as the bad, owning it. And I think what's so interesting about that is don't you think that so often the reason we're afraid of building a personal brand is what if the not so pretty parts come out? There's a whole fear and kind of shame potential there. But when you do own it like you're saying, it takes all that away in essence because you're the first one to share. It's like you have skeletons in your closet, like you're saying this is who I am completely.

And there's something beautiful about that that to me makes it even easier to show up in a real way once you do it, is that true for you too?

Jessica: A 100%, you know that. And I would just say yes and everybody has not so pretty parts, everybody. So when you show up as your fully integrated authentic self, something really incredible happens. You start to

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give other people the permission to do it too. You create this awakening. You create a domino effect of courage and bravery.

And I actually say in my book, I talk about this idea of authenticity being overused. And my point is my counter to that is hell, yeah, let's celebrate the day that authenticity is so everywhere that it is overused because everyone's showing up as themselves. And how free and liberated because we live, and this is my spiritual side coming out so forgive me, I don't want to go too far down that.

Tobi: Yeah, just go, I mean hey, we're being authentic, so feel free to be yourself.

Jessica: We live in a 3D reality, there is duality, there is separation, there is better, worse, there's Black, white, there is gay, straight, there is fat, skinny, there is fear. There is a perception of separation that has been programmed into us from the minute we were born. And what that breeds in us is not so much a projection and a disdain for everyone else, it's our self-disdain, it's our lack of good enough-ness, it's our lack of self-worth that who we were born as is absolutely magnificent and important.

And that, when we really start to look at the world and that starts with how we look at ourselves through this lens of complete acceptance, and compassion, and love, well, that's then how we see everyone else. And you can create these amazingly deep and rich relationships, connections, opportunities, growth for your business as much as your life.

And I mean just imagine walking into an auditorium where there's 150 people, they all look different, they all have different backgrounds, they're different shapes, sizes, ages, they come from all parts of the world. And they each come up to you and they look you in the eye and they genuinely smile and they give you a hug. And you feel safe and you feel seen. And these aren't weirdoes, these are just people who are heart-centered, authentic human beings that are genuinely interested in who you are and want you to be interested in them too.

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And that's not a utopia, that's an actual reality that we can start to create and it starts with us. It starts with us bringing down those walls against ourselves. And then we do that for everyone around us. And so I call that a 5D reality which is like, honestly like a quantum reality looked at through the lens of love versus fear. It's any situation with love. And it'll heal it. And it starts actually with the way you look at yourself. And that comes with accepting those shadows. I had to really own that I was horrible with money, that I was overly dramatic.

I had a really horrible way of communicating that I was absolutely inexperienced and immature when it came to leadership. I had to look at all of that, work on it, own it, have people give me the feedback and hold up the mirror, by the way, so that I could become that much more activated into who I was actually showing up as. And then use that to share that as wisdom for my community. And that's really where the magic happens, when you're willing to work on you. Like I said, it's the inside job.

Tobi: Yes. I was just about to circle back to that because I agree completely. And I think what you're saying, that I just kind of want to connect the dots here. So what you're saying is, wouldn't it be amazing if we were in a place where authenticity was overused, the actual practice of it? We currently live in a reality where the word is overused but the practice of it is not. And that's I think in listening to what you're saying, is the difference between the people who are afraid to do the work on themselves, or unwilling to do the work on themselves.

And so if you're not doing that then any version of you that's showing up is not the authentic you, it's a façade of you, it's the pretty picture of you, it's the highlight reel of you. And without – and I agree completely, with the people I work with in my business, I teach them that we don't have a business brain and a personal brain, we've got one brain. You can't run a business and not do your personal development, it's impossible because like you said, you'll show up exactly like you described. And I showed up similar to her for many years as well.

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It's the phases we go through. We're immature in so many ways. It's so interesting. So I would like to talk a little bit about some topics that I think are scary for a lot of people. And I'll just use myself as an example, and this is in no way am I saying everyone should show up in this way. But I think it's such a great example and I'd love to hear your perspective on it.

One of the things that was – or several of the things that have been so authentic to me in the last year since Covid and George Floyd's murder and everything we went through, the election. Is that I found myself in a place because of my deep inner work that I could no longer be comfortable separating my politics and my beliefs about human rights, and racism, and antiracism work. I no longer felt like I could keep that separate from my business. And I stepped fully into that last year for the first time and I've never felt more free in my life.

And it's really interesting, and I'm super comfortable with it. I don't have an issue with it myself but it's so interesting to watch other people. So even just as an example on inauguration day which was just not very long before we're recording this, by the time it comes out it'll be a month later.

I think I lost – I can't remember, 600 or 700 followers on Instagram, which felt normal to me and probably appropriate for the size of my Instagram following. And I mentioned it to someone else in my community and they were so shocked and horrified. And I could tell that they were making decisions in their life to not lose followers. And to me it felt like the most authentic response from the humans that were experiencing my authenticity. And I felt nothing but love for the people, who came or who left, or who stayed.

And it almost gives me chills to think about that level of transparency in showing up. But it's been so fascinating to watch, and we could pick any, we could pick Covid, we could pick social justice, we could pick the election, any side that you're on. Because I'm not even saying anyone should pick sides. I'm just saying we could pick any of those. And they all

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bring up such fear and such interesting responses. You should stick to decorating, Tobi. You should stick to business coaching.

And I want you to talk about this because if we're being our most integrated selves as possible, and if behind closed doors at home or in conversations with our mother, or our sister, or our best friend, or our spouse, or our kids, we're having those conversations. But we're not willing to bring them into our personal brands. Is it possible to keep them separate and still be authentic? Talk to us about that whole kind of experience because I know you have to have been going through this same thing at some level yourself.

Jessica: Yes. I have lots to say about this. First of all you're amazing.

Tobi: Thank you.

Jessica: Secondly, I'm going to share a rather cheeky quote that you might see on an Instagram meme but I actually feel like it's a marketing rule. And it's your vibe attracts your tribe. And I don't mean to culturally misappropriate that word. I'm Jewish so I can use that word. But your vibe will attract your tribe. And so what that means to me is back to the spiritual thing, we're all just energy. That is not woo woo actually, that's science. And we're all vibrating at different frequencies.

And when you magnify your frequency, what I mean by that is you step forward into who you truly are and make no apologies for that. And you really embody your truth when you make statements and you show up in a certain way, and you associate yourself to causes and passions, and social issues. When you up-level your frequency and you vibrate at that frequency, whatever that frequency looks to you, two things happen.

The first thing is you're going to repel people who are not at their frequency. People are going to be like, "That is not for me", and they're going to check out. The least they can do is check out, sometimes you get

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hate, sometimes you get judged, sometimes you get screamed at, you get misinterpreted. Okay, but at least you're being you.

Now, the second thing that happens is you become a magnet. You just magnetize more people who are at their frequency, because remember this is all energy and like attracts like, that's science. And so when you are putting yourself out there in the service of your own truth, of course you're going to lose 600 or 700 followers because they're not at that frequency anymore.

Tobi: Right, yeah, or 10,000, I mean depending, however – it depends on how many you have and what your message is, yeah.

Jessica: Exactly. And this is one of my second favorite marketing quotes which is – I mean this is just marketing 101 really. You cannot be everything to everyone or you will be nothing to no one.

Tobi: Yes, that's one of my favorites too.

Jessica: Yeah, so let's do some simple math here. Let's say you had 20,000 followers and you came on and you were like Black Lives Matter, you know, George Floyd's death was atrocious, this needs to change. And 10,000 people unfollowed you and the 10,000 people who stayed with you those are your people. Those are the people that are going to ride with you. Those are the people that are going to invest in you. Those are the people that are going to tell their friends about you. And so don't be afraid. Don't be afraid because not everyone is going to like you. That's just a fact.

And the more you lean into who you really are, you know, I really highly encourage people to think about that, that their message, if you play it safe, you're going to get safe results. If you play it big, you're going to get big results.

Tobi: Well, yeah because what I've noticed and I know you have to have noticed the same thing is that when you play it safe, the loves maybe aren't there, the haters maybe aren't there, but the joy is so dumbed-down. You

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live so small because even when I think about, for all the people who were like, ugh, gross, disgusting, gag, unfollowing, leaving, tagging other people. Did you notice about her? Gosh, I wish I knew her politics before. I even had great comments.

One that made me laugh, one person was like, “I’d like to see you decorate on a socialist budget”, which I had to chuckle about because I’m like that’s actually kind of clever. I mean I kind of chuckled at that one because, whatever. I didn’t take any of them personally, I just, you know, because I could just understand where other people were coming from and they’re not my people. But at the same time the depth of the messages, the relationships, the feedback that came either publicly or in my inbox on the other side is so rich, and so connected, and so deep, and so loving.

And without taking a stand you don’t get the hate but you don’t get the love either, you miss out on both ends of the spectrum I think when you stay in that safe space, right?

Jessica: Yeah. I love that you brought that up. Can I also reflect something back to you as we’re talking that I think is really valuable for your audience? So it’s very clear to me Tobi that you got clear. You have done your own inner work. You embodied these choices and these message points and you got in alignment. And you did this very proactively versus reactively. Now, of course there’s moments where we see something on the internet and we feel the need to chime in and share our shit, and that’s fine.

But someone told me a long time ago and I never forgot this that the internet is not a place to process. So don’t process online out loud, it’s a place for you to go experience your own – do your own work, glean some of your own wisdom. Have the value extracted from that experience, or those feelings, or that darkness, or that upset. And then come back and offer something very valuable to your audience versus being in catharsis with your own feelings out loud on the internet in real time.

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There's a big distinction and that goes for politics. That goes for your break up. That goes with your fight with your best friend. That goes with your argument with your kids, whatever it might be, don't come on the internet and process in real time. As much as it might feel good to just re-share that shit you just saw about Trump and you want to be a part of the conversation. No, it will serve you better in the long run if you take a breath, collect your thoughts and then come online, and equally, if not even more so, unapologetic authentic message.

So that just is a no, I really want to strip from this chat because it's such a good one. And I want to make sure the people who are like, okay, great, I'm fired up now and I'm going to go share how I really feel about this now. But make sure you're not in a space of catharsis, and projection, and emotive energy. And that it's about, what do I really want to say? How is this really going to serve people? How can I communicate in a way that's going to touch people? And start from that baseline. And I just really wanted to...

Tobi: That's such good advice and I will say it is definitely, whether I knew that consciously, it's definitely what I practice because yes, at home I'm sure were – well, not I'm sure, I am 100% sure there were many moments over the last four years that I was yelling profanities at the television in my own bedroom. But you don't see me yelling profanities about things on the internet because it's not adding any value, in my opinion it's only adding noise. And so to me kind of what you're saying is that.

I might be angry, I might be sad, I might be really, really mad and yelling about something and processing it. But you're right, if I'm going to bring something that is my authentic message to my brand or my social, usually it has a purpose behind it. It's not just spewing negativity. No. Sometimes people do that too and I'm not judging at all, but I hear what you're saying.

And I think that without necessarily being conscious of it, yeah, that's important to me because I think for me I feel if I just spew the negativity

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then the message gets lost. And these are really, really important messages that I really need people to hear.

Jessica: Bingo, exactly. You said it. That's a beautiful point. Yeah, I want your audience to take that one away, that's so important right now.

Tobi: So good. Okay, so for the people who are like okay, well, that all sounds either amazing or it sounds horrible, whichever. But either one of those I don't feel prepared to show up in that way. How do people start and – I mean because it's not like we expect everybody to have never said anything publicly before about any of this and now they should start this afternoon and have a daily dissertation on their, whatever belief system. You have to work your way into showing up this way. So how do people start?

How do you start, because you mentioned words like courage and bravery, and it definitely takes those? It's uncomfortable work that we're doing. I would say though already by doing the personal work in your own kind of space and container and then bringing it to the world helps for sure. But what advice would you give people to start showing up in a more authentic way?

Jessica: Read my book.

Tobi: Number one. And I think that this comes out, I feel like this comes out the day of your book release or two days later. It's right around there so it should be out when we're talking about this. And remind them the name of your book real quick too.

Jessica: Absolutely. It's called Be, b.e. period and the sub line is A No-Bullshit Guide to Increasing Your Self Worth and Your Net Worth by Simply Being Yourself.

Tobi: Okay, so read your book, number one and then?

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Jessica: And then number two, I mean I say that in jest, but no, really go buy it. But the truth is I wrote the book so that this work was available to everybody because most people feel like they're either going to sit stuck in their own vacuum or they're going to hire a very expensive life coach, or business coach, or agency, and I mean hey, all day, it's why I have a business.

Tobi: Me too.

Jessica: Right. I also don't feel like this work should be a secret and understanding how to tell our story and communicate our authenticity. I mean unlocking your authenticity is one thing and the book is going to help you do that. But communicating the story and showing up with that authenticity is a whole other piece that I teach. And I think that really, it's really tough to do this work by yourself, nonetheless whether you read my book or not. So I'll give a little exercise from the book away that I open the book with, it's one of the first things I ask the reader to do.

And it's essentially identifying three to five people in your life, they are ideally people who know you the best, so a partner, a friend, a mentor, a really great client. So try and find a mix of professional and personal relationships and ask them all to help you with this exercise. And if they love you they're all going to be totally down for it. And have them write their responses back in email form or text so that it's written in written form. And I want you to ask them all the same exact question which is what is my unique intrinsic value?

And it's meant to be a little esoteric in fact because your friends and colleagues are going to scratch their head and be like, "What does that even mean?" And then they're going to really think about it. And what's beautiful about this exercise is it's really hard for us, I believe, as a human species to own what makes us amazing. We're not really overly confident. And if you are you're seen as cocky so people are like, "I'd rather be on the spectrum of too humble than too confident."

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But the truth is you're amazing. You have greatness inside of you that it's hard to shine a mirror at yourself and say it, but when people who love you do it for you. I've seen people's lives change. I've seen people break down and cry reading this feedback. And typically you start to see some consistencies. People who know you the best are like, "You're an amazing listener." "No one is the type of friend that you are." "I've never seen someone come up with ideas as fast as you can", whatever it might be.

And that then starts to lay the clay as I say, the foundation for what becomes this authentic message that is about what you give your value, for what's unique and intrinsic to you and to you alone, which is your humanity. And those two things combined ideally really help to affirm you that okay, this is how I'm showing up anyway so why not show up intentionally on the internet or on social media, or in my business, with that much more clarity and self-awareness. And so I would start there. I mean I guess that I'm going to be a broken record, it's an inside job, it's not an outside projection.

So before we can think about what's the next Instagram post going to say or the next blog I'm going to write, or the next email I'm going to send, it's really about what do you want to own about yourself? What makes you feel the most you? What lights you up? What can you absolutely agree with as far as your amazing-ness? And then put that out into the world and see what you get back. And the more you rinse and repeat that the more affirmations you get from the world around you, which then innately boosts your confidence and helps you show up that much more authentically.

And stop giving a shit what people think of you. I mean it's like a domino effect.

Tobi: Well, yeah, and I think what word has come to me a lot in the last year personally is a resoluteness, I mean it's even different than confidence. It's like an assurance that I know what I believe and what I stand for. And I think that what you're saying is bringing that up for me again of when you do that work, even though it might feel uncomfortable

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because nobody loves to have somebody send back a hateful message or to feel rejection.

But I think that confidence is even deeper almost than the word 'confidence', for me when you've done your own inner work because you're so sure of it. You don't need everybody else to be sure of it. And I think that's a whole other level of hitting that authenticity that you're like if no one else ever agrees with me I still know this is where I stand and what I believe. And something about that is a whole other level.

The other thing that was coming to mind is I know a lot of people, especially people doing antiracist work or really showing up in that conversation about racism or social justice. Everybody's afraid to be performative, and I think at the same level one of my friends and my coach, Trudi, that's in the DER space, said to me recently, she said, "Just the fact that you are noticing and being careful about not being performative, means you're not performative because you've thought it through and you've thought through why you're showing up."

And so again that's just all signaling that personal work. And so I think that's – so any fears on any side of this what I'm saying is what I'm hearing from you and what's been my experience is those start to fall away just because you've made those conscious decisions, right?

Jessica: Yes. I love this conversation and I think it's so – I mean it's obviously so relevant but it's so needed. And I think that we're two white women talking about this. And I have learned on my own journey that there is no they're there, I'm never going to have – I'm never going to fully understand and I'm never going to have it be right.

And I just – and yet as long as I'm on the journey, there have been women, people, white people who have been studying this work for years. And then George Floyd happened and okay, so you might be on the 172nd mile of understanding antiracism. And I might be on the 5th mile, but at least we're

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on the road together. And there is no destination. It's a lifelong unlearning. And we should celebrate and clap for each other.

And one thing that I have obviously really realized, you know, I was in a personal branding session for a corporation and it was a bunch of women, there were like 25 women on the Zoom and a lot of them were not even showing their faces. They were on just audio.

And I was talking about how to build your message. And I was talking about how to show up authentically you. And then a woman who was a woman of color asked a question and said, "This is all great, Jessica, but when women of color in the workplace don't feel safe in the first place for a myriad of reasons, how are we supposed to show up authentically ourselves?"

Tobi: It feels like a privilege to be able to show up authentically, yes.

Jessica: Exactly. And to be honest with you, Tobi, I'm not a DEI expert, I'm coming on there as a personal branding expert if you will. And I don't know where I got it but my response to that was like, "It's not your job to make you feel safe. It's all of the white women on this call, job to make you feel safe to be who you are. You don't need to empower yourself. We need to create spaces that empower you." And a lot of the women again, weren't showing their faces and I didn't really know how many women on the call were there.

And I'm not sharing this to give myself a gold star, I'm just sharing when we come from that place, the way that it can be received was extremely clarifying for me. So at the very end of the call, we ended this for our workshop and I was like, "Does anybody have any last final words?" And all of these women popped on their screens, I could see them, they showed their cameras. And it was like five or six women of color. And they all were like, "Thank you." They all were like, "This was a really wonderful workshop and I really appreciated this."

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And even in the moment when I said that my palms were sweating. I'm like am I saying the right thing right now?

Tobi: Yeah, can I say this? Is it strong? All of that, yeah.

Jessica: Exactly. And I just think being in the dance, you and I have in this dialog in and of itself, and being willing to share this on your podcast, this is the work. And it exists in a multitude of ways. And I've just been creating a space in our business where people feel safe and it's not their job to make themselves feel safe, it's ours.

Tobi: Right. And as you said earlier, whatever those causes are that you believe in, because it's not just racism, although that one's extremely important. For me, I'm doing a ton of work on body acceptance and how I show up and that has a lot of roots and patriarchy. And there's just so many things we can all unfold. I'm doing a lot of work personally about religion and all of those things. I was laughing, I was thinking this week.

I was like I'm going to do a podcast just by myself soon that's just titled basically talking about all the things you were taught never to talk about, which is religion, politics, all of those things. And I think what's so fascinating to me, the reason I wanted to bring this up for you today is to me just being told not to talk about those things is inauthentic because the whole point was to keep people quiet, not make anybody feel uncomfortable, only show the highlight reel. And it goes back to what we were saying.

And not that we always have to be talking about that either, because I can also just talk about making a pretty room or cooking something for supper or how to have a beautiful party. And they can live and coexist together because they live in me and coexist together. But I think to your whole concept of redefining authenticity, if we're not willing to bring that stuff to the table we can't truly be authentic because business is politics, business is social justice and racism, all of it, like you said, integrated. I love that word 'integrated'.

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So thank you for going there with me because I think that it's just critical to this conversation in my opinion, I mean I always of course I'm a little self-indulgent when I have guests because I'm like I want to know what they think about this, of what I've been through. But I also make the assumption, if I've been through it or been thinking it that other people are too and so yeah.

Jessica: 1,000%.

Tobi: So any last bits of wisdom besides – we're going to make sure they know where to find you and your book. And you can tell us that too. Do you hang out on Instagram most or somewhere else, and then just any kind of other words of wisdom to help people as they start this journey?

Jessica: Again, I'm going to just go to my spiritual side and if you're listening to Tobi's show you're clearly a really incredible human because like attracts like and you're an amazing human with a really heart centered message and platform filled with love. And if that is you as well then I believe that you are of the light. There's a lot of darkness on this planet right now and I mean it always has been but we're entering a new paradigm. I believe we're becoming more conscious. We're really stepping into ourselves. We're recognizing how alike we actually all are.

And we need to remember that in ourselves, that we need to own our light and the world needs our light. And I sort of look at it like a candle to a candle flame, one candle flame can light thousands. And no person is too small to change the world. We all touch people. You change the world one person at a time. And so showing up your authentic you isn't just an opportunity that you can say, maybe or maybe not. It's actually you're obligation and responsibility. And so that's my final parting words I guess.

And it really is, remember that, you weren't put here by accident, you came to planet Earth for an assignment to evolve.

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Tobi: Yes, I believe that so much. And that is the exact tug I had when I couldn't stay quiet anymore, even though that I looked back and was like how could I have been quiet in the past, in whatever moment that I started showing up differently. I had always been that person but bringing it to the world, I felt that level. And I've felt many times and I know you have too, a responsibility to help women in business, a responsibility for other things.

But I think you're so right and I think paying attention, don't you, to those little gut feelings, those intuitions, those tugs and listening to them because they're part of that process of showing up.

Jessica: So true.

Tobi: So good. Okay, so where do people find you, Instagram?

Jessica: Yeah, Instagram is great, Jessica Zweig is my handle at Jessica Zweig, just my name, jessiczweig.com is my website. By the time this launches you can go pick up my book. I've got some really amazing programs that go along with my book. You can check out my business, simplybeagency.com. And yeah, I'm really easy to find, I obviously walk my own talk and put myself out there in a big way. And I'm very yellow, if you like the color yellow, well, you can't miss the color yellow, so I'm very bright.

Tobi: I do.

Jessica: Yeah, I've noticed that, I love it. And this is just such a treat, Tobi, thank you for having me on your show.

Tobi: You're so welcome. I loved it too and I will look forward to interacting with you some more, seeing you out on Instagram and hopefully we'll connect again soon, but thanks for this beautiful conversation. And I can't wait to get your book myself.

Jessica: Thank you.

Tobi: You're welcome, thank you, thank you.

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So are you ready to be authentic? Is that more than you're bargaining for, this integrated version of yourself? I think that is such a beautiful goal and as we talked about in this episode, I don't think that there's a place you arrive, whether it's on the journey to authenticity or just the journey of life. I don't think that there is a there or a destination so much as the work and the path as we talked about today.

But my hope and I know it's Jessica's hope is that this conversation moves you one step closer to really owning and stepping into the most real, the most integrated, the most authentic version of yourself. So yeah, and let us know. Let us know what that work is like. It's not easy but I will tell you, it's worth it, living the fullness of a more integrated life, I mean with the highs and the lows is just so much more fulfilling than when we're afraid to step into our full self.

So let Jessica and I know, find us out on Instagram. We would love to hear from you. I know she would love to hear from you about this episode or if you read her book. And I will be back here next week where we really kind of continue this conversation in a way. We really go deeper in social media with my guest next week. But it's very much aligned with this episode. So if you like this one, get ready for that one, you're going to love it too. I'll see you back here next week with another great episode of the *Design You* podcast. Bye for now.

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.