

## Ep #203: Social Media and Mental Health



### Full Episode Transcript

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**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #203: Social Media and Mental Health

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 203.

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, I hope you're having a great week. And I do want to take a minute just to thank you so much for listening. So many more of you than ever are here listening to the podcast and taking so many of my thoughts and ideas to heart. And I just appreciate you more than you know.

Now, if you are loving my solo shows over the last few months, especially the Redefining Success series or any particular episodes that have moved you. I'd really love it if you would leave me a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. And I'd also love it if you would share those episodes and your thoughts on social media with your friends and followers. Now, if you do that please tag me on social because I'd love to connect with you, thank you in person. And I'd just love knowing you more.

I know you're listening out there but it's so much more fun when we can connect as real people. It's definitely my favorite part of Instagram and social media. Speaking of social media today I want to talk about social media and really even technology in general and the toll it's taking on our mental health and what we can do about it.

So yeah, I just told you to share on social media but you're going to hear a lot of my thoughts about social media today. And maybe you can put some boundaries on when and what you're sharing and how you're showing up with it and with tech in a way that's more healthy for you.

So, this is something I've thought about a lot since the pandemic began and I'm sure a lot of you have too. But it's actually been on my mind for the last really even five years or so, so before the pandemic because that's when my daughter hit middle school. She's in high school now but middle school was really rough. It was rough on her mental health, it was rough on mine, it's rough on a lot of people's mental health just as social media is.

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There's nothing more hurtful than being 11 or 12, maybe 13 and not being invited to the party or the event that's all over social. Or having girls' send mean or hateful messages to you on Snapchat or something that no one else really sees. It was truly awful to witness, to experience. And as a mom there were a bunch of little girls and their parents that I wanted to pummel during that period of time. Now, that's not to say that my daughter was innocent, she was not, but it was painful.

And just like they were creating those problems we are also part of the problem when it comes to our experiences on social media. Because let's be honest, social media in particular isn't that much different for us adults than it is for middle school girls. Think about that for a minute.

It's really true because social media is all about the highlight reel and who's in the in the in crowd at any moment. Because they've been as an adult published in a magazine or invited to go on the latest influencer trip in some fabulous destination, or gotten a speaking engagement, or something else to brag about that we too would be bragging about if it were us and we do. But we want to make sure that everyone knows we're included.

And we always want to share our success in that special highlight reel sort of way that we do. But this is exactly what's taking a toll on us and on our mental health just like it did my middle school daughter just a few years ago. Now, I'm that mom that believes in inclusion, it's just my nature, I've always been this way. Call it my Enneagram 8 personality that's driven by justice, or I just learned because I'm learning a little bit more about astrology. I never really knew but I learned that my Aquarius sun sign and my, let's see, my rising sign in Libra is also all about justice.

And then I also am learning about my human design, also about justice. So, this stuff runs super deep in me just by nature. But I'm the mom who was never okay with inviting some girls to the party, or to dinner, or whatever, and not others. And when my daughter would tell me that a group of cool kids left out a certain other kid, I was the mom immediately having her check on that girl or invite her over.

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Now, don't get me wrong here, that's not always a popular stance as a mom, especially with my daughter because it typically got a response like, "Ugh, why are you making me invite them, mom? Nobody likes them and they annoy people." To which I would usually say, "Well, I'm sure you annoy people too and so do all your other friends, so call them and check on them right now." And she's like, "We don't call people."

"Okay, then text them, Snapchat them. I don't care what you do but I'm not okay when anyone is being snobby, or excluding people, or thinking we're better than, so, invite her too or you're not going, or we're not having anybody over at all." Yes, I'm that mom, guilty as charged. But what I couldn't understand the most was when my daughter or other kids would get invited to part of a night, you can come over but only three of us can spend the night, so you're going to have to go home later.

That was always the meanest to me, I'd almost rather you have not invited her at all and have been at home just dealing with the pain and suffering from that. Because it felt like the walk of shame when you were one of those who just weren't good enough to actually spend the night so it's time for you to go home. And I know you all won't agree with me on this but this is just how I feel.

And I would get so angry, hence the two times that I hosted all 11 girls on the volleyball team, I think in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades to spend the night at our house. Because there was no way in hell I was sending any of those sweet girls home after the swimming party. So, my husband of course was smart and found a way to be out of town on those weekends. But I gladly hosted 11 girls two years in a row, they had the time of their life. We got very little sleep. But I was not doing the thing where you're just not good enough to be included or fully included.

And I have to say this is exactly what I see happening on social media or even actually happening in real life but it plays out on social media every single day. And it is very hard on so many adults, especially the adult creatives that I work with and coach. And I know it may sound silly and people should just grow up but the highlight reel is taking a toll on us.

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And let's be honest it is only showing the good. In fact, it's likely even embellishing the good in most instances or at least in a lot of them, but showing none of the bad, none of the hard parts of life or business. And it really impacts the people who are witnessing, and watching, and following along. Many of those people who were sharing the highlight reel, and I've done it, I'm not pointing fingers here, I've done it too.

But many of us are getting invited to the event or being featured but we're not sharing the fact that behind the scenes we're tired or exhausted from hustle culture, or worried about where the next client's going to coming from, or how you're going to make payroll. Really just thinking if people saw behind the scenes, the real me, if they took a peek in my real business they would know I'm a fraud. So not even the people posting my highlight reels are having good mental health most of the time.

They're just getting a moment, a blip of external validation and trying to use it publicly to somehow prop ourselves up. Yet when we are the ones not being featured and not being invited we absolutely forget it's the highlight reel. And we still feel left out and less than and like we're doing something wrong, they are successful but we are not, just like my middle school daughter felt. It's taking a real toll on creatives' mental health and really anybody on social media but I'm talking to you, creatives.

Yeah, so Tyler J. McCall who was on my podcast back on episode 152. If you didn't listen to it you can go listen. He's great. We talked all about antiracism, and politics, and business, and all the things. But he was formerly a consultant who taught people how to succeed in their business using Instagram. That's how he's built his business. But he's now pivoted to helping really the entirety of people working in online business, helping those online business owners thrive.

And he's built an independent and self-funded media company for online businesses that helps entrepreneurs start and build these thriving businesses. And as a part of this media group, he or they produce a weekly email newsletter that is so valuable called The Online Business Digest. And

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they also have a weekly podcast of the same, or a similar name, Online Business Show. And I do highly recommend them both.

But the reason I'm telling you this is just about a week or two ago in The Online Business Digest because I get them into my inbox, they were talking about both Zoom fatigue and how people are cutting back on their Instagram in two separate articles, really good articles. And so, they gave specific effects about Zoom and Zoom fatigue, and the exhaustion it creates for us. And it was really saying in particular though that Zoom fatigue is exacerbated if you don't like the way you look.

And they mentioned in the article that it's probably not a coincidence that since the pandemic and all the Zoom and videoconferencing, facelifts have gone through the roof in our country, they're up by a lot. And I have to say, and especially if you've been listening to my Redefining Success series, and breaking up with hustle culture, and how to be more yourself, and all the things I've been talking about lately, it's so sad but not surprising to hear this.

If you heard my episode 200 about me turning 50 and all the stats about how America glorifies youth, and how we're objectified, and all the thoughts I shared about that, how we objectify ourselves and others, this makes perfect sense. But it's still a problem and it's still the way technology, and social, and all these things are taking a toll on us and our mental health. In the same issue of The Online Business Digest was also an article about how Instagram use is down.

And yes, even though all social media platforms do have ebbs and flows in their usage. There's evidence on Instagram in particular that people are really weary mentally and emotionally from using Instagram and are starting to do something about it. And there were a few stats that they shared in this Online Business Digest article that included this one from Media Daily News that says new research from Insights Agency, Opinium, shows that two in five Americans are cutting back on the time they spend on Instagram in order to improve their mental health.

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The survey also found that nearly 20% of respondents have deleted Instagram from their phone entirely. And I found this really interesting because the very same week this version of Online Business Digest hit my inbox I had literally seen posts and comments from multiple businesspeople that I follow on Instagram in different industries, online business, all kinds of people saying that they were deleting their social media from their phones entirely because of what it was doing to their mental health.

And some of them are even eliminating using social media for their business entirely, not just from their phone but totally from their business which is a very bold move. On this topic of getting rid of social altogether, just a few weeks prior, so back in December I had seen an article in Fortune, the online version of Fortune about how Lush Cosmetics had announced in early December that they were deleting all of their social media entirely from their company.

And according to this article, I think it was on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, came out and said, “Last week Lush Cosmetics announced that the brand would deactivate it’s Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Snapchat accounts in response to growing concerns about the mental health effects of social media. The company took the accounts offline the day after thanksgiving and Lush’s Chief Digital Officer, Jack Constantine said it has no plans to return them any time soon even if it means losing millions of dollars.”

And the Lush CEO went on to say he’s happy to lose 13 million quitting social media. “We’re talking about suicide, not whether someone should dye their hair blond”, he says. Wow. That’s really incredible. I think companies taking a stand like this is the only thing that’s really going to make a difference.

And Tyler McCall is personally taking a stand. He not only in his Online Business Digest but if you follow him personally, he’s been off social media. He took – I don’t know – I think the whole summer, a three month sabbatical from social media this year and then did some podcast episodes on what that was like. And I just saw him in the last few days say he’s still

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not really returning to social media exactly for business. He said, "I'll be back here some, mostly to share my own life, and me, and my husband in our relaxation and vacations and stuff."

But he said that he suspects, or kind of evidence is showing that with the way Facebook, now Meta, is going to all of the Bitcoin and virtual stuff that's coming out. And then Instagram is basically becoming TikTok because they're so afraid of TikTok and that competition that he's just not up for either of those anymore. And I completely agree. He said, "I'm just not a TikToker, I don't want to spend days or hours every day making TikTok videos." And you all, I feel 100% the same way.

Hats off to you who like it and who enjoy it, but some of us don't. And if that's what Instagram is going to be, he said, "I'm out." And I'm with him. But it's so interesting that that's just sort of on the heels of already taking a break because of the toll that Instagram and social media has taken on him and so many of us.

Some of us were appalled back in what was it, 2020, when The Social Dilemma came out. We were appalled. We were scared because we watched this Netflix documentary, The Social Dilemma. And we even heard the people who created all of Facebook, and YouTube, and all of these sites say they don't let their own children on and what a toll it takes on people and how they regret creating a lot of these things.

And at the time I saw a lot of people and maybe a lot of you temporarily take a break from social media in 2020. But it wasn't long before the pull to know what other people were doing or share some sort of success or highlight, or even just some belief that the only way to create success in your business was to be on social media. It had everybody reactivating their accounts. So, the sabbaticals didn't last long but neither did the detoxing or the peace of mind.

And it's so interesting how many people I coach every single month and really also just talking to personal friends every single month. I mean I would say it's probably ever single week, that aren't just struggling with the fact that they don't feel cool enough or like the it girl or it boy, or like they



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have made it, or in the in crowd. Many don't even really expect that they're going to get to that level of success. But a few of them secretly, I guess, aspire to but aside from all of that they're just struggling because of social media.

So aside from the problems with comparisons, with other people's highlight reel and knowing if you're good enough, which we're going to talk about again in a minute. But besides that, so many are just pained and literally in emotional distress over their number of followers or their fear of showing up and looking stupid in a video, or what to say, or the fact that their following isn't growing. Or that they haven't hit 10,000 followers yet, or that they don't know what to post ever and if anybody's going to like it.

And it's just this agonizing, what I always call gnashing of teeth and emotional distress that is coming just from using Instagram, before we even get to looking at what other people are posting. Their relationship with social media purely from the perspective of how to use it as a business tool is agonizing for them and taking a toll on them emotionally.

So why is something that creates this much suffering for us, social media, Zoom, technology, why is it that we regularly use it and don't believe we can do anything but use it? But it often regularly, daily, even multiple times a day makes us feel stupid or like a loser because we're not important enough for people to follow. Why is it so hard for us to control using this,= or even give it up if it makes us feel this bad?

And why do we believe that we can't live without it and neither can our businesses? Because we lived without this for a long time, you all. We built successful businesses, we built seven figure businesses. We did all kinds of things prior to social media, to Instagram. So why do we keep putting ourselves through this agony and feeling like the girl who didn't get included in the middle school party, or at least wasn't cool enough to get invited to spend the night? Why do we keep doing this to ourself? It's insanity.

And I think it's important that we talk about this, because a lot of people aren't. But I'm thankfully happy to see that some people are starting to. And

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it's even more important that we talk about how many people are leaving social media or are putting boundaries on it so we might have the courage to do the same. This is definitely something that my team and I are looking at this year because it's out of alignment with our values and our commitment to both inclusion and mental health to perpetuate some of these problems.

Yet, we still use it for business. I just ask you to tag me on social media. So, so interesting. There's no simple answer here for most of us most likely. And because of the habit that so many of us have of getting all of our validation externally it's unlikely that most people will be exiting social media any time soon. We just enjoy that dopamine hit. Too much of the surge we get, even if we just get an occasional brag or a like or even just peering into what's happening in other people's lives.

So, we'll out up with a lot of suffering to get that hit. But it's not just social media. We've talked about Zoom, but there's other issues. Many issues with technology in general and the way we use it. We could all benefit particularly in our mental wellbeing by adopting the practice of a digital sabbath, at least one day a week where we're completely disconnected from technology, and yes, I mean your phone too.

We also need to learn to document our lives less. I mean, yeah, it's wonderful that we have pictures. But there is a difference in pictures and documenting your whole life. There's a whole section of the book, *The Laziness, or Laziness Does Not Exist*, that I just recently read. I think I've talked to you about by Dr. Devon Price. That talks about this practice of learning to document our lives yet. Because we're missing out on the things that we're doing that actually matter because we're trying to document it.

We're not present with those we love or getting the benefits of relaxation or joy because we're always too busy trying to capture every move for that perfect Instagram or Facebook shot which is really pretty sad. And I've felt this way. You have not seen very much documentation from me on recent trips, and if you do, it's after I get home and have taken pictures but was present with the people that I love, like on our recent road trip this summer.

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It's just not even fun anymore to me to have to interrupt and not listen to people or look them in the eye because I'm like, "Hang on, I've got to post this on Instagram." What would happen to our mental health if we adopted phone free periods? What if part of every day was a phone free period or a tech free period?

And what if we stopped being obsessed with things like activity trackers constantly monitoring anything and everything that we do, our sleep, our activity under the guise of health? But it actually adds more pressure to achieve a badge, or a step count, or complete a certain number of stats to compete with the other people that are also tracking. Might this kind of technology even add so much stress that it counteracts the purpose of movement to destress?

I remember the times over the years when I was tracking steps and I would literally be walking in circles around my kitchen island at night just to hit my step count for the day, instead of relaxing or connecting with my family. You all, we are obsessed. And I've got to tell you, I am so much happier now that I've given up all the tracking. I don't use a Fitbit, I don't use my Oura Ring. I don't weigh myself. I got rid of my scales. I don't track anything and it is so freeing.

But what about also all the notifications we have with technology, on our phones, on our Apple Watches, on our laptops, and anything else that allows notifications. We're constantly dinged with a reminder that we got a text message, or we missed a call, or we missed someone posting or liking something on Instagram. So much so that we're never able to relax and unwind. And so many of us, myself included, sleep with devices next to our bed and we check them first thing each morning, if not in the middle of the night when we get up for water or to go to the bathroom.

There's that and then there's the drive to constantly learn. This is probably the biggest struggle for me. I can give up social media way easier than the drive to constantly learn. My coach this week said, "You read more books than anyone I know, Tobi." And we've made reading and learning a competition. How many books will I read this year? I'm doing the challenge

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on Goodreads. How many podcasts can I listen to in a week? What can I consume?

There's so much content in the world. And many of us could benefit from consuming a lot less information. Just because it's there doesn't mean we need to consume it but it is a struggle. We can't be an expert in everything, and trying to be is exhausting. And it's so easy to justify this one because we've been taught that learning and reading are so important. But now that access to hordes, and I mean hordes of information is at our fingertips at all time. It might be time we consider boundaries around information too.

And yes, even cutting down on podcasts, just like the one you're listening to, which is super hard, I know. It's equally hard to disconnect from Zoom. It seems to be the other elephant in the room that nobody's really talking about because we use it to connect for work. So again, we feel like it's a must especially for teams like mine who all work remotely across the country, and the world, for that matter. So, Zooming seems to make so much sense and it does in a lot of ways. But it's like consuming lots of information, it's amazing until it's not, and it takes its toll, hence all the facelifts.

So, what can we do about it? Well, one of the first things we can do goes back to looking at our own wellbeing via our own mindset. I think it's a great place to start, to detach and detox from external validation first before you even detox and detach from your social media. We've got to stop getting our validation from things and people outside of us. And I'll remind you again that so much of what you see in here on social media is smoke and mirrors anyway.

I found it so interesting, but not surprising to hear that a bunch of designers that were recently invited to a big industry brand event, and it looked like a fun glamorous trip, as they all do. That they weren't exactly as happy as they appeared. They were seen enjoying themselves out of the country and living it up in a tropical location, and posting all the 'fun' on social. But some of the people who attended shared that it was actually underscored with a

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lot of personal conversations about the difficulty of the design industry and the toll it's taking on everyone and on successful-looking designers.

And one in particular successful looking designer, or even successful designer was saying he was trying to figure out his exit strategy because this industry isn't paying the bills well, and doesn't come with pension, and it's just not sustainable. So, we've got to remember again these highlight reels aren't all they're cracked up to be. Everyone's not as happy as they look in the pictures when they're smiling with their cocktail and their fashionable attire.

And it's not to say we shouldn't have fun and get out of the country and connect with people that we love and that are likeminded, we absolutely should. But these highlight reels should come with a warning label. I think it should come with a warning label like those drug commercials we see on TV.

What you are about to see is a glossy highlight reel of smoke and mirrors, and only showing the glamorous, albeit embellished parts of the industry, be it the feed of some of your peers. Please don't follow this feed if you are prone to or allergic to feeling less than worthy. Side effects include believing this is real, feeling terrible about yourself, that you are not cool enough to be included, and making you doubt your business, your success, your reason for existing.

Additional long term effects include believing everything is wrong with you including you are not good enough, smart enough, rich enough, thin enough, fun enough, successful enough. And all other versions of not enough-ness. Please consult a mental health professional to help you detach from, and detox from this illusion of success and help you re-enter the real world.

Okay, yeah, I read that. I didn't have that memorized, you all. And it is funny. When I was writing it I was giggling to myself but it is the truth. It should come with a warning label and the side-effects. And please consult your mental health professional. Because I poke fun here to help us find some levity, but I'm not joking about the seriousness of this issue. Mental

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health is at a crisis point. Not just because of the pandemic, and technology, and social media, but putting all of those things together is a huge part of the problem.

So, I suggest you do an audit, an audit of your tech and your social media. How much time do you spend on it? Who do you follow? Whose feeds and posts do you check most often? And how do those posts make you feel? Be really specific, write it down. Don't just do this in your head, write it down. It's important to be able to see this on paper so you can really take in the impact, the toll your social media and your technology use is having on you.

How much are you reading? How much are you studying? Why? What's the pressure to do that? It might be helpful to go back and listen to my episode 179 of the Design You podcast, called The Problem with External Validation where I spoke about external validation and the problem with getting our value and our worthiness from outside of us. And with what we do instead of just who we are. So, human doing, not human being. So, check that one out.

But social media perpetuates this problem for sure. But so does any level of buying into the patriarchal message that objectifies us and tells us we should look a certain way. We should be a certain size, and look young, and not age, and not gain weight, and not change, hence the facelifts. Facelifts are on the raise. And when we realize this could be because of people looking at themselves on Zoom and objectifying their own appearance, you all, this is sad.

But I can totally see why. I can totally see it. I see my own neck wrinkles on Zoom and Instagram too. And I feel the desire, not to get a facelift, and not really even to get Botox. I tried before and didn't like it. But definitely to use filters, and I do especially on Instagram, I usually use them. But maybe I should stop today because every time we participate in this, we perpetuate the problem.

So, what else can we do? Well, I think it's important to take cues from companies like Lush and start to rethink how we conduct business in a way

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that improves, possibly even protects the mental health of our teams, ourself, and maybe even of the people that follow us.

As The Online Business Digest suggests we can prioritize building our own website and our email list this year instead of leveraging Facebook, or Instagram, or TikTok. That's always been a smart strategy anyway, because we don't know what those platforms are going to do. And if at any point they change, which it sounds like they're going to in big ways, or they go away then we lose our access to our audience anyway. So, build your own website and email list this year.

We can also think about how to create content strategies that use more of your website like blogging or even podcasting, that allows you to own your content and your own distribution. And is less likely to result in scrolling like Instagram does. But it also allows you to create a production schedule that works for you, that's sustainable and customized to your wellbeing. And not being influenced by the rules or the gurus of social media and how often they say you need to be posting, or showing up online, or doing a reel.

We would get to decide if we create that strategy. And yeah, you can do that on social, but it's harder because there's the tug when we see what everyone else is doing and posting. You can also question or even put blinders on when it comes to what 'they' say anyway. We've been talking about them, the social media experts, the gurus, businesspeople, me, what they say we should be doing in business with technology and social media.

I hope the message you're now hearing from me, even though it might have been different in the past is anti-hustle, and to not buy into this stuff. But I feel like I've had this come up multiple times recently in Design You on coaching calls where people are really struggling with what they say. And it goes something like, one of our members says, "You know you're supposed to be doing reels these days because Instagram is prioritizing reels and it works with the algorithm. And if you're not doing them, the algorithm won't share your content with your audience."

Okay, well that may be true. But what I usually say in response is, "Only do reels if you enjoy doing reels and also, if you have time for reels, and if you

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have a planned out strategy for reels. But any belief that you must do reels isn't really helpful." It's just another sneaky way hustle culture is creeping in.

And this is true for all of the they comments that I hear. They, the experts are saying, "You should be doing reels. You should be doing TikTok. You should be doing stuff on Google Business, and all these other platforms out there." And it's really all about whatever's the latest and greatest, and all that like Clubhouse was for a minute last year. Hustle culture is insidious when it comes to what we should be doing. And technology and social media have only made that to-do list longer.

There are many ways to be successful and there are still many successful businesses who are not active on social media or any other type of tech really for that matter. And there's so many who are deciding to get back off because they tried it and it didn't work for them, it wasn't healthy. So, the important thing here is for you to decide what's right for you and your business, not because someone tells you, you should or because you're being duped by the highlight reels of other people.

Using your own values is one of the best ways to really decide. And combine that with that assessment of your mental health when you're making decisions. It can be very helpful.

So, here is what I'm thinking about doing for myself and in my own business. First, my leadership team and I, which includes my COO, and my CMO, Chief Marketing Officer and our Director of Coaching, plus me. We have sessions every week. And so, we're going to have a session later this month to sit down and really just consider the impact that social media is having on the mental health of our team and our customers, and the same with technology. And I expect this to be a really interesting and eye-opening brainstorming session.

And we'll be weighing all the pros and cons and doing it in a way that we can really see what's coming up for us, and what feels true for us, and what is in alignment for us. We're going to assess Zoom usage in our meetings and consider if there's ways that we might change Zoom, like going to



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audio only sometimes, no camera on some meetings or even all meetings. Now, we do like to see each other's faces because we don't get to get in person that much. But they might like and I might vote to have some of our meetings be audio only.

I think it's also good for listening when you're not distracted by looking at other people. So, we can decide how we are using Zoom and how often we're showing up on social, and what it's doing to perpetuate this over-usage by our followers or customers. It's going to be an exciting session and discussion for sure. I cannot wait to see what we discover and learn.

Another thing is I've already diversified my feed on social media personally about 18 months ago. And you've probably heard me talk about this if you listen regularly to the show but it really was helpful to my mental health. So about 18 or so months ago when I started doing intuitive eating and some other things for myself, giving up diet culture, breaking up with diet culture, breaking up with hustle culture, all the things.

I started following all sorts of people in a variety of body sizes, and races, and professions, and ages in my feed. And I also unfollowed a lot of accounts that either perpetuated hustle culture or perpetuated diet culture, or that in some way triggered me. So, if at any time I noticed myself to be triggered by someone else by what they were posting, or saying, or the way they looked. And if it caused me to compare myself to them or to get down on myself, I stopped following that person at least for the time being, if not indefinitely.

And this isn't to be mean or cruel to other people, you all, but we have to take back our own mental health. It's not personal to them, but it's personal for us. So, this is something that you can do, but my point here is I'm going to keep doing this, and I'm going to keep assessing this as I move forward.

I've also created a boundary for myself this year that I do not scroll Instagram or other social media in the evenings including weeknights or weekend nights. One way I've done this successfully is by doing other hobbies instead. So, I picked back up needlepoint, which you've heard me

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talk about maybe, and I love it. Here's the thing, it's impossible to needlepoint and scroll at the same time.

I also do a lot of reading that we've talked about and so at least I read physical books, old school, not digital ones. Because it's also impossible to just hop over and start scrolling on that digital device that I was reading on if I'm reading a physical book. So, this doesn't necessarily help with how much information I'm consuming. But it helps with how much digital I'm consuming and just how much mindless scrolling and getting into those highlight reels.

I'm also watching my time on social media as a result of these hobbies. And if these hobbies don't keep me off social enough, then I'll remove the apps from my phone altogether. But currently I haven't even had to do that because I've been able to take my daily average hours of being on my phone, including social media way down. Now, what I typically use on my phone now is podcasts, listening to them, maybe texting a little bit, but my apps usage is way down.

So, I'm down to about 3.5 hours at the most. But most days I'm down to about a 2 hour range on my phone and social including a lot of times an hour or more of listening to a podcast or an audiobook. So, I'm way down on social media usage. That means probably an hour and a half total on other apps, not counting my podcast or books, and that includes my social media.

So back during the early stages of the pandemic, just for comparison, pretty much all of 2020 and a lot of 21, I would look at my numbers on my phone, my iPhone because it calculates it for you, remind us at the end of the day. And I was often at 8 or 9 hours, sometimes 11 hours, no kidding, on my phone and apps. And that included everything from scrolling Instagram and Facebook, to playing digital games, to looking at TikTok, and so much more.

So, when I say I have improved a lot, I mean a lot, from a high of 11 hours a day down to 3.5 hours a day. And most days back then were 8 or 9 hours and now I'm down to 1 to 2. That is a huge improvement thanks to

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needlepointing and reading. And my mental health can tell, I'm so much more rested.

So, I highly recommend you see how much you're online. Your phone probably does keep it for you automatically. But you could, even though we're not recommending a ton of apps or trackers, if it helps you in the short run, you could use an app to track this one thing until you get your habit improved. But even without having to do that, try a hobby, painting, needlepoint, something that has you using your hands in another way.

Just yesterday, one of my team members who is here locally and works out of my house a couple of days a week came into my bedroom in the late afternoon, I was sitting in my bedroom. She's like, "Hey, I'm leaving." And I was sitting in my room already decompressing from work at about four o'clock, and I was needlepointing. And she was, "Let me see that." And I showed her and she goes, "You know, I think I really might want to know about that and take that up. I think it would keep me off my phone."

So, it was funny that it was right before I was recording this episode because I told her how that had really benefited me. So, I definitely suggest you think about hobbies. And then another tip or hint that I like is only using my phone otherwise, other than maybe being on a call with someone, or a text to my mum or whatever. Only letting myself use my phone when I'm moving my body, so, on the treadmill, or out walking. Now, I prefer when I'm out walking in nature not to be on my phone so I can get the benefits of nature.

But if I am going to listen to a podcast or an audiobook, more often than not now I like to do it when I'm moving my body so at least it's counteracting some of the negativity. I'm not complacent and sedentary and scrolling. And also, it's pretty hard to scroll social media while walking, at least for me. So that's going to tend more to be something like listening to a podcast or a book, but probably not comparing myself to other people on a highlight reel. Because endless scrolling, for me, you might have perfected it, but for me it's pretty hard to walk, it's kind of like walking and chewing gum for me.

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So, this habit of only using my phone as often as possible while I'm also moving my body is really helpful. And all of these new habits for me have created much more physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Now, with regard to other technology that I use like writing or recording this podcast on my laptop, or being on Zoom meetings, I really have control of that most of the time because of the way I use my calendar and time blocking system.

So, if you're in my Design You program, you can learn my 24 to Freedom system, you might have listened to some of my podcasts about the way I time block. But this is the system that I have used to take my work hours down from what used to be about 45 hours a week or more, to only about 25 hours a week. So, all of my podcast batching and Zoom meetings fit into my 25 hours every single week that I work in the business.

Now, yeah, I'm also reading and doing some stuff outside of that sometimes that help me with work. But I'm not out of control with meetings or tech typically in the day. It was what I was doing outside of work that was the biggest problem for me. So, you might need to dial in your work and the tech you're using during work in your work hours. So that all goes back to the breaking up with hustle culture. So, listen to any of my podcasts recently about that, or my time blocking episodes. But really I typically use tech only during those 25 hours.

I do some personal development, like with some of the coaches I use. We use Zoom where I'm in some programs. And typically, I do those on Fridays for up to a couple of hours in addition to my 25 or so hours of work a week. So maybe 30 hours a week a lot of which are on technology in some way but not 45, or 50, or more hours. So that's also a huge difference.

So, I consider my own personal development to be one of the main things that makes me successful in work. And a lot of times I do that inside my 25 hours a week. And I'll also suggest that my team do a lot of their personal development inside their work hours. That's why we pay for life coaches for them, and we pay for them to take programs, and courses, and training sometimes and we do that all within their workday.

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Now, they're not working 25 hours a week, they're working about 35 hours a week. But still, it's a very controlled amount of time and it's in alignment with our values of being conscious leaders and having a growth mindset. That we allow time in their work week and we pay them while we're also paying for things that improve their mental health or their personal development.

So that's what I'm doing, friends. That's what I'm doing and we are doing in my company to detox and detach from technology and social media for my mental health and the mental health of my team. And I hope that you will really consider doing this for yourself too. I can't wait to hear what you think of this idea. And if you're also feeling like social media, especially the comparison game and the smoke and mirrors is taking a toll on you, this is one way to make a change, or several ways. But this is how you start making that change.

There are so many ways that social media and technology can take a toll on us. Even things we haven't talked about today, like consuming too much news, or politics, or other information kind of fits under that consuming step. But we didn't specifically say the news or politics, but it can take a toll too. But even if you start with detaching from external validation first, and then start with your own social habit, or your work boundaries. Those are great places to start seeing some improvement and get on the road to getting your mental health back in shape.

So, you're welcome to reach out to me on DMs on Instagram, only during work hours of course. I mean reach out when you want but I'll respond typically during work hours. And let me know what you think of this episode. And if social media is so taxing to you that you're like, "I don't even want to message you on DM, yeah, I want to stay off Instagram altogether." Then go the old fashioned way and send me an email, [info@tobifairley.com](mailto:info@tobifairley.com) to tell me what you think. Because maybe if you're in email, even though it's still tech, you won't be tempted to scroll and compare.

Okay friends, I'm wishing you so much success with technology and social media detoxing and a big improvement in your mental wellbeing. And I

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can't wait to hear from you about how it's working for you. So, I'll see you here again next week, 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).