

Ep #200: Redefining Success Part 4: How's Your Long Game?



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 200.

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.

Hear the confetti, friends, today is a big day, a huge one actually. It's my 200th episode and it's my 50th birthday. Woohoo. I'm super excited. It feels so weird and incredible to be hitting both of those milestones on the same day. Of the 200 episodes, 199 of them were brand new, only one time in 200 episodes did we re-air what we call a vintage show. And that's quite the accomplishment, if I do say so myself. That means for the last 200 weeks in a row I have done a brand new episode. And just for one episode, that one replay I even did a new intro and outro.

Talk about consistency for a gal who doesn't really love doing the same thing over, and over, and over again. Go me. What else feels weird is saying that I'm 50. I'm 50. Did Sally O'Malley from Saturday Night Live just pop into your mind too? Well, yes, I'm 50. And just last night when I was falling asleep for a second I thought, am I really 50? And is that math correct? And yes, 1972 to 2022 is 50 years. But all that to say I'm incredibly excited about 50. I'm not one of those people who hates to get older. In fact, I think it's just the best.

So much amazingness comes with getting older, the wisdom, the not caring what other people think, the courage to put yourself first, the knowing who you really are finally and what you want. It's all so good. When I think about turning 50 I think of Oprah. I mean when do I not think of Oprah actually? But I think about Oprah and what Maya Angelou told her when Oprah turned 50. And Maya said, "Baby, the 50s are everything you've been meaning to be."

And Oprah says that in your 50s you are who you are meant to be. It comes through full force in this decade. Is that amazing or what? I can

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already see that Oprah's right. And the transformation for me started over the last year or maybe a little longer. And I cannot wait for this blooming into my 50s to take place, just when the world would tell you to start winding down because you're getting old, and fat, and wrinkled, and no longer desirable.

The truth is you are blooming into everything that you truly are. And as I've mentioned in previous episodes, I love Glennon Doyle's podcast and I listen to it regularly. And recently I heard her talking about this too about aging and getting close to 50. And she said as we get to this age as women what she noticed is that it's the first time ever in her life that she's not being objectified. And I get that. We've been objectified as women our whole life by men, by other women, by ourselves. But something starts to shift at this age.

It's like the world says, "Yeah, she's an old broad now, no longer hot or sexy." So, they start leaving us alone from the objectification perspective in many ways. Now, don't get me wrong, the world doesn't totally leave us alone. Culture, the media, the beauty industry makes sure we know that aging is bad and we should look a certain way and literally do everything in our power to try to maintain our youth and beauty. Like shrink ourselves, inject stuff into our faces, get surgery, dress younger. And whatever we do, please try not to be 50, or 60, or 70, or for God sakes, older than that.

But at some level I think Glennon is right. We sort of get a reprieve from being the center of attention, not totally. People seem to get off on commenting on other people's bodies, but that's not just reserved for us as 'old gals'. Although I don't think I'm old. It happens in general especially in the age of social media no matter how old you are. You've heard it. You've probably even said it, "Wow, she looks old. Whoa, she's gotten fat. What is she wearing?" I mean you've literally heard them all and so have I.

But I happen to think it's pretty disgusting. And we're taught to judge openly especially on social media. And I won't pretend that I never think negative

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thoughts about other women's appearances or judge other people. But it's a habit that I work really hard to consciously break. When we do get this reprieve because at some level we've aged out of being the center of attention, in the weirdest way it's a total gift. Just let that sink in what Glennon said, at age 50, the first time ever to not be objectified but we are dismissed instead, not objectified, just dismissed.

And just to be clear, what do we even mean by objectification? So, let's define that for a second. Objectification involves viewing and/or treating a person as an object, devoid of thought or feeling. Often objectification is targeted at women and reduces them to objects of sexual pleasure or gratification. One other definition says the seeing and/or treating a person, usually a woman as an object, denial of subjectivity. The treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings, if any, need not be taken into account.

There's many different ways to objectify a person, including forcing them to be silent, focusing on just their physical body and not their mind, or implying that their appearance or outward beauty is the only important thing about them. We are objectifying when we say, "Look at her, she looks terrible. She let herself go. Have you seen how old, or fat, or haggard she is?" We're also objectifying when we say all the positive things about a body. But any time we're looking and saying, "Can you see how she's changed? I didn't even recognize her."

Or also when we say, "People should change. She should lose weight. She should get Botox. She should dye her hair." Each of these is treating the other person as if their outward appearance is all that matters and that they don't have feelings. It's dehumanizing actually and we do it all the time especially to ourselves. And that's what's been happening to us for years until suddenly we start to hit an age where our outward appearance, one that is aging naturally and gracefully doesn't align with the American glorification of youth.

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In fact, America fetishizes youth. All the important magazines, fetishize youth. They have lists that celebrate youth, even the business magazines. You've seen it everywhere, Forbes 30 Under 30, New Yorker's 20 Under 40, Inc's 35 Under 35, Fortune's 40 Under 40, Time's 30 Under 30, not to mention what the beauty magazines do to glorify youth.

As The Huffington Post said in an article on this topic, "We see it all the time and the media hyped up list of successful people categorized by age but always under 40. With brownie points given to the youngest wunderkinds of the bunch. And in every magazine profile, whether about an actress or an investment banker the subject's youth is presented as a badge of honor. He took the helm at 26, becoming the youngest CEO in the company's history. Or she published her first novel at 23, or she earned her MBA from Harvard by 25."

The article also says it's safe to say by Simon Doonan who they interviewed, "It's safe to say that youth is the new global currency." Of course, American culture has long fetishized youth in terms of physical appearance, plastic surgery and antiaging products are multibillion dollar industries in the US. But more recently our cultural obsession with youth has shifted focus to more on success, or at least the traditional markers of success, money, power and status. In the digital age anyone can become a CEO and/or a billionaire by 22.

Isn't it fascinating that we do this series on Redefining Success yet the media glorifies success for the young. So fascinating. The articles goes on to say, "When we're constantly being made aware of how young or old other people are and marking our lives by the milestones of hitting 25, and 30, and so on, age becomes central to our identity. Obsession with youth also reflects and perpetuates a widespread social fear of aging without a cultural ideal of old age or even middle age."

Says psychoanalyst Eric Erikson, "Our civilization does not really harbor a concept of the whole life." Wow. The glorification of youth, yet to Glennon's

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point I think there's something sort of glorious, something sort of magical about 'aging out'. Aging out at 50 no less, which is hilarious that that's considered aging out. But nevertheless, aging out of who and what the world is looking at. So then of all of a sudden you are very free to be anything and everything you want without any need to prove yourself a fit and ideal. Wow.

To me it's an invitation as Maya Angelou says, to become everything you've been meaning to be. And the reason we can finally do that now is because we can drop trying to be what the world needs us to be anymore. We're past that. The youth obsessed can finally leave us alone. Amazing. And yes, I know I have this knack for reframing things, for being an optimist, for finding the silver lining if you want to call it that. But for me this isn't a silver lining. It's not the good coming from an otherwise bad thing, it's just totally fucking good. It's outright good, incredible, amazing.

If I am lucky this is just the midpoint of my life. I have so much more living to do. And to be able to do that with more freedom feels like winning the lottery. I saw a meme recently and you probably saw it too, that when the show, The Golden Girls started in the 80s, the characters were supposed to be in their 50s. But if you look at the images of them in the show they look like what I would think was 70. The matronly clothes, the old lady beauty shop set and style hairdos, that speaks volumes about what culture thought about 50 back then.

And in the meme it's actually comparing the way they looked to the cast of And Just Like That, The Sex and the City reboot where the characters look much younger in the way they dress, and wear their hair, and carry themselves. It's such an interesting comparison and a statement about our culture. Yet if you've seen the press about the backlash that the characters of And Just Like That have gotten about how old, and grey, and wrinkled they look, it is disgusting.

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Sarah Jessica Parker says in several news articles that she is over the criticism that she and her Sex and the City co-stars have received for how their physical appearances have changed as they've gotten older. She says, "There's so much misogynistic chatter in response to us that would never happen about a man, period."

She's 56 and she told Vogue in an accompanying interview with her December photoshoot for Vogue, cover shoot actually. She said, "Grey hair, grey hair, grey hair. Does she have grey hair?" Referring to this picture of her rocking natural grey hair, it went viral, when she was spotted having lunch back in July with friends. So, she says, "I'm sitting with Andy Cohen and he has a full head of grey hair and he's exquisite. So why is it okay for him?" I don't know what to tell you people. "It almost feels as if people don't want us to be perfectly okay with where we are", she says.

And if they almost enjoy us being pained by being who are today, whether we choose to age naturally and not look perfect, or whether you do something that makes you feel better. She also says, "I know what I look like. I have no choice. What am I supposed to do about it, stop aging, disappear?" Yeah, exactly. The world would have us disappear.

Back in 2019 Sarah said she was not going to get plastic surgery, she wasn't going under the knife she told Elle Magazine. And I say, bravo, SJP, you show up however you fucking want to because that's exactly what I plan to do. But it's still crazy. It's still wild how we are objectified. We're not young enough to be young but we're not supposed to be old.

So how do we reconcile this aging thing with leaning into what we really want to do with the next part of our lives? How do we want to define success moving forward? And if you're not 50 yet, okay. But maybe you're still working on redefining success and intentionally opting out of the youth obsession and the objectification. And all of the pressures like hustle culture, and diet culture, and beauty culture that the world puts on us,

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turning us into objects and completely dehumanizing us. How are you going to be intentional around that?

And how are you going to be intentional about your success in say the next 10 years of your life? I'm having a great time thinking about what I want my 50s to be. What will I accomplish and how will I show up in this next 10 years between 50 and 60? I get to design my life on purpose for this next decade, sort of like a blank slate but with all the wisdom that I've gained in my 50 years so far. And boy, is that picture of what I want to do in the next 10 years really different than what I was thinking about when I was 40 and looking at that decade, that decade until I would be 50.

It's sort of shocking really when I notice the difference. I remember Oprah, speaking of Oprah, also talking about what it was like to turn 60 and how you finally take no shit as she said, 'take no shit'. She's quoted as saying, "You take no shit, none, not a bit. In your 40s you want to say you take no shit but you still do. In your 60s you take none. There is both a quickening and a calming. There is a sense that you don't have as much time on Earth as you once did. And for me there is also a sense of calming about that, people coming with anything less than what is the truth or authentic, don't even try."

I love that. She says, "The older you get the more truth and authenticity become what's important." Bravo, here, here. "We may not realize how much shit we really take on a daily basis. And maybe if we all learn to take a little less and instead focus on what's truly authentic, we can get on a better trajectory towards our goals and dreams." Yes, Oprah, yes. So as much as I'm excited about my 50s, I don't even have to think of them as my last hurrah either.

As Oprah shows, the 60s are equally magical. So, I'm free to just use this next decade to lean into exactly what I want. So how is that different than before? Well, let me tell you. So last week I was on a Zoom call, like a catch up call with some of my friends that went through master coach

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training with me. And that was a grueling experience by the way, our master coach training, full of growth and discomfort.

And so, for the 20 women or so that went through that together we have a special bond. We love each other and we love to catch up with each other about every six months or so. So, when it was my turn to update on this call I said, "Well, first, I don't want to work at all. I literally spend every day seeing how little work I can do." And we all laughed but I was serious. And I said, "I'm also in a rebellious and a reverent phase, stage actually, about everything. I'm questioning everything. Everything."

It's kind of funny. I'm sure a lot of you thought, when have you not been in a rebellious and a reverent stage, Tobi? But this one is different. I question everything now, everything we're told from society about ourselves, about business, about marketing, about how we should show up or must show up. I question everything about branding and being the spokesperson for my brand, and how I work with the team. I'm literally shaking shit up over here, turning it upside down and inside out.

And I told them I didn't know if it was because I'm turning 50 or just that I'm being rebellious. But either way I'm no longer accepting anything that other people put on me at all. I'm not willing to be anyone's guru, collaborate with you, yes. Guide you and share my wisdom, yes. Take the responsibility of being your guru, no. Be your own damn guru.

And I shared that I had seen a quote from a businessowner who's probably in her 40s or so. And it's a person I do really like and I enjoy following her. And I see her doing amazing things. But she had posted a quote that said something like, "Your job is to fulfil your potential because what the world needs is more inspiration from women like you." And I shared with my friends that reading that quote really pissed me off. When I read it I was like, "The hell it is my job." It's not my job. It's not my responsibility to be your inspiration. Be your own inspiration.

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And yes, I get that her quote was meant to be empowering for a lot of women. And it is for a lot of women. But what I realized is that at some level this quote upholds the oppression of women. We're expected to be of service to all other women in this way. We're expected to be other people's inspiration. It's our job to show people what's possible. And I'm no longer accepting that as my job. You can still be inspired by me of course, but that's on you.

I'm not going into my 50s believing that I have to show up in a way that obligates me to be of service like this because then I'm not free to be myself. What if I no longer want to do things that are inspiring?

And then I saw another meme this week from the brilliant Simone Soul, a life coach and marketing expert who is wise beyond her years because she's really young, or young to me. And the face of Joyful Marketing, that's her brand, and this is what her quote, I think it was her words actually. This is what she said, "Stop", or actually she said, "Please stop. Please stop participating in the oppression of women by requiring that women around you take up space in a way that leaves everyone's questions answered and everyone's emotions confirmed."

And this further blew my mind. And just in case you don't quite understand that, because I had to read it two or three times myself to fully comprehend. Let me explain a little bit of what I think it means. To me she's saying, it's not women's job to make everyone cared for and taken care of and happy. We don't have to feel responsible for answering all the questions or being your shoulder to lean on or validate you. But we have been told that we do our entire lives is what I think.

But the big secret that they don't want you to know, they being the patriarchy, is that it's not your job and you have a choice. You can say no just like me. We are not successful because we martyr ourselves for everybody else. We are successful when we follow what we truly want. So, as I enter this first day of my 50th year and the first day of the next decade

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I'm feeling deep, deep joy and satisfaction. I'm feeling liberated and free to be a 100% myself. I have no plans to change me or go back to hustling.

I feel so open and totally curious and excited about what lies ahead. And I think I'm going into this decade with fewer rules and expectations for myself and others than any other decade before. I've learned that I'm already more successful in my 50 years than I might have ever dreamed of being in my lifetime. And that's not because of any boxes I've checked in my job or any number in my bank account, but because of the deep work I have done to love myself and accept myself completely without wanting to change myself anymore.

It's also from the unlearning and untethering I have done to the hustle, and diet culture, and to the patriarchy, and white supremacy. And it's from the work I've done to stop comparing myself to others and only comparing me to me, to notice my own growth. My success is also from the permission I give myself now to slow down and to be in the moment, and to enjoy what's really important for me, that's love and connection to myself and others, and it's collaboration. It's so good.

And my success is also from the commitment I've made to showing up publicly, my whole self in all my weirdness, and my values, and my beliefs, and standing up for what I know is right, even if it's not well received, even if it's not comfortable for me or for you.

So, as we come to the end of the success series, what about you? Even if you aren't having a milestone birthday this year like I am, what have you learned about success? How do you want to think differently about what matters to you? And when you get to the end of the next decade, or even the end of your life, which stuff do you want to make sure you've done in the name of success? It's probably no longer the things you used to think defines success. I know, me either.

So, cheers to my 50 years and cheers to you for taking this journey to redefine your success on your own terms. It's courageous work, it takes

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digging deep and showing up. But my God, is it worth the effort? The payoffs of joy, pleasure, love, freedom and rest are the most rewarding you can imagine. And they are all things that are engineered right out of the world's version of success.

So, it's up to each of us to choose those things for ourselves in spite of what the world, and our industries, and our families, and others would have us choose. Choose joy, choose pleasure, choose love, choose freedom, choose rest. I've chosen well finally. It's been a long time coming and I feel like I have arrived back home to me. The home that was there all along when I was hustling and striving but I just didn't see it. But I'm home and I invite you to come home to your truest self too and see what success feels like there because it's fucking amazing.

Okay, friends, see you next week. I'm off to celebrate 50. 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.