

## Ep #202: Breaking Up with Hustle Culture



### Full Episode Transcript

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**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #202: Breaking Up with Hustle Culture

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 202.

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, hello, hello, how are you? While I'm recording this, it's full blown winter here. So, we're enjoying a couple of snow days and I happen to love it so bring it on. Any excuse for a day by the fire, hanging out in bed or wearing my fuzzy socks and drinking warm beverages is absolutely fine by me. So, in case it's also cold where you are when you're listening to this, and snowy, and you're feeling the joy of a snow day, a day off work or being around your house, or cuddling with your pups in your fuzzy socks like me.

Or if by the time you're listening to this or when you do listen to this, it's not that all but you're wishing for the pace of a snow day then today I'm going to talk to you about how to stop the hustle and how to unlearn the laziness lie. And what I am currently calling in my own life, breaking up with hustle culture.

Now, I was just talking to my CFO, Emily, about this earlier this week. And I was telling her that making big changes like this in my life and true for our lives is really something that does feel like a breakup. In a lot of ways unlearning habits and tuning out society's expectations for us feels terrible, and hard, and scary, and sad.

I think we grieve our old habits and those quick fixes, not because they are working, but because they're familiar. And they're sort of like our security blanket, our go to move when we feel insecure. And all of this really is similar to how we feel when we have a breakup with a partner or a friend, even a breakup that needs to happen but it's the habit and the security that we will miss the most. So, I feel sort of right now like I'm divorcing the cultural expectations and all the opinions of those around me that still buy into the hustle way of thinking and living.

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But it's not just saying goodbye that feels hard. It's also the pressure to replace those old habits, that those old patterns of behavior that I've been practicing for dozens of years. It's the pressure to replace those with new ones that also feels hard because it feels like I have work to do. So, it's like I'm simultaneously breaking up and I still have to get up and go to work which feels double hard.

So, for example, in my business this year we decided that we're only offering our two coaching programs, Design You and Millionaire Mentorship. And they're both amazing. But we're no longer offering one-on-one private coaching with me. And we're also not launching any new programs, or offers, or seminars for sale this year. We're just giving ourselves the time and the space to really do what we do best even better.

And I wanted that to happen but I also wanted more time, not only to focus on those two main offers but for myself, more free time, more downtime, more margin. And all of that sounds great, and wonderful, and amazing until one of two things happen. Number one, when someone I really love, or admire, or I'd like to work with asks me if I offer one-on-one coaching and I have to tell them no.

Or number two, sales are going a little slower at any given time than I would like in our two main programs. And I would love to be able fall back on my old pattern of just going out and signing a few more people up for private coaching to bring in more cash or more revenue in the moment. And saying no to both of these options feels really uncomfortable, hence me equating it with a breakup. I can no longer go back for a booty call with saying yes or just putting people into my one-on-one coaching. I can't do it. You know what that's like.

You're like, we've broken up, do not call him, don't drunk dial him or her. It's a hard no. So that's what I feel like right now. I have to break up with saying yes even when it's comfortable, even when it feels lonely, even when it feels sad, even when it feels hard. I have to break up with taking a bunch of urgent action to try and fix something instead of solving for a better solution that isn't having me hustle as the answer.

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You all, I just seriously thought of that booty call thing on the fly, that is my new thought in my own brain. Do not booty call with a yes. Do not booty call with putting people in private coaching. Anyway, in the past when I needed money that's exactly what I did. I would hop on, I would figure it out. I would create it myself because I'm a great salesperson. And there's something that just feels really good about swooping in and saving the day for the company, and the team, and myself, it's like I pulled open my shirt and there's that Wonder Woman or Super Woman t-shirt under there.

And it feels good but the problem is just like with a booty call there's the walk of shame the next day. There's all the stuff that feels bad about swooping in, about pulling off the saving the day because it always has me hustling on nights and weekends or at the last minute just because the amount in my bank account has me feeling uneasy, feeling lonely, feeling scared. And I'm really over that. I'm over saving the day with sheer might. I'm over all the pressure to be the one person who can fix our problems with my hard work or my ideas.

And don't get me wrong, it was never that the team was unwilling or unable to do their part. It was just that I had this bad habit of swooping in and making things happen and I totally see why. There's a lot of excitement with that kind of urgency. There's a lot of external validation and even self-validation of see, I knew I could fix this. But any level of believing we're the fixer or the firefighter requires that we keep having problems to fix or fires to put out. And I'm totally over being the firefighter, completely over it.

So, what's the alternative you ask? And I get that you ask that because we don't even see the alternatives because we're all conditioned just to hustle. We're all in the habit of saying, "Just get out of the way and let me handle it." We are all used to doing whatever it takes in the moment to mitigate fear or uncertainty but that will forever keep us on the hustle bus. And the alternative is to fix the root of the problem.

So, in the example of sales what should the entire team be doing, not just Tobi? And what should we be doing on an ongoing regular basis to get enough traffic, and leads, and conversions so we're not relying on me to

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muscle my way to success or engineer sales on the fly? And how do we not ever leave ourselves to the last minute or when we're getting nervous about money, but we're always thinking ahead?

And we have these systems, and practices, and processes in place to create consistent cashflow all the time while we're breaking up with hustle culture. Because to really do that, to create the consistent cashflow all the time without having our hair on fire as I call it, requires that we break up with hustle culture. But I want to be really, really honest here, and you know me, I cannot tell a lie. Honesty is my middle name.

So here is the brutal honest truth. Although breaking up with hustle culture sounds amazing and makes sense on one hand, I have to tell you that it feels terrible. And when I say terrible I mean terrible, awful, horrible, painful. It feels like ass to break up with hustle culture. So why is that? Well, one reason is the fact that one of the things that people I coach in Design You and in the creative industries hate more than anything else in the world, so you can check in and see if this is true for you too. But what people absolutely hate is saying no.

We hate saying no to clients even if they're not ideal clients. We hate saying no to ourselves. It feels so warm, and fuzzy, and people pleasy to say yes and we love it and we hate saying no. So instead of saying no we consistently sacrifice ourselves, and our families, and our nights, and our weekends by saying yes to taking one more client on or squeezing in one ore job even though we're already booked, and tired, and overworked, and overwhelmed. Because the thought of saying no just feels too awful.

And the fact that someone wants to hire us also feels flattering. It strokes our ego. So, we're like, wait, on one hand I can say no and turn down the ego stroking. Or on the other hand I can say yes in the moment even though I know it's against my better judgment because it feels warm, and fuzzy. And I get the ego stroking like a good pet would get from its owner. And I don't want to break up with that. And also, then if that weren't enough, on top of that stroking, and ego love, and saying yes, and people pleasing, is our fear that sounds like this. But what if I need that money?

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It's always in the back of our mind, what if I need that money? If I turn this down will I be sorry? Because even though I don't have time to do the job or do a good job, what if I need that money? Which makes us afraid to turn work down no matter what. So, to break up with hustle culture we have to be willing to feel the breakup. We have to be willing to feel what it feels like to say no a lot. We have to feel the uncertainty of not taking on jobs.

We have to trust that if we say yes to the right jobs and no to everything else, and if we're clear about our finances that we won't go out of business. And it might feel uncomfortable until we get all of those processes and ongoing steps that are not hustly in place. Sometimes we've heard that saying, 'it might get worse before it gets better'. And that's what it feels like to break up with hustle culture.

We have to trust that by turning away clients when we truly don't have time to do their work, or at least do it without sacrificing our wellbeing and ourselves in the process. We have to trust that that is exactly what will create the life we want even when it feels terrible in the short run.

So, when you think of it this way it makes total sense to me why most people never get off the hustle bus, why they never break up with hustle culture, because they can't take the feelings, they can't feel how awful it feels to get to the other side of the breakup. They try it for a minute, they dip their toe in it, they feel uncomfortable for a bit. And then it becomes too much and they say, "Screw it, I'm taking that job. I know I don't have time to do it well or to do it at all really but it feels just too scary to not take it."

You may have heard me say in the past how much I resonate with the quote, 'discomfort is the currency of your dreams'. And this instance proves that that could not be more true. If you dream of having a more balanced and sustainable workload and life, if you dream of the time freedom, and calmer days, and more enjoyable life that's possible. If you dream any of that then that dream can only be achieved by feeling the discomfort of breaking up with the old habits and behaviors that are driven by hustle culture because what got us here won't get us there.

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I recently read a really good book called Laziness Does Not Exist by Devon Price. She's a PhD, a professor in Chicago. And she talks a lot about the laziness lie which is her term, not mine, but it's such a good term that I wanted to use it here. So, I definitely recommend her book. It really resonated with me in so many ways.

But the laziness lies, that voice in our head, or in our gut. Or sometimes coming from people outside of us a lot of times coming from people outside of us, and our life are authors of books we're reading, the productivity books, the gurus, the success coaches that say, "We should avoid lazy at all costs." And Devon does a great job of showing how the laziness lie shows up in our lives. And you all, I've been practicing the laziness lie forever, my entire life, the whole thing.

One of the main things I remember from my childhood, but heck, my whole life is my mom saying, "Just don't be lazy", or, "I can't deal with lazy people. I can deal with just about anything but someone being lazy", or, "They just don't want to work. They don't want to help. Get up, don't be lazy." And I know she wasn't trying to cause me or anyone else any harm because she came by this belief honestly too from her parents and from society. Because as Devon Price points out in this book, this is a cultural belief.

But it manifested in me in a lot of overworking, and in an inability to relax. I'm unable to relax. This has been something I've been trying to relearn for years. The root of our hatred of lazy in our society and in our families comes from both religious and societal, or cultural, or more accurately, capitalistic views. So, if you have a religious background at all you may have heard the phrase, 'idle hands or the devil's workshop', which means don't sit still, don't do nothing. And there are so many more things like this, 'the early bird gets the worm'.

All the things that perpetuate the beliefs of anti-laziness and pro hustle, pro productivity. And this stuff goes all the way back to ages ago, puritanical religious beliefs but it also was really exacerbated in America and in other places in the world during, I think what's technically the second industrial revolution. But the industrial revolution with assembly lines, and factory

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work, and Henry Ford played a role in this. Capitalism turned us into machines, into robots, trying to squeeze out as many hours of productivity as possible.

And it wasn't just from adults, there were periods of time where children were working 12 hour days in many cultures, including our own. And it was all about working us humans as machines which was not at all what was happening prior to that, even back in the renaissance when people would work for three or four hours a day in their craft or their art. And they would study and learn.

They would, you know, they were philosophers, and artists, and scholars, and scientists that knew that a well lived life was more balanced and about rest, and naps, and leisurely lunches but several hours of work mixed in. But all of that went away when we became robots thanks to the cultural beliefs about productivity. But it was always about money and power, which is capitalism. And you've heard me say I'm not anti-capitalist but I am definitely anti-hustle. And we've been taught that the only way to succeed is hard work. We've been fed and sold tools to maximize our productivity.

Heck, I've sold those tools myself and taught them. But the laziness lie almost killed me and my marriage. And it's still something that I have to fight all the time. I've been on my journey now to stop the hustle, meaning unsubscribe from hustle culture and beliefs really a 100% committed to it for about two to three years. But I started dipping my toe in it as far back as 10 years ago when I was really feeling major burnout at about age 39. And I knew that it was a lie but I kept getting sucked back in.

But finally for the last two or three years it has been my belief system that laziness doesn't exist and the hustle culture is a lie. And for the last year or so I've been on a mission to reclaim the word 'lazy', to champion laziness, to make it my goal, my favorite pastime. Because other words that have been made bad, or evil, or undesirable and are vernacular in our language, kind of like the way people in larger bodies have been reclaiming the word 'fat' to just be a description like tall or short because they're tired of it meaning something bad, or ugly, or undesirable.



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I believe we must do the same exact same thing with lazy. Just recently I was taking a recertification test for my master life coach certification. And I've been trying to figure out anyway if the school where I was certified is still in alignment with me and my beliefs because there's a lot of ways that it's not anymore. So, I've been trying to assess the pros and cons, and weigh the benefit and cost of continuing to be certified by this particular school.

Now, don't get me wrong, my certificate as a life coach there and then a master life coach were probably the two most important things I've ever done in my adult life, to bring me to where I am today. And my happiness and joy, and even in my thinking about anti-hustle, and anti-productivity mindsets. But I don't know that they still align. So, learning about thought work was life changing, learning how to feel on purpose, and think on purpose, and process emotions, life changing. Some of the most important skills I know.

But one of the current philosophies of this school that we were tested on was the difference between rest and laziness. And the teaching and training in this concept from the school perpetuated the lie that laziness is bad, but rest is good they said. And this was like a loophole. This is to me like when a diet culture concept calls itself wellness. It suddenly tries to rebrand itself. And so, to me this idea of laziness is bad, but rest is good is it's sort of like rebranding hustle culture to try to make it look positive.

But here's what infuriates me about the concept, it was taught in this particular training that rest really only makes sense if you've earned the rest from doing your work first, from being successful first, from getting shit done first. And then and only then should you rest because you've earned the rest. You all, this makes me furious to think about. The fact that we're perpetuating these lies that we have to earn rest is one of the biggest causes of our physical and mental disease that we currently deal with at an epidemic level in society. We do not have to earn rest.

The other thing that was taught in this training was by no means should we ever call ourselves lazy because lazy is such a dirty word. And we

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shouldn't basically mean girl ourselves that way, or label ourselves with that awful word just in case we make it true as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

And of course, I'm paraphrasing here. And maybe being a tiny bit dramatic but this is really close to what the training was about, the concept was about, this concept of rest versus lazy making rest good and lazy bad. And it just further perpetuates hustle culture and the laziness lie and it makes me so angry. I literally kind of had to hold my nose, not think real hard when answering the questions to get credit for recertification on this particular question. And yeah, it was just one question on the test. But it was so out of alignment for me.

I could hardly type the words. I could hardly say why rest was good and laziness was bad. And the whole time I knew as I was typing that I vehemently disagreed with the teaching. I literally practice calling myself lazy on purpose as a compliment. It feels like one of the healthiest descriptions of myself as a recovering workaholic. It feels both liberating and rebellious to champion lazy, to claim it, to not apologize for it. And I get not everybody is a recovering workaholic.

Maybe you've struggled with procrastination, maybe laziness hasn't served you. But I still want you to be careful demonizing lazy and to see what else is going on for you. Because for me demonizing lazy really led me to becoming a workaholic. When we reclaim lazy, the word lazy, the concept of lazy it feels like breaking up with hustle culture, just like reclaiming the word fat feels like breaking up with diet culture.

And let me say, if you resonate with this concept, if you want to break up with hustle culture, if you want to get rid of the laziness lie. If you want to stop believing the cultural definition and glorification of productivity. If you want to redefine success there's so many great books on this topic that I highly recommend you read including I think my very favorite on the topic called Do Nothing by Celeste Headlee. And then also the book I've already mentioned today, There's No Such Thing as Lazy, or it's actually called Laziness Does Not Exist by Devon Price.

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So, both of these authors, both Celeste and Devon who are great scholars and give so much history about the how and the why of the hustle culture. How it all began, how it really took hold in recent years, semi-recent years with the industrial revolution, and the assembly line, and what's happened after that. It's so helpful to hear the history and to help us understand how we got to where we are today. But they also both address the problem with technology.

Now, my relationship with tech is love hate, it's changed my life but it takes a toll on me. And it's the same for you probably. It takes a toll on us in so many ways. One of the big problems with technology and the hustle culture though is actually not technology's fault because here's what happened. Technology actually did its job by making things easier and faster. It was our productivity and hustle culture mindset that perpetuated the problem.

Because instead of getting the benefit of doing work in half the time, because back in the 70s even, people predicted that our workdays and work weeks would get so much shorter, and we would have so much more free time because of technological advances. Even just the things that were becoming so commonplace like no longer having to handwash your clothes or your dishes. But guess what, hustle culture said, "Hey, now that we've freed up all those hours, let's not take those days off or those moments off, God forbid we actually get rest."

We certainly don't want to go back to those glorious renaissance type days. Let's just fill all these extra hours we freed up with more work. Great idea. And in fact, thanks to technology now we work more than ever. And we're constantly connected to work. And we're expected to be constantly connected to work via email, and social media, and now during the pandemic, Zoom. I mean without technology you wouldn't be hearing this podcast right now. But technology has us connected to work, and learning, and doing, and productivity 24/7 including nights and weekends.

But that's not how it was supposed to go. Technology was designed to engineer more freedom, more rest, to not take near as long to do things. Was not intended to make us into more of a machine, more like a robot.

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And I'm going to do an entire episode next week about technology and technology detoxes, and particularly getting off social media which a lot of you can't possibly imagine.

But it goes hand in hand with today's episode. Because I'm seeing more and more people actually decide to get off social media, even some of those who teach it for a living because of the toll it takes on their mental health, and the mental health of their children, and their families. But before we can even think about curtailing our social media and tech use, we have to start with our minds, and our beliefs about hustle culture and productivity. And start unwinding the complicated relationship between our work and our worthiness.

Now, let me preface this with the fact that I do love to work. But I don't love working nearly as much as I thought I did for a long time. I was completely convinced that working was my true joy, my hobby. I would swear it was the love of my life. I firmly believed that lie at my core. And it makes perfect sense why I would have believed that because work and achievement have been conditioned into me like they probably have for you.

All my accolades from my parents, and my teachers, and other businesspeople, people that I admire have always been based on my accomplishments, and how hard I work, and my success. How many things I check off my to do list and how not lazy I am. I was trained to work more, and more, and more. It was Pavlovian, just like the dogs. But the carrot that was dangled for me to get me to work more, and more, and more was more praise, more validation, more accolades. You know it, you've felt it, you've been there.

But at some point the cost outweighs the benefits. And you all, I took it to the extreme. If a little is good a lot is amazing. And so did many of you because we bought into the lie, the hustle lie, the productivity lie, the lazy lie, they're all the same lie. And we bought into those believing that worthiness and work are one and the same. So, until we really believe we're worthy, completely aside from work, completely aside from how much

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money we generate then we are still buying into the lies. And this is hard too you all, this is so hard.

If you listened to my four part series that has been so popular on Redefining Success that I just did in January of 2022, if you listened to it, if you loved it, know that what we're talking about in this episode are the main obstacles that are going to get in your way of actually redefining success.

If you can even get past the discomfort we talked about earlier of breaking up with hustle culture and stopping those old habits, and sitting in the muck, and the loneliness, and the fear of what it feels like to not rush in and save the day. Even if you can get past that you still have to untether work and money from your worthiness for this to take long term. Your bank account balance is not your worthiness score.

Your list of achievements is not your worthiness score. How many times you've been published, or how big and fancy your client is, or what you're posting on your highlight reel on Instagram is not your worthiness score. You aren't better than other people who are less successful than you by society's standards, or who are less productive than you by society's standards. You are amazing because you're a human being, not a human doing. And I know that sounds cliché but it's really, really, really important.

All my life I thought I was important because I was a human doing. And the more I untangle, and untether, and dismantle this thinking. The more I see that all those people that I judged for years as being lazy or that at some level I thought I was better than because of my success, or my achievements, or how much I can get done in a day. I used to literally champion the fact that I could get more done in a day than most people get done in a week, as if that's something to be proud of.

But I really, really now see that those other people who didn't buy into it at the level that I did, those were the smart people. Those are the people with the secret, with the solution. I thought I had the secret to success. I bought into the lie, hook, line and sinker. It worked on me, the messaging, the advertising, the indoctrination worked on me like a charm. I fell for the whole thing. But they didn't, they were the geniuses who already knew that

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hustling didn't make them happier, or better, or more important, or more worthy, it just made them tired. It just made them tethered, they weren't free.

I kind of giggle to myself really, not just to myself, I'm giggling out loud here. But I giggle when I think about how arrogant I must have been at times thinking, thank God my parents taught me to be such a hard worker. It's even still hard for me not to believe that. When I say it I kind of cringe just a little bit of like, but aren't I supposed to be a hard worker? Yes, the pain, and the pressure, and the proving, and the therapy, and the personal development, and the suffering that I have spent years trying to unlearn and undo thanks to these lies, that's where it all came from, the laziness lie.

So, friends, if you're ready to break up with hustle culture, get ready, buckle in. If you're ready to really go through the discomfort of a breakup for the chance to find your true love on the other side, really think of this as a relationship. Breaking up with the toxic person to find your true love that sees you for what you really are and all your worthiness as a human being on the other side, that love for yourself and for your life, and for a more sustainable schedule and goals.

If you are ready then buckle in because you're going to have to feel the breakup. But if you're ready I welcome you, come along with me on this journey. It's not easy. It's really worth it, it really, really is. And if you need help I highly recommend starting with those books, either or both that I recommended today, Do Nothing by Celeste Headlee, and Laziness Does Not Exist by Dr. Devon Price, so good, so helpful.

And if you want help, mindset help, coaching help, how to think about time help as you change your thoughts around hustle culture, and time management, and as you stop overworking, then consider joining us in Design You. I don't recommend you go through this all by yourself. So, whether it's us and our community, or a therapist, or a one-on-one coach, really it's so much easier especially doing the mindset work, the thinking differently, the breaking those thought habits and thought fallacies. It's so much easier to do this with a coach.

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The breakup and the detox from these old habits can be hard by ourselves. We sometimes can't even see it by ourselves. I did not do this work by myself. I've had many, many coaches. My coach, Suzie, I'm always working with. And I've worked with other people on top of that to really help me break up with the laziness lie and the hustle culture. And I would be honored to help you along this path too if you think that I'm the right coach for you. So, consider that, reach out if you have questions.

You can always DM me on Instagram, I'm over there a lot, or my team is, just not nights or weekends anymore if I can help it.

Okay friends, that's it for the day, that's it for this episode. I love and hate myself at times for bringing you the truth because the truth can be so hard to hear. But it also, as the saying goes, will set you free. So, I'll see you next week and that's where I'm going to dig deep into technology, and social media, and what it's doing to our brains, and our mental health. And talk about what we can do to change that, okay, so I'll see you then. Bye for now friends.

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