

## Ep #201: How to Be More Yourself



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Tobi Fairley**

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

## Ep #201: How to Be More Yourself

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 201.

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 friends, welcome to the aftermath. Really we call it the afterparty but last week's episode was my 200<sup>th</sup> show and my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. So how in the world do we follow that? Well, I'll be starting another series really soon because you loved the Redefining Success series. It spoke to so many of you. And I'm deep in the prep and the research actually for the next episodes, the next series. But in the meantime, I wanted to talk this week about how to be more yourself.

So, I get a lot of feedback as you can imagine from those of you who listen to the podcast or follow me on social media and also from those of you who work with me in my programs. And the majority of that feedback is positive, and supportive, and grateful and it's really fun to receive. But I learned a long time ago that if you only take the good feedback, or for that matter, only take the bad feedback you're likely going to show up in ways that are less authentic than the real you.

Now, I do get the occasional negative feedback and a lot of that, I wouldn't even call that negative, it's usually sent in a way that's meant to be helpful, or that the person thinks is with good intention. But it's typically a list of the ways they want me to change, the things they want me to do differently. And I'm sure if you've heard me talk about the concept of having manuals for people it's a spoken or unspoken book of rules we have for how other people should act so we can be happy.

Most of us have manuals for our spouses, and our kids but we also have them for other people, public figures, celebrities, even strangers. And the way it goes is that we think we know best how other people should act. But it's mainly for our own benefit because we believe other people's behaviors, either allow or prevent us from being happy. So, as you can imagine there are tons of manuals out there for how I should act, what I

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should talk about, how I should show up on my podcast, on my Instagram feed, all the places.

And I've seen this come up a lot in the last two years since I really started being more outwardly vocal about my beliefs and my politics, so being myself, which had people getting sad, I guess, because they sort of preferred the before me, the don't ask, don't tell version of me. Because then people could just assume that my beliefs or my politics aligned with theirs. And they didn't have to bump up against any of our differences which really shifts the responsibility to them to decide if they will continue to listen and learn from me.

So as opposed to them having to decide that, they would rather me change which I get. And even though I get it, it does annoy me too I guess when I think of the other people that I have to decide to unfollow, or whether or not to support, or a company that I can, or can't, or will, or won't buy from. Because I realized that maybe our values are out of alignment. Yeah, it kind of annoys me too, I get it. And it would just be so easy if they would be different but there's still the fact that I can just choose to not follow them, or support them, or work with them.

And I always trust that when I do that, when I choose that they're not for me anymore, that there is someone else out there that is better suited for me in this particular season of life. But I do have to say that as hard as it is to choose not to follow other people and support other people it can feel even harder as the person who is speaking up, and speaking out, and being themselves, to not let all those manuals and comments from other people move you away from your values and your authenticity.

For example, I recently got an email that said, "Hey, Tobi, I think the way you're now cursing in your messaging is overshadowing your purpose. Maybe it's because you didn't originally talk that way so I'm not used to it." But basically, she was saying, "Your language is making me uncomfortable." And as you can imagine I sometimes get the same type emails or comments about me sharing my politics, or talking about race, or

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gender related issues, or the LGBTQ community, or all kinds of other topics.

I would not say that my topics and my ideas are neutral or safe, they're definitely polarizing. And occasionally I get just the plain old rude or nasty comment but those are rare really. And when the unkind ones come up we usually just kind of toss them out because we know they're outliers. But what I think is important about the kind comments that want me to change is that they help me have a specific way of thinking about those comments that allow me to stay in the place of being my most authentic self and that's what I want to tell you about and teach you about today.

As I said on last week's podcast, my birthday episode, I'm no longer willing to be your guru or your inspiration. I said, "Be your own damn inspiration." And it's funny but I was also serious that this is really part of my philosophy these days of staying true to myself. And of course, you can still be inspired by me. I love getting the kind messages like the one I received this week that said, "Loved the birthday podcast and your entire attitude right now. I'm so inspired by your energy of freedom." It's fun to get those.

But getting those kinds of messages they do remind me that being my authentic self is doing a great service to a lot of people. And that's such a beautiful bonus to showing up in this way. But I don't then turn that into some need to people please even those who approve. So, as I said earlier, I have to sort of weigh both the positive and the negative and make sure I'm still being myself.

So, I don't let those make me people please or give people what they want to hear because the minute I step into that kind of energy I'm stepping out of following my heart, and my gut, and my intuition and showing up completely me. Now, the main tool I use to stay in this place of clarity about who I really am and what's authentic since both the positive and the negative feedback do have a big chance of derailing your authentic path at any time if you're not super clear about this. But what I use is that I remember that any feedback at all is the other person's thought model or thoughts, not mine.

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Now, what do I mean by that? Well, if you've followed me for long or listened to any of my episodes about thought work you know that I believe in the think, feel, do nature of the human brain or human behavior. We think something about a circumstance which creates a feeling in us and then we take an action or an inaction which creates some kind of result in our life.

And at the school where I learned life coaching and was originally trained in life coaching I learned a framework called the model that just helps organize the think, feel, do cycle and the steps so that we can more easily see on paper our thought, or the circumstance, and then the thought we think about it. And then what feeling, and action, and result it creates. So, it's just a little tool to help us see, when I think this, this happens. Well, we each have thousands of thoughts a day and each one goes through this think, feel, do cycle.

So, any time I get feedback good or bad I remember it's coming from the other person's think, feel, do cycle, not my own. For example, when the feedback came in recently about my cursing I was able to see that it was her thought, not mine, that the cursing was overshadowing my message. My thoughts about my cursing are completely different. I realized that it may overshadow the message for her.

But there are other people who give me feedback that they love how I'm showing up, that they love that I'm more myself and that I let my hair down, so to speak. And that I'm being real, including cursing and that they relate to me more than ever. So, two different people, two different think, feel, do cycles, two different comments. So interesting. And it's important we realize that we don't control other people's thoughts, nor can we control them even if we want to. We might have some influence occasionally I suppose, if what we do or say resonates with them, or polarizes them.

But mostly we can't control other people's thinking and subsequently their feelings or their actions either. So, when I get feedback like this, good or bad, I now have the ability to see that even their good feelings aren't because of me. They're because of the thoughts they are thinking about

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me. And my words or actions are only the circumstance in their thought model, everything else that happens is on them. So interesting.

What I love about this approach is that it stops the blaming of others, really for anything because as long as I believe your thoughts, good or bad, are on you. And I am the only person responsible for how I think, feel and act. I can't really blame you for anything good or bad, I'm on my own. Now, that can feel scary. It's sort of nice to have a scapegoat sometimes, isn't it? But it's also super liberating to think this way.

And this is the tool, the trick, the practice that I've used to become myself in all parts of my life lately. It's the change you're seeing in me, it's that 'attitude' of freedom that one friend commented on because I've decided to be completely free from other people's thought models. Now, I'm not saying that it doesn't enter my mind but I can manage my mind remembering that when it's not aligned with what is authentic for me I can remember it's their thoughts. So, when someone comes with an opinion or comment I can see it for what it is, their thought, not mine.

Now, sometimes their thoughts and mine are similar, or aligned, or sometimes even their negative thoughts make me think differently. And maybe I do want to adjust something. But in those circumstances my actions, yeah, they might please the other person but I want to be clear that that situation is sort of a coincidence, or a bonus, or a byproduct if it's pleasing, but it's a byproduct of the fact that either we're thinking similarly about a particular circumstance or I've decided to think differently on purpose. But our thoughts, feelings and actions are still totally our own.

Approaching life this way has been the very thing that has allowed me to show up more authentically in so many ways in the past two years. It's helped me be honest about my politics, my thoughts on human rights, the George Floyd issue and everything that came after that. It's helped me move away from hustle culture and think differently about productivity and success. It has helped me break up with diet culture and giving up any belief that I need to change my body, or ascribe to the latest diet or exercise regimen.

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It's allowed me to be so comfortable in my body, in my own skin, and honestly, in my own mind. One of the things I find so interesting about how our minds work, especially when we aren't familiar with this think, feel, do cycle is that we feel compelled to share our opinions with other people on what they ought, or need to, or should do. We have an idea which is our manual for them but we think it's the truth, they really should show up this way. That's when we don't know there's such a thing as a think, feel, do cycle or a manual.

And in years past it would make me kind of angry or annoyed if someone had shared an opinion like this in the ways they think I should change or show up. I would feel almost some obligation to oblige. But now I just find it interesting. It tells me about them and gives me some clues about what they believe but I don't make it mean anything about me.

So, for example the email I got about my cursing, first I didn't really get shaken up about it. Because I have heard many stories about the same scenario from my friends, Corinne Crabtree and Kara Loewenthal because they both are super successful life coaches who curse all the time in their messaging and podcasts, I just curse occasionally. But they curse a lot and they talk often about all the unsolicited feedback they get.

And both of these women who curse a lot, in fact Kara's podcast is called the Unf\*ck Your Brain podcast. So even in the title of her podcast is the eff word yet she gets tons of emails from people telling her she shouldn't curse and how it takes away from her purpose and her message which is so funny to me. It's in the title of her podcast. It should be a precursor, a little warning of what's to come. But both of these women earned multiple millions of dollars last year and the year before, and the year before, and the year before.

In fact, Corinne earned over 10 million in revenues and Kara probably five or more, I mean they're making lots of money. So cursing isn't keeping their message from getting to at least a lot of people who are aligned with their message. So, the interesting thing when I got this message about the way that I'm showing up is that it didn't make me think differently, or make it

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mean anything about me at all, or that I should change how I show up. It just made me fascinated and so curious about her thoughts and where they come from.

So, the patriarchal society we live in works to control and police women's behavior, especially a good southern girl like me. And just to be clear, you know the patriarchy, it's not a person, it's not this woman, it's not a person, it's not all men. So, let's define the patriarchy for a minute. According to Wikipedia the patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominant roles of political leadership. They have more authority, more social privilege and they control the property in the society.

So, the arguments of the patriarchy exists and is a problem contend that gender roles and gender inequality or inequity are instruments of power and have become social norms to maintain control over women. And serve to justify the oppression of women which I would agree. And historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, religious and economic organizations of a range of different cultures. Most contemporary societies are in practice patriarchal as is ours.

So, a patriarchal system that can detract women from their purpose and their potential with the practice of making sure they are thin, and beautiful, and ladylike, and don't break any of these norms that the patriarchy fights to uphold to keep us in line. That will ensure that we women don't have too much power. And that's what I think about when I hear this sort of feedback.

I think that it's really interesting and it makes perfect sense that some people, or even a lot of people, especially a lot of women would believe that my cursing is inappropriate, or unladylike, or in this case, distracting from my purpose. Because that is what the patriarchy tells us, that's what we've been taught. It's what I was taught my whole life. And there are many patriarchal, and cultural, and religious beliefs like this that are commonly used to judge other people and distract them from their true purpose and their true selves, especially women.



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So, it's sort of ironic that me cursing may not take away from my message, but me worrying about and getting distracted when someone complains about my cursing could totally take me away from delivering my message in an authentic way. It's really fascinating because if we can objectify women and judge women for things like how they look, or what size they are, or how many tattoos they have, or what their hair looks like.

Especially for women of color they deal with comments about their hair a lot or what kind of bodies we have, or if we have body hair, or how we talk, meaning do we curse? Or do we have grammar that people want to criticize and correct? Or maybe how many times we say like in a sentence. I remember Kara Loewenthal saying a lady said she had to stop listening to her podcast because Kara says like too much.

But any time they criticize and want to control what we're talking about, or how we're talking, if we're talking about politics, or social justice, or money, or religion, all the no no's we should never talk about. That is an attempt to control the behavior and limit the power of the person speaking, in particular, women. And more often than not it works, that's why the patriarchy has been alive and well for so long.

Because as my friend, Susan Hyatt says, if we're distracted enough to think about our body, and what we're going to eat all the time, and if we should be thinner and shrink we're leaving millions of dollars on the table in our businesses which also means leaving a lot of power. So, if we can be obsessed with being thin and beautiful instead of doing our work in the world, guess what? We make less money, we have less power.

So, for me knowing that if you don't like my cursing, or my politics, or my body size, or something else about me, that's coming from your thoughts, and your beliefs, and your internalized patriarchy, your internalized misogyny, your internalized respectability politics or other systems that are very normal to have really, I guess, infiltrated your belief systems, or mine because we're indoctrinated into that kind of thinking all the time. And we always have been for hundreds of years in the society, and the country, and the world we live in, it's very normal.

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I have a lot of this too. I'm not pointing fingers. I have plenty of internalized patriarchy, internalized misogyny, internalized respectability politics myself that I have to, if I want to not sort of inflict it on other people or myself, I have to work on it. I have to get really aware. But all of that in someone else has nothing to do with my belief systems. So as long as I know that then I am free to keep showing up in a way that pleases me, or that aligns with me.

Now, before we go further let me also define respectability politics because I dropped that in there. And just in case you don't know what it means or what I mean by that, respectability politics refers to the way that people who are attempting to make social change present their demands in a way that is acceptable to the dominant standards in society. So, it's similar to tone policing, I guess.

But it's basically when we water down our approach to try to create change in some way by not making other people too uncomfortable in the process or in the delivery in hopes that they may agree with us or get onboard with us. So, it would mean that any time I'm talking about any of these topics, politics, religion, that I ease into it and I certainly don't curse. And I'm very ladylike and I'm not aggressive. I don't sound angry and all the things that would make you the listener, uncomfortable.

So, it's a common complaint especially when talking about topics like racism, or hearing from women of color in particular, but also just women in general that we be less angry, or less aggressive. Because this message would be 'better received' by the people that need to hear the message. I mean how many times have we heard that angry Black woman story. And that if she would just be less aggressive her message would be better received by white people that need to hear it which I believe is a bunch of BS.

I have this conversation with my friend, Gail, all the time. And how often her tone has been policed for years when she was working in corporate and other places. And this is true at any level when we are practicing those 'respectability politics', the person delivering the message practices those

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to try to be listened to or heard so that you're not uncomfortable. But it's also sort of inflicted on us when we have a message that other people are telling us how we should deliver it, so that it feels more comfortable.

So, at some level wanting me not to curse and wanting me to align with what feels comfortable to you is respectability politics. You want me to be respectable, or ladylike, like a good southern woman 'should be'. But like one of my recent podcast reviews that was completely unsolicited but it was so fun for me to read said, this is what it said on my podcast, you can go check it out.

"Toby is not what you might expect from a nice southern girl. She stands up for what she believes and is seeking to improve herself and others. She is not looking to conform to the status quo but works towards a higher level that often makes one confront the conditioned norm. Thank you, Tobi, I really appreciate your voice, care and unabashed forward movement." So, the interesting thing about this, again, it's a positive comment. I can take it with a grain of salt if I don't want to get into a people pleaser mode.

But what I think is fascinating is she noticed and points out that because I don't just 'follow the rules' of a good southern girl, that I'm causing other people to confront the conditioned norm, which is exactly what we're talking about here. So that means when I show up most authentically myself, I am pushing up against those conditions, or those condition norms, or those rules for some of you. And depending on your belief system and your thoughts about me or my actions you may be triggered to think and feel in a way that feels negative to you.

Our cultural norms say women should be polite, and ladylike, and thin, and more soft spoken. They shouldn't tackle taboo subjects like we've talked about, the ones like politics, and religion, and sexuality, and money, and racism, and the patriarchy, and white supremacy, and anything else that makes anyone uncomfortable which are all the things that I often talk about. Maybe I have a little rebel in me. What do you think?

But women should be feminine, that's what the world says, we should be feminine, and motherly, and nurturing. We should have children and get

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married to someone of the opposite sex. We should be in relationships with those humans of the opposite sex. And we should always align with the sex assigned to us at birth. And we could go on, and on, and on with the social and societal norms. There's just a giant rulebook. And there's even some extra chapters if you live in the south.

But the point is that any time that I bump up against those while being myself, bump up against them for you or you bump up against them when I'm being myself, then I'm going to get feedback, both positive and negative. I'll get positive feedback from those who love the example or the permission because they also want to bump up or even obliterate those norms, those rules that they have felt restricted by, or oppressed by, or that were out of alignment for them.

But any negative feedback is going to come from those who feel more comfortable staying aligned with the belief systems that uphold those traditional cultural norms. I get it. It all makes perfect sense to me. And I'm not pointing fingers either way, I'm just now curious and clear, or more clear. I have some more clues on what's happening in the brains and the thought models of the people who are giving either positive or negative feedback.

And having that awareness allows me to keep showing up 100% myself knowing that any comments from other people are about their own journey and not really about me at all. Believe me, I was entrenched in all those traditional belief systems for a long time. My mom spent most of my life telling me to be ladylike. But being told that really just never felt aligned. It's not like I want to be unladylike.

I just felt like somebody was always trying to control me or the world was always trying to control me. "Be quieter, Tobi, shrink down, be softer, don't make anybody feel uncomfortable. Don't do anything that would be perceived as unladylike." And yeah, I'm still ladylike in a lot of ways. This girl loves big hair, and makeup, and fashion. But believing someone outside of me defines ladylike for me I think is what didn't work for me.

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And so, I did have to giggle a little bit to myself when the person sending the email about my cursing was trying to be kind because she was very kind and very respectful. And she said, "I hope this is received well." I mean she was very nice. And she even went on to say, "I even curse on occasion." And so maybe make me feel like she wasn't judging me or something, which was really sweet. She was trying to deliver this message in a way that I would hear it. But what it made me think to myself was, I think I curse more than occasionally, my friend.

I think the eff word is my family's favorite word. Since the last two years and what we've gone through, has involved living through a pandemic, the Trump presidency, the last election, the insurrection. I mean the eff word is practically a staple around my house. We maybe even use it more than and, but and or, if I'm being perfectly honest.

And to really shake things up for you and freak some of you out. I'm a mom who curses around my teen and she curses around me. I mean I know she was doing it behind my back, friends, so why would I make her be any other version of herself in front of me because of respectability politics? So, I'm just that mom that's like, "Be yourself." So yeah, there's a lot of cursing flying around here with my 16 year old and my husband and me. That's how we roll. We're 100% ourselves. And that might make you very uncomfortable but it makes us feel very liberated and relaxed.

My main goal is to have others in my life feel seen and heard around me as their true self. And this is really most important for me with my daughter. So, whether you're my daughter or anybody else, my team, bring your whole self around me, friends, bring your whole self at home, bring your whole self to work, in our friendships. It's as I said, exactly how I roll. So having said this, I'm absolutely comfortable receiving the feedback both good and bad. You can bring it, all of it because I said be yourself. It helps me know you more.

And it's always a little litmus test for me to help me continue to be my whole self and not fall into some level of people pleasing. And I can hear you and I can agree or disagree with you. And I can still understand where you're

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coming from and know that I don't have to do anything in response but continue to be myself. And on the flipside, it's your job to decide if you align with me, if you align with my teachings, my ideas, and want to continue to follow me, or learn from me. No hard feelings on my end either way.

I want you to be 100% yourself. There is tons of people I no longer align with that I used to. Some of my major mentors in my life, I move away from. I move out of that season. I move out of alignment from. I think it's how it's supposed to work. And I get such awesome and diverse feedback every week. And I think one of the comments I got online for my birthday really summed this whole conversation up very well. It said, "Tobi, I'm grateful you stepped into your magic so I can see my own." And that's really my goal here.

My magic is not your magic but maybe, just maybe if you hear some of my tools, or the way I think, or watch how I show up, maybe it will give you a little window into yourself so you can see your own magic and show up in your own most authentic way. And so many of the letters and emails, and comments I get reflect this very idea because I think of myself really as a mirror to you, that's what we are all the time as humans. Any time you're engaging with or responding to me, it's just a reflection back to you of your own beliefs. And that's true of everybody you're encountering in your life.

All relationships, whether we feel triggered, or seen, we're really just looking in a mirror. And I love being that catalyst, that mirror to reflect back to you yourself so that you can be more of yourself, and love yourself the exact way, and size, and person that you are. So, I hope me holding up that mirror gives you the courage to show up and stretch yourself, and maybe take the path less taken and speak up for what you feel is right.

And by all means don't feel pressured to change yourself just because your true self is also acting as a mirror for another person and possibly triggering some negative response from them. Because that's on them, not you, and you didn't do anything wrong.

Okay friends, so keep being you, or even be more of you than you've ever been, knowing that others' responses are about them. And if you're like me

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and you want to give a big eff you to hustle culture, and diet culture, and shrinking your body, or shrinking your voice, or quieting your voice, or respectability politics, or anything else. But you're afraid of what others will think and how they will respond then know that no matter what your views, there are plenty of folks out there who align with your thinking.

And when you start showing up they'll come into your orbit. And yeah, you'll get some that don't like it and that's okay too. But it's like magic that you start to align with the other people that want to hear your message and want to align with you but you first have to be willing to be your true self.

Okay friends, that's what I have for you today. That's my tool, that's my trick, that's my practice for being my own real self, for staying in my own think, feel, do cycle and getting out of everybody else's. And I hope that it serves you and will help you stay true to you. And I'll see you back here next week with another episode of the Design You podcast.

Oh, and for those of you who have loved my messages lately and who want to work with me, don't forget when you're listening to this when it comes out, the doors are open for our Design You membership, our program. It's not even a membership anymore. It's a year long program. It is awesome. I coach with you every week in there on our group calls that are amazing. And there's so much more in there, all our courses, all our stuff.

So, if you want more of this, if you align with me, if you're like, "Yes, Tobi, you reflect me back to myself, we are aligned", then head over and check out our Design You program because I can't wait to work with you really soon. Okay friends, see you next week, bye for now.

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