

# Ep #171: Diversity in Social Media with Rochelle Johnson



## Full Episode Transcript

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**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #171: Diversity in Social Media with Rochelle Johnson

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 171.

Welcome to the *Design You* podcast. A show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth and joy, here's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey there friends. How are you? I hope you are doing great. I'm really, really excited about today's interview. So, I have my – I guess she's kind of my online friend, Rochelle here today. But the cool thing is she lives about 15 minutes from me. And as you'll hear us discuss in the episode we've never met in person, yet I feel like I know everything about her because she's an incredible online fashion influencer.

And so let me tell you a little bit about her. The way she describes herself or at least that her bio does is that Rochelle Johnson has earned over 400,000 followers across her social media platforms, 300,000+ of them on Instagram from Arkansas you all where she inspires women of all backgrounds, shapes, and sizes to look and live confidently, sharing content that is bold, and fun, and accessible. And all of that I agree with. So, this is a beautiful curvy momma with two precious beautiful children and her husband's pretty dang cute too.

And they live here in Arkansas and she has built this incredible influencer business. And she influences me every day and my daughter every day. She looks gorgeous in anything she puts on her body. And she gives me so much confidence to show up and really own everything about my body, and my size, and who I am as well. So, we get into all kinds of things today like how she built this business, her philosophies, how she thinks.

What it's really like to be an influencer which is really hard and not even close to the glamorous life that a lot of people want to think it is which is kind of how I feel about interior design. A lot of hard work. And I just really like this frank, honest, conversation that we have with this incredible woman who's practically my neighbor. And now that Covid is over, because

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I didn't know about her pre Covid, I can't wait for her to be my real life friend.

But for now, let's have you become her new bestie online because you hear about how she thinks, who she is and can go out and follow her too. So here we go, here's my interview with the fabulous, amazing, beautiful, Rochelle Johnson.

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**Tobi:** Hey Rochelle, welcome to the Design You podcast. I'm so glad you're here today.

**Rochelle:** I'm so happy to be here.

**Tobi:** So, fun, so we live in the same town essentially, we live probably what, 15 minutes away from each other?

**Rochelle:** Yes.

**Tobi:** And we've never met in person but I feel like I know you because I follow everything you put on Instagram all the time. And we have a common friend which is how we got connected. But I hear you followed me too for years. So, we've been fangirling each other for a while. So, it's so fun that you're here. One of these days, and of course Covid was in the way because we have talked about you coming over and stuff, but one of these days. And you had a baby. There have been a couple of obstacles for our rendezvous that we're planning.

But at the very least I wanted to get you on the podcast today because just I think you're so inspiring. And I wanted people to know about you and hear from you and be able to also be inspired by you like I am. So why don't we start with you telling everybody a little bit about yourself, what you do, who you are? And kind of set the tone for this conversation we're going to have today.

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**Rochelle:** Sounds good. So, I'm Rochelle Johnson. I live in Arkansas. I'm originally from California, I don't know if you knew that. But I've been here about 12 years and I moved here with my – well, my husband's from here. So, I started my fashion blog seven years ago. And I basically wanted to just show other plus size women where to get clothes, where to get the cute clothes and how to wear them. It turned into something else. I started posting on Instagram and people are really inspired by the clothes but also by my confidence.

And I never really thought about it like that. I just was like, well, people always ask me where I get cute plus size clothes. So, I wanted to show them. But people were getting a lot more from that. And I think that because I was an early adopter, so this was around 2013, yeah, 2013. My page had just grew and one day there was a popular influencer and she was like, "I want to feature you on my blog." And at the time I didn't have a website. So, I just had my Instagram page. So, I was like, "Well, I guess I've got to start my blog."

So that caused me to actually start and really become a professional blogger. So, I did that. And it just has taken off since then. And I've had two clothing lines at Lane Bryant which was my ultimate goal was to have a clothing line. So, I did two of those. And I'm just looking forward to whatever's next.

**Tobi:** So, fun. Well, all of everything you said is true from my perspective. I love to see you and I'm older than you by quite a bit probably.

**Rochelle:** Probably not.

**Tobi:** I don't know how old you are but I know you have adorable young children. And I'm literally eight months from 50. So, you're way younger than me. But I will say that you do give me confidence even in my own style and I'm not your age. We don't look exactly alike. We're not exactly the same size. But I am a curvy girl. It depends on how stressed out I am in the

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world what size I am. It can go anywhere from straight sizes to plus sizes depending on which year, month, or day.

But what I love about following you is like you said, your confidence, besides the fact that seriously you look great in everything. I have this conversation with our common friend, Tasha all the time who's my hairdresser. And we're like, "How does she look", I mean in everything, in workout clothes, leggings, all of it, dresses, everything, it just, it blows my mind. And so, my daughter and I both are really inspired by, in fact a lot of the clothes that my daughter, she's 15, but a lot of the things that she buys we're looking at what you're wearing and what you're getting.

And a lot of its affordable and I mean honestly we're like, "Rochelle." Every day we're like, "Did you see what Rochelle had on today?" So, we're truly, we are truly watching all the things you're doing. So how do you get to be a plus sized person with a lot of confidence that's willing to put themselves out and just own and embrace? Because it looks like you truly embrace your body as is. I mean you're literally saying, "These are the size pants I have on. This is the size shirt I'm wearing." And it's a service for other people.

But it takes a lot of confidence to do that in a world where we're kind of told we're supposed to be thin and our sizes are supposed to be tiny. And you're bucking all of that system and those rules, how did that happen?

**Rochelle:** There's so much. Well, I think that I honestly feel like God just gave it to me because I really don't have a reason to – I mean I won't say I don't have a reason to. But growing up which my mom she would probably hate but she's not on social media so she'll never hear this.

**Tobi:** She's not listening.

**Rochelle:** Yeah, she's not listening. But she would always say, "When I lose weight I'm going to wear this." Or, "When I lose weight I'm going to buy this", which a lot of people say. But in my mind even as a 13 year old I was

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like, “Just wear whatever you want to wear.” I didn’t see her as fat or too big or anything like that. She’s just my mom. So, I always was just like, “Just wear it.” I’m not understanding.

And I mean there’s so much to unpack here but a lot of times as parents you say things about yourself that are negative, which is negative self-talk. And you can pass that on to your children. Thankfully, it wasn’t passed on to me just because I don’t know, I just didn’t think that way. I was more rational about it I guess. And I’m not so worried about what other people are going to think.

I think a lot of times as plus size women we think that everybody’s looking at us or everybody’s judging us, or people ask, “Well, do the pants make a noise when you wear them?” I’m like, “I’m not thinking about if the pants make noise, I’m just...”

**Tobi:** Wearing them.

**Rochelle:** Yeah. I’m just wearing the pants because they’re cute and I like them. And trust me, nobody walking down the street is going to say, “Oh my gosh, her pants are making so much noise.”

**Tobi:** [Inaudible] in the 80s and 90s when [inaudible] and they were plastic, right?

**Rochelle:** Yeah. So, I just really believe that you should just wear what you want to wear. If you have an issue with your body just deal with it. But continue living life, continue doing what you want to do. Your size should not stop you from doing anything, from wearing bright colors, or wearing patterns, or wearing tight clothes, or wearing leggings.

**Tobi:** Shorts, shorts skirts, all the things.

**Rochelle:** Shorts, anything. I mean you should wear what you want to wear, do what you want to do. And nobody is – I don’t think anybody is really thinking about you and what you’re wearing.

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**Tobi:** Yeah. And if they are it's a fleeting thing, they might for a moment judge you but then they've already moved on to something else or they're judging themselves in comparison to. It's almost always about the person themselves not the person that they're looking at or judging, right?

**Rochelle:** Exactly. A lot of times it's self-inflicted judgment. And I just try to tell people, "Get over it, just wear it." And most of the time I get so many compliments when I'm wearing bright colors and patterns. Or people will literally just walk by and smile at me. And I know it's because I'm wearing something bright. And I think sometimes they're like, "I want to wear that but I don't have the confidence. But I'm happy to see you wearing it." So, I just feel like you should wear what you want.

**Tobi:** I love that so much. And I didn't mean to interrupt but I was going to say one of the way you've inspired me and one of the things I notice is I realized recently and I didn't know this before really. I mean I kind of did but I hadn't really articulated it or clued into it that when I'm feeling like I have gained weight or I'm bigger than some crazy standard, not even a crazy, just any standard that I've decided is the right one for me and I'm not there, which we do this as humans all the time.

We're always picking some arbitrary place based on what somebody else thinks. And then beating ourselves up with it. And so, what I noticed is that when I am not my slimmest other than if I was going to go out to an event of course I would fix up. But in the day-to-day I find myself giving up a little bit more and why bother, and don't fix my hair, and don't put make-up on which are all very much a part of me. I'm a girly girl, I've always worn make-up.

And one of the things you've really inspired me to do is to not change anything about how I would show up just because I'm in a phase where I've put on a few pounds or even a lot of pounds. I mean because I see you and you're so put together and you're so polished. And I know that's your job.



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And I'm sure there's moments, I mean you do show up at times with no make-up on but it just has inspired me to say, "Why are you feeling like weighing 10 pounds, 20 pounds, whatever more than you used to, has any bearing on you showing up as your best self and doing your hair and make-up?" And it was such a shift for me. Does that make sense?

**Rochelle:** Yeah.

**Tobi:** When I started realizing that stuff doesn't have to change just because I'm now purchasing clothes with a bigger number on the tag or even when I...

**Rochelle:** Exactly.

**Tobi:** Yeah, and when I would lose weight I would be more apt to dress up and like myself and get dressed every day. And why is that? Why is it that I do that? And then I wonder why I'm judging myself more when I've gained weight? And I'm like well, no wonder because when you gain weight you go around looking like you've given up. And when you're thin you put yourself together. That's not apples to apples. Do you have any thoughts on that? Have you, like does that, what's your approach to that?

**Rochelle:** I always say not to measure your worth on the scale. So however, much you weigh it doesn't have anything to do with your worth as a person and how much space you take up in the world. And everybody is worthy of being happy, being healthy, having success no matter what size they are. So, one of my good friends, she has a great quote, she says, "Don't wait on your weight to live the life you want." And I think about that all the time because honestly, I don't weigh myself a lot. I think it can be toxic in ways because you're always measuring your value.

And like you said when you gain weight you don't put yourself together. You're kind of not in the greatest mood.

**Tobi:** Yeah, we're in leggings all the time, sloppy.



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**Rochelle:** Yeah. So, I just don't weigh myself because I don't need that type of energy.

**Tobi:** Yeah, I love it, I agree. And I have stopped weighing myself too and I've been working a lot on changing, for my whole life I feel like I've been on a diet. And I finally have stopped that. I've kind of been on the road to stopping it for the last 10 years or so. But now I'm in a place where I'm truly like I just, I'm not interested in it anymore. It's too much energy like you're saying, even just to obsess about food or body size all the time.

And we all know that all clothes are different and even if you think you're a certain size, in one brand you might wear something super tiny compared to that and in another it might be different or bigger. And so, I love what you're saying. And I also think you're spot on. And I wasn't connecting the dots that maybe at some level internally because I thought I had failed again maybe at my weight, that I was somehow punishing myself for feeling like, well, you've gained weight so you don't deserve to whatever.

And so, I love what you're saying there because even if it was subconscious, that really struck me when you were saying that. You're right, those two things are not dependent on each other. They're mutually exclusive. No matter what size you are, you absolutely can care for yourself, and use skincare products, and go to the spa, and exercise, and wear make-up, and do things to make yourself look and feel beautiful. And completely disconnect that from your size or your weight, so good.

Yeah, so good, thank you for sharing that, that's really good. Okay, so let's talk a little bit about this concept that we kind of came to the table with, you and I of anybody who really wants to be successful can be. And that we both think that's true and we both agree there are some caveats to that and there's some privilege built into that. So, let's kind of start that discussion. Tell me kind of what you mean and then we can get into the butts.

But what do you mean and what does that look like for you when you say anybody who wants it? So, does it mean you have to hustle? I'm kind of

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tired of hustling a little bit I'll admit. What does that look like from your perspective of if you want it you can create it?

**Rochelle:** I think originally I was thinking based on size and location.

**Tobi:** Yeah. Really good, yeah.

**Rochelle:** So, a lot of people think, since I've lived here, a lot of people have said, "I'm going to move to Dallas so, I can start my modeling career." Or, "I'm going to move to Atlanta." Or people always want to go somewhere else because they feel they can't accomplish their goals here. And a lot of times, I mean I kind of feel like that's not true. I feel like you can start something right here and I guess this is technically a small town.

**Tobi:** Yes, I think so.

**Rochelle:** Yeah. In a small town and be successful, you just have to kind of use your resources and get creative. But success is not just for people who live in big cities.

**Tobi:** That's so good, I agree. And thankfully thanks to the internet, and technology, and all the things we have now, that's more true than ever. Because I feel the same way. When I first got into the design industry 20 years ago it was still true and I proved it to be true. But it wasn't even as easy as it is now. And 10 or 15 years before that people felt like they almost had to move in interior design to be in LA, or New York, or like you said, a place where they could really grow their businesses. And I've proven that same thing wrong. So, I agree with you completely.

And people are still shocked when they're like, "You're from where? You live in Arkansas." But I think you're such a beautiful example of that because even, not that we're comparing here because we both, neither one believe our Facebook following is our worth, kind of like our weight is not. But it's so inspiring to me to look at the fact that you have several hundred thousand followers. And again, like you said, you can build that from

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anywhere, you're 15 minutes from me. We're in a small town. It's Arkansas for goodness sake.

**Rochelle:** Yeah. So many people, they're like, "Where are you from? I thought you were in LA or I thought you were in New York." I'm like, "No, I live in Arkansas." And they're just so shocked. And you don't have to be in a big city to do what I do. You can do it anywhere.

**Tobi:** Yeah, the internet is everywhere. The internet is everywhere and your sponsors can ship you packages to Arkansas just as easily as they can ship it to LA. And we can be, when it's not a pandemic we can be in LA, or New York, or Atlanta, or anywhere else in a few hours if we want to be.

**Rochelle:** Exactly.

**Tobi:** Yeah, so good. And I saw you were recently, it was just a week ago you were out in California for a shoot, right?

**Rochelle:** Yeah. So, people, I mean people will send you wherever they want to.

**Tobi:** Yeah, so good, that's great. So, talk to us a little bit about the size piece of that. So, there are a lot of people I'm sure that even if they can get beyond the fact that yes, I can live in Arkansas or anywhere, in the middle of Indiana, or in a tiny town in wherever and still build this business. If they can get beyond that, there's so many of us who think if we're not, well, all the things, thin, white, blond, cisgender, hetero, name all the categories. But if we're not like the mainstream most acceptable version of ourselves then it's not possible to create a business.

And so, one of those things, well, you have a few different intersections of identity that you could talk about too if you want to share that. But starting with your size that you've just proven that to be absolutely untrue.

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**Rochelle:** Yeah. I think that for some reason people think that plus size people in general can't be successful. Or when you see a plus size person you don't necessarily consider them as successful. I mean I think there are a lot of reasons for it. But it's just not true. And success is for anybody no matter what size you are, no matter the color of your skin. You have to work for it. You might have to work harder depending on different factors like your skin color, or your race, or anything.

But success is for anybody and I kind of feel like my platform is pivoting a little bit to that because I get a lot of comments about thank you for showing that plus size women can wear luxury. A lot of times plus size women, you're intimidated to go into a luxury retailer because people just will ignore you or you're afraid they're not going to help you, which I mean sometimes it's true. Again, because people think that plus sized people don't have the resources to buy luxury items which is just silly.

**Tobi:** And it is. Well, and if we look at statistics, the average size person in America is what, a 14 or a 16 or something?

**Rochelle:** Yeah.

**Tobi:** It's not a straight size. So, if the average is that then we know the middle then there's plenty of people on both ends of that spectrum, which I think is so interesting. And I'm thrilled that it's changing but it's because of people like you that it is changing. So, when you do go in a luxury store, or you do buy luxury goods, or you do wear them, how do you deal with, or any of these things that you're talking about, if you have discrimination about your skin color, or your size, or because of what you're trying to purchase. How do you typically handle that?

**Rochelle:** So, I think just like with wearing clothes, it starts with confidence. It's like when you go somewhere, just know you belong there just like anybody else does. When you go somewhere you can't feel like I don't deserve to be here, or this is not for me, because it's for everybody.

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Nobody said that you can't buy a luxury item if you're not skinny and white. It's for anybody.

**Tobi:** Yes. Shocker. People, skinny white people can buy anything that they damn well please, right?

**Rochelle:** Right. But I think you have to have that confidence on the inside to just know okay, I'm going to go try on this bag or these shoes or whatever. And I'm worthy of it and nobody can make me feel like I'm not. And if you don't want to serve me I'm going to go somewhere else. I don't have to deal with that.

**Tobi:** Yes. You're not the only good shoe store in America, there's over 70 others. Or you're not the only brand that sells really cool, amazing high end stuff. Yeah, so good. But even in spite of this it is still true that a lot of influencers, or bloggers, or whatever term you prefer to call yourself, do still face the fact and run up against challenges like getting paid less because you're a plus size or because of your skin color. Or even the colorism in general, not just being a Black person or a brown person but the lightness or darkness of your skin.

All of those things are real things when you do this for profit, when this is a real business. So, can you speak to that a little bit? And kind of what you've learned, what you've found out, what you've learned and kind of how you then sort of navigate that?

**Rochelle:** I think it's just a known fact in the influencer world that if you are Black or if you are plus size, even if you're Asian, just if you're anything other than white and skinny you're going to get paid less than the girls or guys who are white and skinny. We know this because we compare rates with each other. I recently compared rates with another influencer, she's also Black but she's skinny. And even though I had hundreds of thousands more followers than her she got paid more than me and almost double.

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And then she said she knows for a fact that she gets paid less than her white counterparts. So, it's just across the board. And there's nothing to – we don't have a union or anything like that. It's the wild, wild west, anybody can do whatever they want to. Probably similar to being an interior designer.

**Tobi:** Yeah, everybody charges different. But where it is a little bit different I think with you is unless you're working for corporate, commercial interior design. When we're working for individuals, yes, whether they agree to pay us what we charge is based on kind of our own self-worth of being willing to charge it, but also their personal values. But a little bit different, when you're dealing with large corporations I do love that in a lot of ways you could potentially have leverage on them and calling them out. Or maybe not even publicly calling them out but asking what their values are.

Because I think we're living in a time, don't you, where more and more companies are going to be required to be transparent about their values, and transparent about pay and all of those kind of things. So, I think what's interesting to me or what I'd love to know is now that you have this information and you sort of know what someone with your size following, and just how great you are on camera and what a beautiful job you do of being an ambassador.

Have you just decided to ask for what your worth at another level? Or do you walk away from companies that you suspect aren't paying you what they're paying counterparts that happen to be whiter, or thinner, or lighter, or something else that you're not?

**Rochelle:** I think what I do, I just charge what I feel I'm worth. I mean I won't say what I'm worth, but I charge what I feel is a fair rate for my talent. And sometimes you think that you're charging a fair rate and then you find out later that, well, no, somebody else is getting double or triple. And it's all about just what you ask for, and what you're presenting to them and telling them, "I know that I'm valuable. This is what I bring to the table. I know that

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you have paid other people more. So, there's no reason for you not to give me what I'm due."

**Tobi:** Yeah. So good. So, can you give us a little more insight on kind of how your jobs works? Do you have regular sponsorships with people? Do you pitch yourself to companies? What's the goal? Are you getting paid to wear people's clothes on your Instagram, or put it on your blog? What is kind of the work for you of being an influencer, what does that look like?

**Rochelle:** Yeah. So basically, I get paid to wear a brand's clothing. But sometimes to promote a lotion or a shampoo, and to present it to my followers. But it has to be in a creative way because I primarily do clothing and that's what I love to do. That's what my audience loves. But when I do, do other things like cosmetics, or skincare, I have to find a creative way to integrate it so that my followers respond to it. So, I mean I could just hold up a bottle of lotion. And I do sometimes if I'm tired. I'm all out of ideas today, I'm just going to hold this up and hope for the best.

But I mean I try to get creative and find a way to get my audience to respond. If I just hold up a tube of lipstick, they're literally not going to care. It doesn't matter if it's my favorite lipstick in the world. I have to be wearing an amazing dress, the background has to be amazing. It's basically coming up with a marketing plan to promote a product. So that's essentially what I do. So, it's really marketing.

**Tobi:** Yes. And it's evident when you go to your page because for one thing I think you just – we've chatted about this a little bit in DMs back and forth with each other. But you do have also an interest in interior design. You just got a new house. You're working on that. You're not a designer and you don't claim to be a designer. But you follow designers because the visual background of what you do is so important to how you present yourself. You're really a lifestyle brand.

And so, I remember at the holidays, you had your beautiful trees and they were all so colorful, and bright, and on brand. And I mean it's obvious to me



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it's a lot of work because I've done some, not influencing, but for lifestyle photography myself and my own interior spaces I've designed. And it is a lot of work. It's not inexpensive to do all the work. And you either have to be able to do it all yourself or hire someone to do it for you, the photography, and the editing, and all those things. So, it is a really big job. So, I understand exactly what you mean, but it's a marketing.

It's a marketing business. So, on that note, do you have, like what kind of support do you have? Do you have a team? Do you do everything yourself? Do you work with other professionals? Do you take your own photos? How do you pull it all off because there's a lot of hats to this job?

**Rochelle:** Yeah. So, I have a manager and an assistant. Well, my manager's assistant who kind of doubles as my assistant, just keeping me on task with deadlines. And they do a lot of negotiating for me, contracts, all the legal things. And then I also have a photographer and a videographer on retainers. So basically, whenever I need them, I'm like, "I have to shoot tomorrow." Because it's so – having a photographer and a videographer that can be there at a moment's notice is so important.

Because a lot of times people will want their – they'll send me a product on Monday, "Can I have everything by Tuesday?" So, you have to come up with a concept, shoot everything, let's not talk about writing captions.

**Tobi:** A whole other job.

**Rochelle:** Yeah, a whole another job, writing captions, turn everything in, in 24 hours. So having a photographer is just like, it's the biggest part. And then I'll probably have an intern this summer just to help with steaming clothes and just organizing and doing all those things that no one likes to do, yeah.

**Tobi:** Yeah, it's a lot. And nobody's thinking, I mean it's the same with interiors and photography for interiors, nobody's noticing that there's somebody steaming the bed, and the sheets. And you don't just take your

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sheets out of the dryer and put them on. You're literally meticulously crafting every piece of that photograph, which is what you're doing with your fashion, which is so interesting. Okay, and just because you do all of that work, you also are a wife, you also are a mom. You also have a new house. Your baby is only a few months old. You have a little boy.

You all have all kinds of other things happening. And that's what I'm always thinking when I'm watching you and following your stories. I'm like, because I know the amount of work at least to a degree that goes into this kind of business. And I'm like, "How in the world is she pulling all of that off?" So how do you balance this? And how much do you work during a day, showing up and they need it in 24 hours' notice and you're like I have a cranky baby and a tired, like is your little boy four or five?

**Rochelle:** He's four.

**Tobi:** Yeah. So how do you make that happen?

**Rochelle:** It's just really crazy. And honestly, I do not have a good handle on him.

**Tobi:** I know, I'm failing miserably at the moment.

**Rochelle:** Yeah. Hopefully, we'll have a full-time assistant/nanny soon. And also, I'm working on getting up earlier, just so I can have like...

**Tobi:** Yes. It's hard for a tired mom who's working on marketing plans at probably midnight half the time.

**Rochelle:** Yeah, exactly, because I found if I wake-up early I can get more done and kind of finish earlier. Because honestly, a lot of times I stop to make dinner or order dinner. And then we eat and then I'm going back to work. So, it doesn't really end till I go to sleep. Just because there's so much to do in a day and it's just a lot.

**Tobi:** Yeah, it is a lot and I think that that's important for you. I love that you're saying that, that way because I think it's easy for people who have a

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little bit more traditional businesses, I see this in the design industry, of people who have run more kind of either brick and mortar or just traditional, not style but a traditional business model. And then we watch influencers like you come on the scene, and all of a sudden even though you've been working your buttons off for a long time, it feels like you just exploded onto the scene. And now you're getting all this attention.

And it looks fun and easy. And sometimes other people feel like well, that's robbing me of my – like in design, interior design influencers I hear other people who have been around for a while thinking those influencers are sort of ruining my business, or making people think that it's easy. And I want to make sure that people get, you're not trying to pretend this is easy. You're working probably as hard or harder than some of us in a more traditional business model because there's no turning it off at night. You're always on. You're always on stories. You're always in Instagram.

You're trying to keep all those balls in the air and be a real human being at the same time.

**Rochelle:** Yeah. And I think because I am on social media, there's a lot of comparison. So, I always feel like I should be doing more. I'm sitting here watching TV but I should be working on this or uploading this, or I could be doing this right now, which I don't know if it's ADD or what. But it's always, my mind is always going about what I should be doing or what I could be doing which is probably not healthy. But there's just so much to do in so little time. And it's not easy at all. And I kind of want to show that it's, you know, everything is not perfect.

A lot of times people will say, "I mean your life is just perfect." And I mean I am on stories maybe 20 minutes a day. I mean it takes a long time to create stories and do all the things to put on Instagram. But I mean it's only a small snippet of the day. And it's definitely not perfection. My house is a mess all the time. I'm always rearranging things or setting up a closet in the living room or shooting a video in the dining room. It's just, it's crazy. And

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most people, I think they think it's a perfect life or everything's just perfect all the time but it's not.

**Tobi:** I love that you said that. I think that's true for interior design too. We do a lot of work to make these images look magazine worthy and ready. But where it gets misconstrued and it puts a lot of pressure on real people is they start to make assumptions and believe that that's how someone's house looks all the time. Or that they never have a mess or their baby, I love that recently you had one of your stories and you did one of those cute things, kind of like a TikTok type thing where you all plopped on the sofa. And it changed your clothes.

But then you stand up and your baby projectile, like spit ups all over you and runs down her and your dress. And you're like [inaudible]. But I think that's so important for people to see. And yeah, there are days that my sink's full of dishes and the dog threw up or pooped on the floor or something. We're real human beings and we have real life stuff happening all the time and think that it's so easy.

And also like you said, if people misconstrue that a produced story or video that you've spent hours creating, and editing, and putting on, if they think that's just you popping on, and whatever you happen to be wearing, and throwing it up in a few minutes, that's not at all the truth. Those are truly like an advertising agency like you said, or a marketing agency, crafting these segments and stories, right?

**Rochelle:** Yes, yeah, exactly. I mean my house is never clean. And I use every single inch of my house. Well, my old house I used every single inch. This house isn't quite Instagram ready yet. But my old house, every single inch I used for photos, I used for stories. Everything was crafted for Instagram. So, I think a lot of people, I mean you just don't realize it. But I mean I kind of think that's like the magic of being an influencer, is to kind of – I don't know, it's almost like a mind trick.

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**Tobi:** Yeah. It's a little bit like a fantasy or aspiration. And so, I love that. I love that you're saying that though and pulling back the curtains so you're not trying to pretend it's real. I think kind of the danger of that for a lot of us is if we pretend achieving that in our lives, in all like day-to-day regularly. When we think that's the goal we're going to be frustrated a lot. We're going to be disappointed a lot. It can take a toll on us. So, is there anything about that, that when you spend time thinking about that, that you also want to share of just reminding people?

Kind of what's the purpose of influencing, is it just to have these little entertaining moments and also help people buy some things? Or does it help people aspire to be a better version of themselves a little more often but maybe not all the time? How do you see the role of this where it's at it's kind of most helpful and not harmful?

**Rochelle:** Yeah. I mean I feel like I want people to take away whatever they need from it. So, if you feel like you need confidence, I want you to take that part of it away. If you want ideas on decorating your house, take that piece away. But don't take the whole thing as – don't try to take it all. Because I think that you'll just end up going crazy.

**Tobi:** Yeah, I agree.

**Rochelle:** Because it's too much to consume. I think about it a lot.

**Tobi:** Yes. And it's unattainable. It's so funny because in one breath we're talking about we want to break through those old belief systems of everybody has to be skinny. But if we're not careful we're perpetuating the same kind of lies of making people believe that you can look this perfect all the time and that you have the perfect house, and perfect husband, and perfect children, and perfect life, and perfect wardrobe and that you're never stressed because none of that is true either.

**Rochelle:** Right, exactly. So yeah, you have to just take pieces away from it.

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**Tobi:** I love that, that's really good advice. So, the last thing I do want to cover which we didn't talk about already when we were kind of prepping for this. But I notice about you is you have such a kind spirit. And you do seem very calm which I don't know if you're just really good at staying calm in all the kind of chaos we're talking about. But I've noticed you a few times leaning into sort of – I mean not only just influencing what people wear but influencing sort of people's beliefs or even influencing kind of how they treat one another.

And so, I remember you on different occasions have said, "It's really not cool to talk about people's weight. It's really not cool to ask people if they've lost weight. It's really not cool to ask people if they've gained weight. It's really not cool to, that's not cool. That's a boundary." Or you'll say, you've said other things of how people can be kind or even respect boundaries in DMs. And you're a real human. And I love that part of your brand because I think that you're such a beautiful voice for, yeah, I'm a real human being.

And yes, I may work in Instagram and social media but boundaries are still very important. So, can you talk a little bit about how that kindness piece is important to you and how it shows up and what you would like people to keep in mind?

**Rochelle:** Yeah. Thank you for saying all those nice things. But I mean there is such a bigger discussion about talking about people's bodies because really the media really just takes it, the body talk, takes it and runs with it especially around January it's the worst. But I just feel like we shouldn't be commenting on other people's bodies because you don't know what brought that person to that place. A lot of times people will say even when I was pregnant people were like, "You're losing weight, that's great."

I'm like, well, actually losing weight it shouldn't be the ultimate goal especially when you're pregnant. You're not supposed to be losing weight. If somebody is losing weight you don't know what's going on with them,

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even if they're not pregnant. And they could be depressed. They could be going through something serious. They could be sick. And it's like we shouldn't be just like, "Oh girl, you're losing weight, that's great." It's not always great.

And I don't think we should associate being smaller with success. I mean back to that again people always say if you're losing weight then that's a win or that's successful. And in every case it's not. And I just feel like we just put so much on our bodies and how our bodies look. People will say, "Well, everything looks good on you but I don't, you know, I'm bigger than you or my body, it doesn't look the same as yours, or I'm ugly." And you're not ugly because you have a different body. You just have a different body.

And we just have to change the way that we think about ourselves and our bodies, change the way you think about other people's bodies which you really shouldn't be thinking about other people's bodies. But I mean it's just – I just hate it.

**Tobi:** Yeah. and I just love that you talk about it. And you talk about it, and I mean if you think about that we can take it in any direction just in the way that we're looking at other people, other people's hair. I've had people in the past say, "Oh my gosh, your hair is so thin." And I'm like, "Well, I call it fine." I have a lot of it, it's not thin. But why are you commenting? Whatever the standard is, like thick hair is amazing. Or clear skin is amazing. Or small bodies are amazing or whatever.

And people don't even notice how they will just literally make comments, or share, or whatever, like you said that is truly kind of a boundary violation.

**Rochelle:** Yeah, it's unsolicited. It's like but I didn't really ask you your opinion on my hair.

**Tobi:** And I really might happen to really love my hair. Maybe this is my preferred hair type. Maybe I'm thrilled that my hair is not thick and takes seven hours to dry like my daughter's or whatever. But I think you're right



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and that's what I loved about – and I've seen you do it multiple times. And just remind people to be kind and to think about – and especially with influencers.

I think it's almost like influencers and celebrities, don't you think it's almost like because you are working in that space that people almost want to feel like well, when you signed up for that you signed away your right to have boundaries or for people not to judge you, or whatever. Which I think is really kind of dangerous in a lot of ways and really unfair in a lot of ways, right?

**Rochelle:** Yeah. I mean people feel like they have 24/7 access to you. They can say whatever they want. This actually doesn't bother me. But I know it bothers a lot of people. People will just message me, no, "Hello. How are you." But, "Can I have the link for those shoes?" Or, "Can I have a link for that dress?" And it's just like, okay, I'm going to give it to you but you should at least start with a, "Hello", or, "How are you?" Or. "Hi, Rochelle." I'm not just a service. I'm an actual person. Yes, I can give you the link, it's no problem.

But you don't just go up to people and start demanding things. But I think people think they can do that because it's the internet. It's like, okay, well, you have all these followers.

**Tobi:** Yes, they definitely do. And in interior design, different designers have different feelings about this. I'm not one to keep all my sources or things close to the vest, I just I'm happy. I know even if I give everybody everything I have, they're not going to put a room together the same way I do, or I couldn't serve all those people anyway. So, I don't get upset about that. But there a lot of designers who do, which rightly so. We're not entitled to have to give you all of our sources that maybe another client paid us to create, unless we want to.

But I find the same things, people are like, "Where did you get those curtains?" And I'm like, "The ones that we had custom made in a workshop

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with a specific, you know, with seven different elements, the hardware, the trim, the fabric and all the things, those curtains?” And people just, they’re not even really thinking about sort of treating others, like you said, like a human, not like a service. And they feel entitled.

And when I see friends of mine that don’t want to share their design sources, when they say, “We don’t share that.” There are people who get really angry and really ugly and call them names and are abusive in a sense. And I think that, I’m sure that happens all the time with influencers.

**Rochelle:** Yeah. And I think it happens the most when you say, “You shouldn’t be saying this.” That’s when I think people get the angriest because they’re like, “Well, why not? You talk about this all the time. Or you’re always talking about your body, so why can’t I comment on your body?” And it’s like, “Well, I’m talking about it but that doesn’t mean you can just say whatever you want to me.”

**Tobi:** Yeah, talk about your own body if you feel like it. But this one’s mine and I’m talking about it. Yeah. And also, I think just the consent piece, if you’re like, “Hey everybody, I’d like to hear what you think about this?” It’s one thing but yeah, the unsolicited advice. That’s really interesting, how that is sort of one of the main negative byproducts of the internet. I get a lot of – not a lot. I get a little bit of pushback when I talk about politics or when I talk about social justice, or other things. And people are like, “You need to stick to decorating.”

As again, if I’m a one-dimensional robot who creates rooms and doesn’t have real feelings or opinions so yeah, interesting. So, well, if people want to find you, they want to follow you, if they want to be inspired by you, where do they go? Because I want them to have all of the same delight that I get from all of your hard work. And now I know I should even be more delighted because it’s even more hard work than I even thought probably but where do they find you?

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**Rochelle:** So, my blog is beauticurve.com, with an I and not a Y, so b.e.a.u.t.i. curve.com. And then my Instagram is I Am Beauty Curve and YouTube is Beauty Curve TV.

**Tobi:** Awesome. So, we'll link all those in the show notes and it's I am, like the letter I and then the word am a.m. beauticurve with an I in it. But they'll also see your name on there, Rochelle Johnson. They'll know they're in the right place when they see a beautiful curvy woman in gorgeous bright clothes that has multiple hundreds of thousands of followers, they're like I've arrived. Well, thank you so much, this was so fun. And I can't wait for us to have our in person coffee or rendezvous soon, sooner than later.

**Rochelle:** Yes, I can't wait.

**Tobi:** I hope you bring the baby.

**Rochelle:** Yes, I can.

**Tobi:** Yeah, my daughter and I love both of them. We love watching your son too, your children are beautiful, the whole family you are all just beautiful. And so, we're going to keep fangirling from over here across the river.

**Rochelle:** I'll do the same.

**Tobi:** Perfect. And I can't wait to see you soon. Thank you so much.

**Rochelle:** Thank you.

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Okay so hurry and follow her. And one thing I meant to talk about that we didn't talk about, so I'll say it now. But you've heard me say this before I think if you've listened to all of my episodes, not that I'm holding you to listening to all of them. But I have talked about this how in the last year or so I have gotten really intentional about who I follow. And following all kinds

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of body types and people of all kinds of different races, and backgrounds, and ethnicities, and genders.

And so, I meant to talk about that with Rochelle. We'll talk about again soon, or maybe she and I will do an Instagram Live soon. But I know that she believes the same way because we have discussed it and I've seen it coming from her that she believes in following all different kinds of people. And what I've learned from that myself is that it almost rewires your brain. And when I only followed slim white women, I was a lot harder on myself and I was a lot more frustrated about sort of accepting myself.

And when I created a diverse Instagram feed it truly changed me at my core. So, Rochelle was one of the first people that I started following when I started to diversify my feed. And she has been a delight and an inspiration ever since. So, if you haven't done this work, if you haven't diversified who you follow and followed people of all sizes, shapes, skin colors, backgrounds, I highly recommend you do it. There is a world of incredible people out there that you're missing out on.

And had I not done that work I wouldn't have gotten to follow and know Rochelle and she wouldn't be here on the podcast today. So, I encourage you to do that work. Go diversify your feed and see what happens to how you feel about yourself and how you feel about other people. It's going to change you I promise. And I will see you back here one week from today with another 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](http://TobiFairley.com).