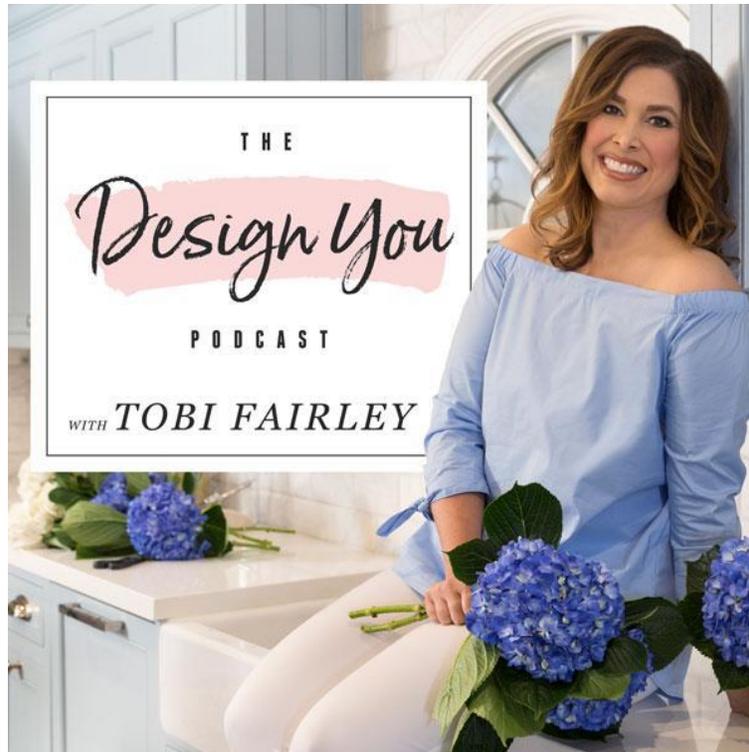


Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Tobi Fairley

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 165.

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.

Happy Thursday my friends or whatever day you're listening to this podcast on. The day I'm recording it is a Thursday and the day it's going to go live is a Thursday. So I'm just going to go ahead and say happy Thursday. I hope you're having a great one.

I do want to give you a little heads up in this episode. So occasionally I drop a little salty language around here, but not too much. But today's episode has a little bit more than usual. So if that is offensive to you or you're used to listening out loud when maybe your kids are around, you might want to. Have a heads up on this one that you're going to hear a little bit more language in this one than maybe you're used to.

So now that we have that squared away, let's talk about the episode and my guest Amy E. Smith. So Amy is a certified and credentialed life coach and hypnotherapist. She's a masterful speaker. She's super funny as you'll hear today. And she's a personal empowerment expert. She's the founder of thejoyjunkie.com, and she is really into empowering women to really move to a place of radical personal empowerment and self-worth. All sounds amazing, right?

Now let me give you a little sneak peek into what you're going to hear from us today. You probably need it. I think everyone is guilty of what we're talking about today whether we like to admit it or not. We're talking about people pleasing. We're talking about worrying what others think of us. We're talking about comparing ourselves to others, and we're talking about procrastination. Guilty as charged, right? I definitely am. I would love to say I'm not guilty of any of those, but it would absolutely be untrue.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Now the good news is Amy defines these things for us in a way maybe you haven't heard it described before. And she gives us some great insight and solutions and practices that we can put in place to move to a more authentic and honest and real version of ourselves. So this one could be a note taker. I think it actually is. So you might want to grab a pen and paper and get ready to enjoy this amazing episode with my guest Amy E. Smith.

Tobi: Hey Amy. Welcome to the *Design You* podcast. I am really, really looking forward to this conversation today.

Amy: Yay! Tobi I'm excited to hang out. Thanks for having me.

Tobi: This is good stuff. So we're about to get into the topics of people pleasing, what others think of you, and comparing yourself to others. Which I think are things that every human on the planet needs to talk about, need to become aware of their beliefs about it. Before we do that, why don't you set the scene a little bit about by telling everybody kind of who you are and what you do. So they're like, "Who is this lady telling me these truth bombs and why should I be listening to her?"

Amy: Right. "Why the hell do I need to listen to you?"

Tobi: Exactly.

Amy: Exactly. So my name is Amy Smith, and I am a life coach and a hypnotherapist. I've been working in the personal development space for well over a decade, almost 15 years. What I do is I essentially break it down between two major components, an internal component and an external. The internal is helping women genuinely access and believe in their own intrinsic self-worth, believing in that they matter, believing in their own value, that they're deserving. We use different semantics around it, but it's essentially that enoughness. That worthiness.

Tobi: Totally.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Amy: Then the external piece is okay. If I now am bolstered in my own sense of self-worth and my own value, how do I now communicate that with the outside world? So what does it look like to actually establish a boundary, to say no, to have difficult conversations without being riddled with guilt? What are the actual phrases, the wording?

How do you ask an adult child to move out of the house? How do you tell your family that you don't believe in the religion you were raised in? How do you ask for a divorce? How do you sever a relationship with a client articulately without lying and making a bunch of bullshit excuses?

Tobi: Yes, yes.

Amy: So that's what I do in my world.

Tobi: Oh it's so good. So many things already are coming in my head. I'm just like nodding over here as you can see. I'm just thinking like yes, people are afraid to tell the truth because it's always conflict avoidance. I don't want to hurt someone's feelings. All of this, like you said, BS that's constantly in our head that keeps us from showing up in a more honest way. So you're speaking my language. So let's jump in. Shall we start with people pleasing?

Amy: Sure.

Tobi: Okay, tell us about people pleasing. Like how do you define people pleasing? Let's just dig right into what the hell do we do about it when we figure out we're people pleasing even though we thought we weren't a people pleaser.

Amy: That's right.

Tobi: Talk to us.

Amy: Well first of all, I think something that's really important to understand is when you think of the term people pleaser, we usually have something that we kind of envision. That's someone who is really meek, who is maybe

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

quiet. The doormat gets walked all over, never speaks up for themselves. So I like to expand that definition of people pleasing to include any time there's a sacrifice of self because you are so highly invested in the opinions of other people or what other people may think.

Tobi: Yes. So good. Yes.

Amy: So if you're concerned about walking your dog and what other people are going to think about what sort of outfit you have on, that is an element of people pleasing. You are concerned of your perception.

Tobi: Yes. Yeah. Absolutely.

Amy: So I think it's important to recognize that if you are curbing who you are in any way. If you are putting up a façade. If you are putting up a veneer. If you are twisting, contouring. If you are silencing the things that you are offended by, let's say, in certain company, that is an element of people pleasing.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: But what I think is really important for people to understand is that we develop that behavioral tactic as a defensive mechanism. We don't do that just for the fuck of it. We do it because it's something that we've adopted usually from our family of origin or from our early life that we learned, "Okay, this is a way that I can stay safe."

Tobi: Yeah. Even a lot of cultural things. Like me from the south, you're taught from early on especially as a female don't make other people uncomfortable. Don't talk about these certain conversations. These would be inappropriate. Even that you should wear a certain thing.

I was taught you don't leave your house without your lipstick on. You don't even really go to the mailbox. Even that is people pleasing if it's impacting you that you are like I've got to put my lipstick on. Not because I want to. Not because it makes me feel better. Not because I like how it feels, but

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

because I would not dare let someone else see me at the grocery store looking this way, right. That's still people pleasing. Yes.

Amy: Yeah, absolutely.

Tobi: Yeah. Before we started, I think it's really interesting. We were kind of chatting a little bit about this. And you said one of the problems with the discussion about people pleasing is that a lot of people don't associate or identify with that description you gave earlier. So they just assume they're not a people pleaser.

I think it's really important for me to even say what I said to you, which is I'm like Enneagram eight, outspoken, good at getting my needs met. My family would even at times think that I'm not sensitive or soft enough about other people's feelings or whatever. Yet all the time every day at some point in the day I find myself having either an urge or following through with a people pleaser type action. I even work on this with my coach a lot. Like maybe around family. I see it in all sorts of instances.

So can you speak a little bit more to like if we're like oh I'm sure not that. Because I'm telling you if I'm one, I think everybody is one at some level. So what's a better way to start identifying not, "I am a people pleaser," but, "I practice people pleasing behaviors." And how would I start to recognize what some of those are?

Amy: Yeah, that's a great question. I think largely it's about starting to watch what your instinct is or what you would want to do versus what you end up doing because of some sort of response that you feel is mandatory.

So a perfect example of that is what you were talking about with the lipstick. Am I putting this lipstick on because? What's my come from? What's my motivation? Am I motivated from a place of self-love and personal empowerment or taking care of my physical vessel or adornment or motivated from this place of I genuinely love showing up in that way?

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Or am I motivated about an archaic perspective about what women need to look like? Is it rooted in something that my mom always told me? So now I feel guilty if I don't do this thing because it's a massive should. What is the motivating factor behind your behavior?

So I think something that is really key to understand about this is if you have any of these tendencies, congratulations. You're normal. We all do. Like I mentioned before, it's a defensive mechanism. It's a way in which we cope.

So a little bit of primitive history around it. If we look at, for example, Maslow's hierarchy of needs. One of our primary human needs is the sense of belonging. So if we talk about our ancestors in the hunter and gatherer days. If you did not belong to a specific group of individuals, that meant you were going to die. That meant you were not going to survive.

So now that we're a much more evolved species, we still have that same defense and same deep-seated thought that I need to have all these people's approval in order to survive. So what that looks like now is if somebody doesn't like your design. Or if you launch a new website and you get some critique from your family. We now on a subconscious level, I know this is going to sound incredibly hyperbolic, but we think we're going to die. That's what's happening on the subconscious. It's going, "You're in danger." It sends in the fear response, the stress signals. "Oh my gosh. There's a threat. There's a threat."

So how do we curb that threat? We people please. We acquiesce. We twist. We change things. We try to fit into a mold in order to make everybody else happy.

One of the roots of this, also talking about sort of our biological makeup, is that it's rooted in our primary fear responses. So everybody's heard of fight, flight, freeze, right? Well, there's another one called fawn that has been a little bit more newer on the psychology scene. The idea behind fawn is that if you were in front of an aggressor or a captor or a tiger coming after you,

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

fawn is where you try to befriend the aggressor. Where you try to make friends with the tiger. Like, “Here tiger, tiger. Don’t eat me.” Right? It’s where you are trying to placate or acquiesce.

Now, the modern iteration of that when we’re not dealing with impending doom like a mountain lion attacking us or somebody holding us up at gunpoint but rather a critic about a design we created. Or a client doesn’t necessarily like what we came up with. We now go into that fear response of, “I feel threatened.” It’s not necessarily as severe as like I was talking about with the mountain lion, but the modern iteration of fawn is people pleasing.

Tobi: Yeah. So interesting. So interesting. Something that’s coming to mind. One of my clients that I work with, recently I was talking with her and we were coaching on just some things that she’s become aware of. She said, “Why is it that when I’m with my clients and I truly love my job, but when I’m with them I feel like I’m kind of always just trying to make them happy.

“Then when I leave, the minute I get in the car I’m like angry and mad. Even though I was like, ‘Sure, it’s fine. We don’t mind redoing that.’ We’ll get you another selection or whatever. I go to the car and I’m like furious. I’m like my job sucks and I hate my life. Like what’s happening there?”

She wasn’t able to recognize what was happening. I said I think it’s because essentially people pleasing. I prefer myself when I’m talking to myself to call it lying because it gets my attention more. I’m like I think it’s because you’re not being truthful with your own needs. So if you’re constantly tamping those down, they’re going to come back up in other ways in other areas as frustration or anger or resentment or some level of aggression or self judgement.

She was even saying how it then perpetuates with like her husband and her judging him. She’s like, “So really all of that is because I’m afraid to be

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

honest and speak my truth?" I'm like I think so. I really think so. So when you hear that, what's coming up for you?

Because I think people have this all the time. We have like our outside persona, right, and the one where we try to be palatable. Then we have the behind closed doors, which is far different. We can't imagine that one being public. It's probably not the one we want to be public. It's like angry and mean or whatever. So I think maybe part of that is why people can't really integrate how to show up in a truthful way. Because they're like, "If I let that out, everybody would hate me."

I try to help people understand well you wouldn't feel that angry if you were being honest more often. Can you help us connect those dots? Because I think the thing that makes people not show up honestly is they're afraid of confrontation. They don't trust that they can show up in a way that's like, I don't know, at some level responsible or kind. Not a total asshole. How do you integrate that?

Amy: Well, I think you brought up a couple of things that are really important. One of them is that we have equated in our society that if I speak up or I give voice to something then I'm being an asshole and I'm being a dick, right. So we label very assertive women as bitches.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: Fortunately now we're reclaiming that moniker and saying, "Fuck yes I am." But I think for so long, and this was my struggle. I thought that it was either or. That it was either I'm completely passive and I let everybody walk all over me, or I'm this raging bitch who's just acerbic and biting and adversarial.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: So I think especially with who we are talking to right now, which is people who are creative. People who are entrepreneurs, who are authorities in their own medium. You have to give yourself credence for you

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

being the authority, right. So prior to working in personal development, I was a makeup artist for many years. That is a notorious way in which people have an idea about something that they want to see, but they are asking for very conflicting things, right.

Tobi: Sounds like interior design.

Amy: I'm sure it's very, very similar. Like I want it totally natural but super smokey and a bright red lip but totally muted. You're like okay, I'll get right on that.

Tobi: That's great.

Amy: So I think there's also something to be understood about sensory acuity. Who you are working with, are they extremely visual? Are they auditory? Are they kinesthetic? Because there are certain people who will never ever ever be able to describe what it is that they're looking for. So that is a little bit more of a logistic sort of thing.

What I think is really important is first of all recognizing that you are the authority, and that you can speak to your authority and to their desires with kindness and grace. You don't have to be an asshole. You can say, "I absolutely love what you're going for here or I love that you're so passionate about multiple textures. Here's what that might lend itself towards. Your eye is going to go towards this, and then you're going to have this competing issue over here."

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: So you explain the reality of what their choices might lead to instead of just doing that stupid old adage of the customer is always right. Now they're not. That's why they hired a fucking professional.

Tobi: Right. Exactly, yes.

Amy: So they're not, but they also really need to hear you speak from your expertise.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: You got into this business and created this business because you have this artistic flair and this creative spirit. That you are good at this.

Tobi: And you probably have a lot of experience that they don't have. You've learned lessons the hard way. Like there's a million reasons and things that add to your credibility and your authority, right.

Amy: That's right. I would also say this is something that I've learned a lot just in the work that I do in hypnosis and the work that I do with my clients. Not everybody sees pictures in their mind, right? Some people don't.

Like if I were to say hold your hand out in front of your face and then close your eyes, can you see your hand? Most creatives absolutely can. They can see pictures. Their sensory acuity is visual. Now a lot of people who hire creatives do not have that visual representation in their minds. They are far more auditory or kinesthetic or what we also call auditory digital which is not quite as common.

So, for instance, if I'm working with somebody in hypnosis who is not very visual, I'm going to do all things that are related to sound. So if I take them on a guided imagery, it's going to be about how things feel and how things sound. So if you're working in your medium and you're expecting that client to have these visual cues, they may not, right.

Tobi: That's so interesting. Yes.

Amy: So set up your systems as an authority to say, "What do you think of this look? Of what look?" Have them bring photos to you so that you're not just assuming that what they're thinking of in their mind is actually going to be correct or look any semblance of normal.

So we think part of it is the logistics piece. Can I set it up so that we're communicating in a way that's more congruent? But then also really understanding that you're the authority on this.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Tobi: Yeah.

Amy: And you can speak to those things with kindness and grace.

Tobi: Actually isn't it more kind to just be honest? Like I love what you're describing, but we can't do it on the budget that you're suggesting. Like it's so much more kind to be honest on the front end than to lead people to think that they're going to get what you told them you could all the while knowing it's not possible. Then they're disappointed at the end. So I think we confuse kindness in the realm of people pleasing sometimes.

Amy: Yes.

Tobi: Because it's like we may not be what you perceive to be unkind at this very moment, but sooner or later if you're not being honest, it's going to feel that way because the truth is always going to come to light in one way or another.

Amy: It is so true. I used to have a friend who I would ask her hey, are you coming to my party? Are you going to make it? She'd be like, "Oh I'm going to try. Yeah, I think so. Yeah." I would get so attached to that response that was total and utter bullshit. She never intended to come. She never ever did come. Then she would text me last minute, which is like the people who are avoiding conversation at all costs. So then they do more harm on the backend.

Tobi: Yes. 100% yes. Wait until right before your party or in the middle of it to disappoint you instead of giving you a couple of days to get your head around it.

Amy: Just shoot me straight from the fucking beginning. Yeah. So I think.

Tobi: So interesting.

Amy: There's something that I say all the time. Which is constantly putting everybody else's wants, needs, and opinions in front of your own is poison disguised as nobility. We think it's so noble to be like, "Sure, yes. Okay. I

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

can't wait." It's not. You're lying. You're being a liar. What sort of people do you want to attract in your life, in your business, in your family? You want to attract authenticity. I've never met someone who was like, "I want to attract a bunch of liars." You need to be the person you want to attract.

Tobi: Yes. As you were talking about that nobility, I think I see it often. Since I'm a business owner and I employ people, I see it with other business owners being afraid to fire someone or afraid to give people honest feedback about the job they're doing and thinking that that's kind. Again, what I've learned is it's way more kind to release someone in a nice, appropriate, but honest way and let them go on to something that's better suited for them or for you to find the right person.

So I know you help people with difficult conversations. What's the actual approach? How do we get ourselves in that headspace where we're like, "Let's just do this way sooner than later. Let's handle things when they come up. Let's learn how to have these hard conversations." Letting someone go, breaking up with someone, telling someone their budget's too small. Whatever those things are, how do we do that in a way that is both honest and I guess kind? I don't even almost like to use the word kind because everybody's perception. Teach us how we can do that better.

Amy: Well, I think your first item of business is I always operate under this idea of at least giving people the opportunity to be what you need. So what I mean by that is if you have an assistant who's working in your company and helping you with things. Instead of giving clear and concise feedback and being very deliberate about this is what I am looking for. Instead of doing that, you go to your mastermind and you bitch about your stupid assistant.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: Or your coach gets an earful, or your spouse gets an earful.

Tobi: Your mom.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Amy: You just go, “Fuck it. I’ll do it myself.” You just do it yourself and you’re not giving that clear concise feedback. That now is on you that you did not at least give them the opportunity to rise to the occasion. You didn’t give them the opportunity to be what you need. So I would say first of all, take a step back and assess the situation. Have I given them absolutely every criterion that they needed in order to meet the objective?

Tobi: Yeah.

Amy: Yes or no.

Tobi: Because most people generally want to do a good job for you. That’s why they’re there. So you’re robbing them from that opportunity to grow, to excel. To me, that’s the ultimate unkindness is not letting them step in and do a good job because you weren’t willing to be honest.

Amy: But far more often we see somebody not do a good job, and we feel like the victim. So it’s so much easier for us to make them wrong and sever the situation than to actually have a tough conversation. This is why people ghost in relationships. This is why people just stop being available for relationships. This is why your sister just stops calling. It’s because we are so afraid of actually asking for what we want and communicating what the definitive need is that we’re willing to just be like, “Okay, cut our losses. Let’s go try somebody else.”

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: That is your responsibility. That is on you. That is not a series of people who just can't get their shit together. All right? You need to at least give them the opportunity to be what you need. Then how many times am I going to ask for this very specific request? Now, I also advocate that you are as clear and as specific as possible.

So, for example, let’s say you have somebody who’s working for you and you tell them, “I need you to take more initiative.” What the hell does that mean? Right?

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Tobi: Exactly.

Amy: They might think, “Okay she wants me to answer emails earlier in the morning or she wants me to do more outreach, or she wants me to have more.” Who knows what? That is up for so much interpretation. That’s like telling your partner I need more romance. What does that mean? Is that more dates? Is that notes around the house? Is that sex? What?

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: So you have to be very, very clear about when I say take initiative, here are a couple of examples. I would love to see you contact this many businesses to see if they are looking for interior design work. Four businesses a week that have a minimum 50 employees. You know what I mean?

Tobi: Yeah. Like you're very explicit.

Amy: Yes, yes. So that’s one thing is am I being crystal clear? The second is how many times am I willing to repeat myself and ask for the same thing?

Tobi: Yes, yes. Because most people quit after the first time, right? They're like that whole kind of fear of failure. Well I tried. It didn’t work. I'm not going to put myself through this again kind of thing.

Amy: Yeah. It’s the exact same thing in boundaries. So if you asked somebody, let’s say an in-law, to stop feeding your child a bunch of McDonalds or a bunch of shit you don’t want your child to eat. And they breach that boundary, then you have to circle back and enforce, right. That’s the same thing when you're leading a team. You have to go back and say, “Hey, remember when we talked about reaching out to companies to market? Remember when we talked about initiative and I gave you five different examples? I meant it. I actually meant that.”

Tobi: Yeah.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Amy: So talk to me about what's coming up for you. Are you having struggles? Are you having any oppositions? Are you giving them sound training? Are you pointing them to resources? Like what is your responsibility in the matter?

Tobi: Yeah, yeah. Even what are you investing financially? I found a lot of times, like you said, like getting training. We just expect people to A, read our mind, and B, without any resources, money spent training, questions asked. All of that stuff, right.

Amy: Are you making yourself available? Do you have time to meet with them and go through stuff? Another thing I do with all of my team is I ask them from the beginning how do you like to be spoken to? Are there any things that are highly triggering for you that you do or don't want me to say?

My best friend and I, we had a business together for a long time. I am far more emotional than she is. So if she would respond in text, which we have no paraverbal skills. We have no non-verbal skills when we're reading just text. It's a very small amount of how we communicate. It comes across incredibly curt and rude, and I'm like uh. Especially if it's a task that I needed to get done.

So I told her, "I need you to do some emojis. I need you to do some XOXO. I need you to say at least one line of I hope your day is going well. I love you so much. I love running this business with you. One line of kindnesses, some fucking emojis." But you have to ask for what you need, right. She doesn't need that.

Tobi: Yeah, so good.

Amy: So being clear with your team or your partner or your kids.

Tobi: Your daughter. That reminds me of my 15-year-old daughter who thinks sometimes I'm just all business. She's the same way. She's like, "I need a little more than that right now today."

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Amy: Yes.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: How do you like to be spoken to? You can use things like Enneagram or Myers Briggs or whatever to figure out, “Oh okay. This is how somebody communicates.”

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: As far as having tough conversations, there are so many other things leading up to that that need your care in order to see is this truly about an ultimatum at this point? Or is this more just getting this communication stated?

Tobi: Yeah. How many steps are between those two things? Because it’s usually not step one started, step two ultimatum if you really want to create the result you're looking for, right?

Amy: That’s right.

Tobi: There's a whole continuum of getting from one place to the next. Yeah.

Amy: Definitely. So I think though once you do get to a point where you need to have a really difficult conversation whether this is I want a separation. Whether this is letting somebody go in your company. No matter what it is. Starting off by first of all asking for the time to talk. Requesting a sit down. Nobody likes being caught off guard. Nobody likes just being like, “Hey we need to talk. Do you have a minute?” Like give them a heads up.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: “I really want to go through some of this stuff around that latest project, or I would love to talk to you about some of this stuff that came up in therapy. I would love to share with you some things that have been really

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

on my mind.” Whatever you do, don’t say we need to talk. Say do you have a couple of minutes? Do you have a half an hour? When would be a good time? Be respectful of that other person’s time and space.

Tobi: Yeah.

Amy: Then start with gratitude and owning your shit. Okay? So start by saying, “Thank you so much for taking this time to talk. I really, really appreciate it.” Just very easy gratitude. Then if you need to own anything, right. So maybe it’s something that you’ve been really bothered by one of your team members that they’ve been doing or saying.

You might start by saying, “You know, there's been a couple of things that have come up that I've found myself starting to get into a resentful place. I realized that I had not brought up any of that stuff with you. That was wildly unfair. If the situation was reversed, I would want you to bring it to me.”

Tobi: So good.

Amy: “So first of all, I just have to say I'm so sorry. I apologize that this is the first time you're hearing about it, and I've been thinking about it for 30 days.”

Tobi: That is so good. How often do you hear people own something at that level? It’s so rare. But that is so good. Because it immediately just arms them and doesn’t push them into the defensive if you're already coming from that place. Yes.

Amy: You know that whatever emotion that you are going through, you will likely elicit the other emotion from the other person. So, for example, if you are driving along and you accidentally cut somebody off and they are like, “fuck you,” screaming and yelling. Your instinct is not to go, “Oh you know what? I'm really going to work on that.” Right? Our instinct is to match the emotion and be like, “I was just trying to pull off!”

Tobi: Yeah, totally.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Amy: We match the emotion. So if you sit down and you engage with this person and your first instinct is one of vulnerability.

Tobi: Yes, and not blame. You're not blaming and you're not pointing fingers and you're not judging, which is where most of us want to start.

Amy: That's right. You're actually owning your piece in the matter. You will be incredibly vulnerable, which means you are far more likely to elicit vulnerability from the other person.

Tobi: So good.

Amy: Now you go in guns blazing, you go in with all this armor, you are likely going to be met with defensiveness or complete shutdown. Because what is that? That's fight or flight. They feel attacked. They're in their stressed response.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: If you are coming at them from a more vulnerable place, it's not fail proof for sure, but your chances of eliciting vulnerability from that other person are far greater if you show up in that way.

Tobi: So good.

Amy: So think about if I were to have this conversation, who would I want on the other side delivering that? Be that person.

Tobi: Yes. So good. So much just gold there. Okay. So a lot about people pleasing. It's so helpful, but I think there's another side to what people think about me that shows up a little bit different. I mean it technically I'm sure is people pleasing, but the one that shows up more like hiding. Not going live on Instagram, not having my picture taken, not doing a video. Like that's a whole other side to what people think about. Not wanting to put my work out.

Amy: Yes.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Tobi: Not wanting to charge what I need to charge. Can we talk about that version of what people think of me? Which is still a layer of the people pleasing, but I think it's one that's harder to recognize as people pleasing. And more maybe fits under what we might call imposter syndrome or any of that kind of fear. Let's talk about that because I see that come up a lot as well.

Amy: Yes. Okay so I think there's a couple of things that are happening here. One, there's a self-worth issue. Me being actually a valuable person to take up space in this industry, in this school, wherever you are. Just your own, "I have value. I have something to offer."

The other is competency on whatever medium that you're using. Like am I skilled at video? Do I know how to deliver a poignant message? Do I know how to say something in 30 seconds really sharply? So sometimes it's a matter of straight up logistics. Do I know how to operate this? Do I know what to do essentially?

That can all very much be learned, right. But a lot of times what we do is we get stuck in the I don't knows. We go, "Oh but I don't know TikTok. I don't know Instagram. I don't know how to send that to my list. I don't know how to do an opt in."

Tobi: This is hard. This is so hard. Yeah.

Amy: Then we stop there. So I would encourage everybody if you get into the 'I don't knows', great. Because that's the jumping off point for literally every successful person out there.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: So follow that statement up with, "I don't know, but I'm going to figure it out. Or I'm intelligent enough to source the information that I need." So don't just stop at the I don't know.

Tobi: Okay good.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Amy: So we've got that. So I think it's about looking at what is getting in my way? What is truly getting in my way?

Tobi: Comparing myself to others is one of them. "Well I saw her, and she looks better than me and she's more well-spoken than me. It seems so easy for her. Oh, she's thinner than me. Oh, she has better hair than me. Her voice doesn't sound like mine." All that self-judgement where we pick ourselves apart from top to bottom, right.

Amy: That's right. So you go into this comparison. Then I would also say you go into shoulds. You go into, "Oh well everyone in the design industry does this. Or every creative has to be on this platform." That is another element of comparison, right. So I think you have to start looking at what is the overall goal that I have for my business? What is it that I want to achieve?

I cannot remember who told me this, but it was one of the best things I learned about comparison. I thought when I first started. I was like, "Oh my god. I've got to be like Martha Beck. I gotta be like all of these heavy hitters and Brené Brown. Oh my god, I am lightyears away from that."

Tobi: Right.

Amy: Then you get into that, again, "I'm not good enough." Going back to that first thing of self-worth. "What am I doing? Nobody wants to hear. Blah, blah, blah." Then you get in this real sad spiral.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: So what I started doing, and I think that this would be great for everybody out there on their entrepreneurial journey. If you give yourself a ranking of overall, for me, in the field of coaching hypnotherapy and the work that I do in personal development, where would I rank myself? One being total novice, ten being mastery. Where would I rank myself? Now I'd say I'm probably in like a seven, an eight. That's kind of where I've been

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

over the last 15 years. So I serve fours, fives, and sixes. I don't worry about trying to serve the nines and tens.

So if you are just now starting out. You would say, "You know what? As a designer, as a creative I am probably a solid five." Okay. Then you start targeting the threes and the fours, and you don't worry about those people who are serving the sevens and the eights. You will get there, but you've got to start by who is it that I need to serve right now? Who lights me up right now? Stay in your own lane.

Tobi: Yeah.

Amy: I have really realized that the less inundated I am with scrolling. I really am hypervigilant about who I follow and what infiltrates my feed because I want that to be inspiring to me and not a comparison trap.

Tobi: Yeah.

Amy: It's a waste of our time.

Tobi: I think what I'm noticing when you're saying that too because I love that. That's a great way to think of it. Just to be clear. If you're a five and you're serving those twos and threes and fours, we don't mean that you don't think they're a ten with their style or the way they dress.

Amy: Oh no, no, no.

Tobi: But they're a two or three on accessing the knowledge of how to design this room or how to build this house.

Amy: Exactly.

Tobi: Are they understanding scale or proportion or layout or whatever? So depending on which industry you're in, it's like the knowledge base. Do you know 20%/40%/50% more than they do about the thing that you're talking to them about?

Amy: That's right. Competency in your business.

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Tobi: Not judging their worthiness, just your area of expertise.

Amy: That's right. That's exactly right. We need to definitely not be ranking people based on their characteristics.

Tobi: They're a ten. They're an eight. No, not at all.

Amy: No. No, no, no, no. I mean you don't want somebody to sit down and start working with you when they have designed entire castles.

Tobi: Yeah, exactly. They're an architect and you're explaining basic layout to them. They're gonna be like, "No, I get that part."

Amy: Exactly.

Tobi: So yeah totally. That's so good. I get it. Okay. One more thing I would love to discuss before we wrap up is the problem of procrastination because it's super related to all of this. So is procrastination like its own thing? Or is it just where we go when we feel sort of the effects of either people pleasing or comparing or all of the stuff we've been talking about today? Like where does it come from?

Amy: Yep. Okay. So the reason why we procrastinate is extremely varied. So I'll give you a couple of reasons why we do it. If we look again at sort of our primitive biological responses, procrastination is the modern iteration of the freeze response.

Tobi: Okay.

Amy: So if you are in your stressed response. You're feeling danger. You feel an imminent threat, and your instinct is to freeze and just, "Oh my gosh." That is likely going to be a procrastination response now in present day. So if you're in a situation where you feel like other people are better than you, or what do I have to offer, and it just paralyzes you. Again, that's because of a fear.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

So I think it's first of all recognizing that we're never going to get rid of fear, ever. So it's about what do I choose to do in the face of fear? I like to call it becoming fear optimized instead of fearless because I think that's a bullshit word.

Tobi: It's good, yeah. It's like being able to feel fear and move forward anyway. Move through resistance in a sense, right.

Amy: Exactly. So I think that there's one documented case of a woman who was void of a fear response. Her life was incredibly dangerous. Because she would just walk in front of cars and shit because she wasn't afraid of anything. So we need it. It's the same thing that keeps us out of imminent danger.

The problem is our fear response kicks in when we're on to something and also when we're in danger. So we have to sit with the fear and decipher. Is this something that's telling me I need to abort mission and run away? Or is this something that's telling me, "Okay, what's being called for right now is courage." So you have to evaluate that in that scenario.

Tobi: Okay.

Amy: So procrastination usually is rooted somewhere in the fear. Now not always. Sometimes procrastination is simply because whatever it is that we're going to take action on takes extreme effort. Whether it's mental effort, emotional effort, spiritual, or physical effort.

So, for example, if you need to, it's on your to do list to clean out your garage. Which obviously takes a bunch of physical effort. It is always, always, always going to be more appealing to sit down and binge Mad Men.

Tobi: Exactly.

Amy: Because that doesn't take any effort really. So if you have a proposal you need to write, if you have a launch that you need to do, if you have a

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

whole room that you need to put together. We will naturally procrastinate on that just by virtue of it taking effort. So it's not even necessarily related to fear in those situations.

Tobi: That's interesting, yes.

Amy: It's just based off of work. That's just going to take some work. So you have to gear yourself up for that and go, "Okay, just do 15 minutes. Or okay, do this and then you'll have this reward." If it's just effort based.

Tobi: I could also see when you're saying that, back to our first part of our conversation. Also if you agreed to do something that you really don't want to do, you would totally procrastinate on that too because you weren't being honest. You should have never...Well, I don't like to use should. If you hadn't obligated yourself to that, you wouldn't be procrastinating right now. You would have just not ever agreed to do it in the first place, right? Yeah?

Amy: Perfect example. That's another reason why we procrastinate. Another one is what we were talking about earlier with the I don't knows.

Tobi: Yes.

Amy: Where it's like I know I need to get this up and running system or I need to launch on Instagram, but I don't know how to schedule posts. Or I don't know how to put this thing on my website. So we stop because of lack of information.

Tobi: Yeah.

Amy: So, again, that's why I think it's incredibly important to say, "I don't know, but I'm going to figure it out. I don't know, but I'm going to source the information that you need."

Tobi: Or hire someone else to do it is my favorite response to procrastination. Pay them to do it so I can still sit on the couch and watch Mad Men.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Amy: That's right. Delegate, delegate, delegate.

Tobi: Perfect. So good. So is there anything in the realm of this incredible conversation that I've loved so much that you would like to add before we wrap up? We touched so many things. I think we gave a lot of nuggets there, but anything else you'd love to add to it?

Amy: Well, I think one thing that we've danced around a little bit is that all of this is wildly human. When we are doing anything that is rooted in fear whether it's people pleasing or procrastinating or talking shit to ourselves, we are doing all of that simply to take care of ourselves.

Tobi: Interesting.

Amy: Because we're trying to stay safe. Again, many of us developed that in our childhood. We learned that placating to others or making everybody else happy allowed us to slip under the radar. Or it allowed us to accomplish certain things. So if you just recognize that at its basic root, it's just defense, taking care of yourself. And now it's gotten to a point where it's no longer helping and it's actually thwarting your success. So I think giving yourself just a heaping dose of compassion.

Also please know that everybody you see who's wildly successful, they don't have some sort of secret sauce. They still experienced fear. They just chose courage over and over and over again.

Tobi: Yeah.

Amy: So I know you talked about briefly imposter complex. Some of the greatest minds like Maya Angelou or Michelle Obama, Tina Fey, Mike Myers, Meryl Streep have openly talked about dealing with imposter complex.

Tobi: Yeah.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Amy: The only difference between people who have that type of success is that fear comes up and they choose courage. All of you listening are capable of choosing courage.

Tobi: That's so good. I was also thinking while you're choosing courage and it looks like to the world that you're choosing it all the time, you better believe there's also like 15 things you're currently procrastinating on at the moment.

Amy: That's right.

Tobi: Because we are human, right.

Amy: That's right. Absolutely.

Tobi: So good. So good. Well thank you for this conversation. I loved it. It was so helpful and thoroughly entertaining.

Amy: Oh good.

Tobi: Yeah, enjoyed it so much. If people want to know more about you, where to find you, get some of your resources, where should they go? What can they look for? Tell us all the details.

Amy: I have tons of freebies. If you go to sort of my corner of the internet is over at thejoyjunkie.com. The Joy Junkie. You'll see free workbooks, free masterclasses, and workshops that I have, free hypnosis actually on anxiety and fear, which would be really helpful if you struggle with that. I've been doing a podcast for over eight years. A bevy of different topics and information.

So I would say just come over there. Get to know me. I hang out the most on Instagram as far as social goes. Get your hands on some freebies. Come listen to the show. You'll know if I'm right for you or if I'm not. It's very clear. Yeah, I'd be most honored to hang out.

Ep #165: Boundaries, People-Pleasing, and Having Tough Conversations with Amy E. Smith

Tobi: Awesome. Thank you so much. Well, again, I'm super grateful and all you've shared. Just so transparent. You weren't people pleasing me at all. Well, maybe just a little bit. But you were being perfectly honest in the process, which I appreciate so much. Yeah, just thank you so much for being here.

Amy: Well, I've had a blast. Thanks Tobi.

Okay. Did you see yourself in that episode? Could you identify with some of those behaviors? Yeah. Me too. The good news is as Amy said, it's normal, right? We're normal. We're human. So even though we don't love every little behavior that we participate in or that we continue to make a habit in our lives, at least we're normal. I hope that gives you some solace.

And I hope that this episode gave you some great tips or nuggets of gems or tools. Whatever you like to call them, you can now go put to work in your life to really reach that next level of self-worth and authenticity. It definitely helped me. I'm going to be practicing some of these starting right now.

I will be back next week. Maybe its people pleasing. Pleasing you, pleasing me, pleasing my guest. But I'll be back here seven days from now, and I'll see you again on the next 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.