

## Ep #224: Encore: How's Your Workload?



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #224: Encore: How's Your Workload?

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 224.

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.

Hi, hi friends. So, I'm coming to you today post COVID. That's right, I avoided it for almost two and a half years and then I came home from vacation last week with a bad case of COVID. It has not been fun you all. It is horrid. And I'm not quite feeling up to myself. I don't think my voice will hold out for a whole episode. So, I'm going to bring you an encore episode today but I don't think this is a bad thing because what I'm doing in my company and personally as I lay around and try to recuperate and get my stamina back is I'm thinking about the fact that we're halfway through this year.

And every year at this time of year, even without a case of COVID, I am always looking at what we've accomplished so far, are we on track for our goals? Are we on track for our dreams, really growing and thinking big? Do we need to shift? Do we need to adjust? Do we still want to think about success in the same way, the way we defined success at the beginning of this year? We had this whole redefining success series that was so popular for a lot of you and it's really easy and fun to get into that in January when everything feels new, and exciting, and just your hyped.

But once the hype wears off and we're at that point now, it may have worn off a long time ago for some of you. But we're at least at that midway point now where usually it feels hard. Sometimes it's called the messy middle. And so, are things messy? Are things hard? Are you noticing that you're wanting to give up your dreams, decide you didn't really want that anyway? That's what our brain loves to do. So, I would love for you to listen or relisten if you've heard it before.

This episode really get clear again and get committed again to what you want to accomplish in the rest of this year. And even look at next year. I like to look at least 12 months out. And sometimes in the midyear point I look

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18 months out. What's the rest of this year and get a good picture, not details but that 40,000 foot view of what I'm setting myself up to accomplish next year? So, I invite you to do this exercise with me. I invite you to get really introspective and find out what's working, what's not working, how you're feeling. Are you tired? Are you overworked? Do things feel better?

Is there something you're ignoring that you said you wanted to do but you're afraid to fail at it? Get really clear on where you are today and I'll be back next week with a brand new episode. I've already written it for you. I think my voice will hold out to record it in a few days. And we will take this a step further to really see what we're thinking, where we want to go next and how we finish this year on track or even on a different track if you decided that maybe six months in you weren't quite clear about what you wanted but now you really know.

Okay, so enjoy this episode. I'll see you again in a week, friends, and bye for now.

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Are you hustling already? Thankfully I'm not. I'm having a very relaxing week and I'm loving it, probably the most relaxing first two weeks of January ever honestly. And as I was writing this podcast and now I'm recording it, I still have on my PJs and a sweatshirt at two in the afternoon on a Thursday. And I'm wearing no make-up and it's absolutely glorious. I wrote this episode from my bed with my pups cuddled up next to me because that is what I call success.

Yes, this is the redefining success series and being chill, and relaxed, and nestled in at home with my people and my pups is the pinnacle of success for me. And so is starting the new year not thinking that I'm behind, or that I'm not enough, or that I need to fix something, or that I have to hustle. It feels so like much success. But I know success is different for everyone or at least it should be if you are being honest with yourself and not following some other person's or guru's roadmap for success.

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On last week's episode I introduced this idea of redefining success. And today I want to specifically dig deeper with regard to our thoughts about workloads, and schedules, and obligations. And where our teams if we have them, if you have a team like I do, where they fit into this conversation. Or really how I suggest you think about their freedom and their success. So first of all, I want you to think about your schedule for a second.

Now, in particular since we are at the beginning of a new year, ask yourself, do a little assessment, how is your current schedule feeling for you and to you? Is this the schedule you would choose for yourself? And make sure you're clear on why it is or isn't. Ask yourself, are you forcing yourself to do things that you think you should do or that you have to do in order to be successful? And if you are forcing, in what parts of your life are you doing this? Is it everywhere? The way we do one thing is the way we do everything so a lot of times it's everywhere.

But is it, is it everywhere? Are those things you're forcing yourself to do that you don't really want to do related to your work, or maybe to your health, or something you're believing about your body, or your weight. Maybe it's about your home and getting organized. Maybe it's something you're believing you have to do with your family, your kids, or maybe it's some totally other area of your life, a different area. But where are you believing that you've got to push yourself and force yourself to finally hit the level of success you dream of?

I think to start to redefine success we have to first take that really hard look at how we're showing up versus how we want to show up. And that could mean different things for different people. Some of us are working harder than we want to work. And we really just want rest or a slower pace but we don't feel like we have that option. We feel like we have to do all these things. I said that so many years to myself. And some of us definitely have more privilege than others so that some things are actually optional to us.

I get that not everybody has the option of not working as hard as we're working right now but a lot of us do. And even with privilege we're still

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pushing and forcing ourselves because of our belief systems. So, notice where you're doing that. Notice if the things that you're doing, the things you're feeling if it feels like a requirement that you have to, that you don't have a choice. And check-in and see if maybe you really do have more choices than you're believing, than you're telling yourself you do because a lot of times we do have more choice than we think.

Now, some of us are not working too hard, or not overworking, or not wishing for rest, some of us are not maybe working hard enough or at least we think we're not working hard enough. And we berate ourselves for what we should be doing, or what we're not doing while we procrastinate. But we're berating ourselves like I shouldn't be watching this much TV, I shouldn't be laying on the couch, I should be doing something. I should be selling. I should be making money. I should be marketing. I should, should, should.

But I want you to ask yourself, how much of what's happening on that should list is actually a problem for you. Should you really be doing it or is it just not acceptable to not be doing it when you compare your current state of being to society's version of success and to society's addiction to productivity and output? What happens if you start to think critically about how much you are or you're not working? And if you're not working a ton, might it be true that that's the perfect amount of work for you?

What if working that exact amount would allow you to meet your own standards of success, maybe not the ones that the world tells us but the ones that really matter to you? And what if you don't need to change anything about your work ethic, or workload, or schedule? You really just need to give yourself permission to release yourself from society's definition of success, or productivity from all those shoulds and instead write your own definition.

Because what I find, whether you're overworked or you're berating yourself with all the shoulds because you don't think you're working enough, both of these things stem from us trying to do and be what culture tells us we need to do and be in order to be a success.

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I just told someone yesterday literally, I think I've said it three or four times in the past week. But I specifically said it in our Design You coaching program, "No, I can't magically make you start doing something this year that you keep telling yourself you should do. But you clearly don't want to do or you would have already done it. So, I can't magically make you be something that you're not. And I want you to just admit to yourself that you hate that thing and let it go."

Because guess what? There are many ways to be successful and that thing you hate which in her case was showing up more on social media for her business. That thing is just one option, it is just one action that could lead you to success. And I reminded her that I built my entire business before a lot of what current social media was even a thing. I mean, yeah, there were blogs but there was no Instagram. I wasn't having to do reels to be a success. And way before me, many, many people built their businesses when there were no blogs.

So yes, there's always new technology but we don't have to do all of it to be a success. And her business is not going to die if she's not commenting on posts weekly in her social media and she's not showing up on video. Some people love Instagram, so some people love lives, and stories, and being on videos, they're performers, her not so much. So, there's no need for her to believe that showing up regularly on social media has to be part of her definition of business success. There's a lot of other ways she can be successful.

So, my biggest question for her was, "Why do you keep trying to force this? Why are you not letting it go?" And her answer was, "Because my social media people told me that's the way to be successful online." And that's not untrue. I'm sure there is proven success with their clients when they show up and comment on things with people, and build online relationships, and show up on videos. Yeah, it works but it's not the only thing that works. But what was interesting there and it's true for most of us is that the definition of success is always what someone else told us.

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So, think about that. For me I have to check-in and go, "Is it my parents, my coach, some guru, my friends, my peers, society, the industry? Who is it exactly that's told me this is the path to success? And am I going to choose to believe them?" Someone or something else that we are looking out to and comparing to and listening to told us how to be a success. And it may be true for us and it may not be.

I'm not sure I've ever heard anyone say in conversations like this, "Well, I know in my gut, and my heart, and my mind, or one of those, exactly what success looks like for me. And what everybody else is telling me, that isn't it. Even if all the gurus in the world told me so, I would not do that because that's not my version of success." I don't hear that very often.

But that my friends is what I want for you. It's what I want for all of us, for us to know our own knowing, our own confidence about what success looks like for us, about what we're willing, and interested, and excited to do for success and what we're not. What it looks like to have no forcing, no gnashing of teeth as I call it, and suffering because that stuff is not required. So where are you trying to force yourself to be successful in a way that you don't enjoy, that's just not working, that you just keep telling yourself you should do but you're not doing? Where are you doing that?

Think about this example, if you think you should be going to the gym three times a week but you never go regularly, and when you do go it feels like a chore and it only happens after hours or at least minutes, if not hours, of negotiating with yourself, and vacillating, and dreading, and the self-loathing, and all the stuff that happens in order to get you there. That's miserable. That is miserable and I have been there so many times. And I have to remind myself, that's not the only way for me to define or redefine health in my life.

I don't have to do that one particular way of moving my body, or working out, or doing it because everyone else is doing. That's how I felt about the Peloton, that's why I sold mine. So, what is the definition of health, or success, or business success, or financial success that better fits with you personally and your desires, your nature, your personality? And what is

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something that's actually pleasurable to you more often than not? There are so many ways to define or redefine success, including in the areas of health.

And we each get to decide what that is for us. Often though the stress and the self-loathing that comes from not meeting society's definition of health or wellness does more harm to us mentally and emotionally than not going to the gym does. We're like, "If I don't go to the gym I'm going to die early. I'm going to cut years off my life." Well, what if actually beating yourself up and loathing yourself for not going to the gym, or making yourself go to the gym is adding so much stress and pressure, that that's going to take years off your life?

The same is true for success in other parts of our lives, not just in health, it's true in business too. Where are you creating suffering, and anxiety, and stress, that can take a toll because you're trying to believe in some version of success that if you're really honest, you don't really even want to believe in? For most of my adult life and most of my 22 years of owning my own business my day-to-day existence looked pretty much like that. It looked like me hustling, me forcing myself to do a lot of things. There were so many shoulds.

I had a whole lot of believing, I don't have a choice. I don't have a choice but to work really hard, and work long hours, and miss being home with my family and my daughter, and working on weekends, and not being there when she gets home from school. And not going to the swimming pool while she and my husband were there because I had to be at work and living in this constant state of urgency and stress. And pretty much dislike for everything that was on my calendar that I was supposed to be doing.

But some masochist version of a belief system that made me show up and do it anyway, that's what it looked like and it was really painful. And of course, there were definitely sweet spots, there were highlights. Those were the things that kept me going. I'd get on a magazine cover, or I'd get a big client, or I'd get invited to go on a trip with a magazine, or speak at market, or win an award. But those were really few and far between. They



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were the things that kept me coming back to the grind day after day but they weren't enough to offset the toll that the grind took on me.

But I really thought that's what success in business looked like and so did the world because boy, did I get a lot of external validation when I was working that way. You're the hardest working woman I know. Wow, you're such a success. Things are really going well for you. And that's confusing too because I was doing things that were harming me in a lot of ways, and harming my family, all in the name of success. And people were validating that version of how I was showing up. And the thing is you probably think success looks like that too.

Let's just chew on that for a minute, let's just sit with that for a minute. Does your brain think that success and business looks like hustling and forcing, and not enjoying a lot of what's in your days, all as a means to an end? A means that gets you to some future point in which you will finally be able to feel and be a success. Have you ever noticed that society's definition of success pretty much engineers all the pleasure, and joy, and fun right out of work with the promise that we can have pleasure, and joy, and fun at some later date in the future if we work hard now?

Yet somehow that later date never shows up. And it's all a big myth and lie because we're going to keep hustling, and keep hustling, and keep hustling to go to the next, you know, we move the goalpost out, the joy goalpost keeps moving and we never actually get there. And so then at some point we probably just die with all the joy still unenjoyed, unrealized. And to make matters worse, when I was hustling for years at work it wasn't just the work stuff that I had to contend with. There's also the work that I needed to do at home waiting for me around the fringes of my day, if not interrupting my day.

Now, as you probably know, you may know this, you may not, you may not have articulated it in this way, or understood it in this way but there's a proven gap of unpaid work. And it's recognized between genders, traditional gender roles, meaning the work that is done in the home, or with family, or basic needs being met, that's not really optional, but that we're

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not compensated for. Like housework, and meal prep, and child rearing, and childcare, and other family obligations, taking care of aging parents, all the unpaid stuff that we have to do.

And yeah, this information is pretty much based on traditional gender binaries, the male female binary as I don't really have any data on where the non-binary or trans community fits into this. So for purposes of this podcast, we're going to talk in those traditional gender binary, although I recognize that not everybody fits into those. But as far as the data that is available is concerned for the traditional male and female roles, women do about four and a half hours of unpaid work at home every day and men do about two hours.

So that's more than double the amount of work that we do as women, and moms, and daughters and just being in that more matriarchal role in the family, in domestic chores, and in family and home related responsibilities. About, a little more than double what men do. And let's be honest, two hours for men is still a lot to do when you have a full-time stressful job.

Now, none of this takes into account the work that single moms have to do. They have all the unpaid work. I guess they have six and half hours. They have all of it to do, plus they have to do the paid work to support their families. I can't really imagine how difficult that must be because I have a spouse to help carry this load among other help. Because financial privilege can also help lessen this burden for some of us. And so obviously not everyone can afford that option.

I do, I pay people, incredible people to help my family and me with cleaning, and laundry each week. And it makes an incredible difference, it makes a huge difference. And even with that help my unpaid work is still a lot to balance with running my company. And I have a very helpful husband and wonderful other people who I've hired to do this stuff in my house. So that just shows how unsustainable and unrealistic our cultural expectations are. No wonder we feel unsuccessful most of the time.

We're losing at this thing every day more often than not because it's just not possible to fit all of that stuff in. And we live in a patriarchal society, and

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the traditional gender roles for women haven't changed a whole, whole lot. I mean they've changed some, we've made some progress, but they haven't changed a whole, whole lot, at least in America. even though what has changed is that most households require both adults, if there's two adults and a couple, or two parents, requires both of us to work.

I was thinking recently about how my dad and other men like him which are the people that I got a lot of my model for entrepreneurship from and running a business from. I was thinking about the difference in me and my dad, and our responsibilities. So, I'm modeling and getting advice from my dad for years yet my dad had the privilege of my mom staying home with my brother and me. They had the financial privilege, white privilege, male privilege, all the things. So, my mom stayed home with my brother and me.

And when we were growing up mom did everything at home, she did all those six and a half hours of work if there were that many back then. She did all the cooking, all the cleaning, all the parenting literally, grocery shopping, homework help, caring for pets. I do a couple of times remember her hiring some help. I remember one time we had a lady for several years that helped do some ironing but mostly my mom handled it all.

And our household was very traditional and patriarchal. And so, my mom literally fixed my dad's plate at mealtimes, put it in front of him, picked it up when he was finished. Heck, she even laid his clothes out for him to get dressed. She pretty much still does all of this stuff, he still goes to work, she still does all of that stuff even though it's been a long time since they've had kids at home. Now it's grandkids that are over there all the time. And all of that's okay, that's the way they like it.

But when I think about why it felt so much harder for me to build my business even with all the privilege I have, it felt so much harder for me than it looked for the man that I was trying to model. I can see when I look at it through this lens that it was that unpaid work gap that made a huge difference. Now, don't get me wrong, my husband does a lot at home. He goes to the grocery store, he does some of the cooking, he cooked all of

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our supper last night. I literally did not lift a finger. And he's very self-sufficient. I rarely have to do things for him on a day-to-day basis.

I am certainly not laying out his clothes or putting a plate in front of him at dinner. But even just having the traditional gender role of me being the one in the family who's pretty much in charge of deciding what has to be done, especially with regard to the house, and our daughter, and the pets. It's still a lot to think about, even with his help I still have to think about it. He's willing to do a lot if I ask for his help. But the key words there are I have to ask.

And a lot of times when I do ask I feel like I'm burdening him and I probably am, I'm asking for a favor at some level because he also worked hard all day. And he's also tired just like I am. And so not a single one of those things that I'm asking him to do were anything that my dad had to deal with at all.

Mom literally handled everything. She handled the family finances since my dad's not handy. She didn't even ask him to handle things or go to the store, or fix things around the house, or put out the trash. In fact, he was pretty impatient when she asked for help. So, she tried not to ask much of him at all, it was just easier that way for her. Now, of course he was making a lot of money and he paid for things. And that's really important so let's not forget that. But these days women are making money too. I'm paying for a lot. I make about the same amount as my husband, pretty close.

So, we're both working hard to create the financial success we have in our family. But the unpaid workload is still not equal. And heck, if we're honest, we're both tired. We would both love to have someone else take care of us and fix our plate, and maybe even lay our clothes out the way it was handled in my childhood. But at least having someone else to think about all that stuff so we don't have to. I often dream about now what it would be like. And I did actually, it's not even just now, I remember thinking this in my 30s, from a traditional role.

I'm like, "I need another spouse", even though I'm not into that. I need another adult in the house taking care of everything for me because I'm

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working hard to build this business. And my husband was working hard to become a partner in a law firm. So, thinking of everything, handling everything, the sheer amount of decision fatigue that it would eliminate if I had someone else handling all of that is even hard to imagine. I wouldn't have fatigued myself with things like what's for breakfast, or lunch, or dinner, or have I ordered groceries yet?

Or did I remember to give my dog her insulin shot? Or did I order those books my daughter needed for school? Or did I return all the Christmas gifts that either don't fit people or that they didn't like? Did I make everyone's doctor appointments, or their haircut appointments, or remind them to? Or did I schedule that photographer for my daughter's annual Valentine card photos? Did I pay the balances on her school trip? Do we have fish food for Nigel? Did I confirm the dog's bath appointments?

And I forgot, we're out of trash bags and we need to get all the holiday decorations down. And does Ellison have a clean uniform for school tomorrow, or even today because she's leaving in 15 minutes? And the dishwasher isn't working and I need to call the repair person. And did I pay for the lawn care bill? Because even though we don't do the lawn ourselves we have to remember to pay people or they won't come back, and on, and on, and on.

And you know what I mean. And every one of those things comes from a privileged lifestyle with quite a bit of financial means. And I still have to think about all those things and that list exhausts me. And there's so many people who have to think about so much more who are also trying to run a business, and that may be you. So those are just a few of the things we have to think about. While also running a business that my dad never had to think about any of that stuff. And I was thinking, what one of those things did he have to handle, it's mindboggling.

But let's also acknowledge that success today is not just about getting it all done, about all those decisions. It's also about how well we do it all, how well we keep those balls in the air. Other people judge us potentially but we definitely judge ourselves on how well we pull off the paid and unpaid work.

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We believe that doing these things perfectly is the goal. And it's a 100% a part of what we consider success to look like because even when we're doing everything right at work, if we're dropping a ball at home we still feel like a failure.

So particularly as women and moms but a lot of you guys feel that way too, if you're a guy listening, we struggle with this. And I know I had a lot of mom guilt because I wasn't pulling all that stuff off every day and spending enough time with my daughter. How could I have been? And we are comparing the way we are at home to how our moms or grandmothers were. I mean I compare how good I am at the unpaid work and being a mom, to my mom who didn't have an outside the house job most of my childhood, sometimes she did but most of the time she didn't.

And I'm also comparing myself to my dad or other examples of success at work and you can't be a 100 and a 100. There's not enough time in the day to have two full-time jobs and pull it off at the level we think we should be pulling it off. So, we are expected to and we expect ourselves to have the bandwidth, the energy, the mental capacity to handle all the things and simultaneously pull them all off, work task and home task, both. And if we happen to also be the business owner, we don't just get to go do our job at work.

We don't get to just be say the interior designer at work. We also have to be the CEO and we're required to make CEO level decisions. So, a lot of you are the chief employee in your business, and maybe the only employee in your business. And you're also having to run the business. So, you're managing yourself, you may be managing other people or a team and you're managing your clients, and their expectations and every other vendor or person that is part of the process of the work that you do. And I'm here to tell you that pulling this off is impossible. We don't like to hear it.

It is impossible, impossible. We want to say clever things like it's possible, I am possible, impossible spells I am possible, but it is not possible to do all of that, it is not. It can't be done. Or maybe we should say it can't be done without the hustle and the exhaustion most of us are feeling at any given

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moment. And even at that it can't be done to the perfectionist level we dream of. So, a lot of you have felt the hustle and the exhaustion for years while also feeling like a failure and searching for success, even with that hustle, balls are going to drop daily no matter what because it's too much.

So, what is the solution? Well, I believe the solution is redefining success. And as we started to talk about last week, there's a lot of different parts to the success equation. This means all kinds of different things to different people depending on your unique set of circumstances, how much money you have, how much financial privilege you have, white privilege, there's just so many things that go into this. But here are a few areas that might help you get started crafting a brand new definition that could be lifechanging for you.

So first I think it's about knowing yourself, and I mean really knowing yourself. So, this is awareness. And it's sometimes hard to get awareness when we're wearing all those hats and trying to keep all those balls in the air. But let me give you an example that just came up for me. So, over the holidays this year, a few weeks ago, my daughter tested positive for COVID, yay, not. And it was right before Christmas and even though she was double vaccinated she got COVID.

I think it was the new variant and she felt pretty terrible, which I hated for her. And at first she was really, really sad about it and I was pretty sad about it too, missing Christmas. So, for obvious reasons and not to spread the virus, we cancelled our plans to have 20 people at my house on Christmas night. And we didn't go to my mom's with my brother and his family, my parents for Christmas Eve. We connected with them through Zoom.

And though I hated that my daughter was sick. I have to tell you this Christmas for me was personally amazing. I got to rest and lay around in my PJs. Clearly you know by now that I love them, I'm wearing them as we speak. I got to do more puzzles and more needlepoint. I didn't have to stand at the sink for hours, heck, for days, washing China and crystal, and arranging flowers, and cleaning the house, and setting the tables.

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Only to then stand at the sink for more hours after the meals were done, washing all those plates and glasses again and putting them away, and cleaning the house up afterwards for days. I didn't have to do any of that. I got to sleep in every morning and take naps. I read books. I did so much cuddling with my dogs. I couldn't really cuddle with my daughter much, she was masked up. And even though I'm triple vaxxed we were trying to social distance which was not the easiest thing to do. We made it, no one else got sick, thankfully.

But I did a lot of cuddling with the dogs. I did a lot of TV watching. And I didn't have to get into frantic deadline mode that my house was ready, and the gifts were wrapped, and the meal was cooked and ready on time. And did I remember to put the rolls out and let them rise and all the things. And I didn't have to entertain or nurture anyone other than just my husband and my daughter. It was very low key and it was amazing. So, I'm slightly embarrassed and also sort of proud to say that it was really glorious other than my daughter having COVID.

And I told my mom afterwards kind of tongue in cheek but not really that I may never host Christmas again or even be willing to agree to go to someone else's house on Christmas day. We can do it earlier in the month. Surely we can get together on the 17<sup>th</sup>, because in this situation and had it not happened I wouldn't have known this because I wouldn't have chosen this by choice. It was a consequence of the dang Omicron variant. But it helped me know myself better.

Because if I'm really honest, I've complained a good bit over the years about the amount of work it takes to pull off my perfection level holiday entertaining. Even though I always also told myself that I loved it and I'm really good at it. And I am good at it. Pulling off the entertaining was sort of proof that I was actually a certified card carrying good southern girl, and a real interior designer, and a hostess with the moistest. And it was as if those cards would be revoked if I didn't pass the test of holiday perfection every season.



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But this year having this reminder that holidays can look different, and I mean they looked kind of different last year but they looked really different this year for us. It made me realize that a lot of our cultural expectations, and obligations, and definitions of success have us doing things that yes, maybe we're even still great at. And of course, there's some joy in them. Or at least there's some external validation from everybody telling me how amazing it is, which can be a slippery slope when we're getting validated.

Like we talked about earlier, we're getting validated for something that's taking a toll on us, can be problematic, it's confusing. But this entertaining at this level is also exhausting. So, what if we had a choice might we not to choose to do it? And guess what? We actually do have a choice. We don't think we do, we feel obligated but we have a choice. I think I mentioned on some previous podcast maybe recently, and if not, I'll mention it here.

I took this test called the Spark Type quiz recently and read the book that goes with it called Sparked by Jonathan Fields. And it tells you your zone of genius. And some of these things work, some don't. It's like any personality test. This one I felt really, really seen and really heard maybe for the first time in my life. And so, the Spark test tells you your zone of genius, your kind of sub zone of genius. And it tells you your anti Spark type, which is the thing that you do, and maybe you're even still good at it. But it fatigues you, it drains you.

So again, just because it's your anti Spark type doesn't mean you can't pull it off, doesn't mean you're not good at it. But when you're doing it you'd probably rather be doing your actual zone of genius instead. So, I realized when I was thinking about this Christmas situation and not having to entertain, that the complaining I've been doing for years is because even though I'm good at entertaining, it's outside of my zone of genius at some level. My zone of genius according to Sparked, which I agree with is that I'm the scientist. I love solving big problems.

And my subtype is the maven, which means I love to learn just for learning sake. So that pretty much translates into reading and studying all the time, so both of these do. And I fully agree. These are really who I am. My anti

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type, the nurturer. My daughter would agree, not really, I'm a good mom. But yeah, I can be really good at nurturing but it does drain me, it fatigues me. So, no wonder that doing all that work during the holidays when I already have a full-time job and I'm working right up until time that I start working on my house, and the tables, and the China, and the flowers.

And then right after Christmas I go back to work with not a lot of break to speak of. We kind of call it a break but let's be honest, I work a lot of the break to entertain and make it perfect for everyone else like my mom's always done. But no wonder it drains me and fatigues me to spend my holiday nurturing everyone else when my anti Spark type is nurture which I agree with. Again, you may not like the book at all, you may not agree. But for me I really resonated with it, it feels very true.

So, you all, this was a huge aha for me this year because it does ring so true. This year I stayed in maven mode, reading, and science mode, solving problems, even working puzzles. But I didn't have to spend the holiday nurturing everyone else and it was beyond amazing. Knowing this about myself now helps me see how I could set myself up for success in the future by being aligned with my zones of genius, my desires, what I really want in a more honest way when I'm committing or not committing to things.

And I use this example, not just because I might not always want to do Christmas. And trust me, there may be plenty of years that I want to do it. But at least I have the awareness now that it really does drain me. Maybe if I do it I take the first two weeks of January off. But I can reimagine what success would look like for me in this part of my life because I know myself more. And this is true with all parts of our life.

So not just for your holiday entertaining or traditions, but where, and when, and how often are you saying yes to things at home, or at work, or with family obligations that really drain you and fatigue you? And you just don't really love doing it but you feel some obligation either so you can hit some revenue number that's a sign of success, or you can make everybody in

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your family happy, or you don't want to say not to your clients, or you're aligning with what society and culture tells you, you should be doing.

So even though they're not right for you, you do them anyway and you call it success. And are you doing this in multiple areas of your life at once, overdelivering at work, and home, and with family, and leaving no time for yourself, or your wellbeing, or your mental health, or just to plan old rest? I mean speaking of rest, I just read an article this week in The Atlantic talking about how we as Americans even turn our hobbies into work which is so true for me. I even turn reading into work. I'm like, "I've got to get through 50 books this year."

We don't know how to be idle. We don't know how to do things without having to finish them. We don't know how to play without winning. We don't know how to do things just for fun. And we judge ourselves and our success on how busy and accomplished we are, even if it's in our hobbies. Well, yeah, I may not be at work but I won the whole tennis tournament. Yet, as I talked about in last week's episode, at the end of our life it's not having worked more or done more that we wish for. It's usually the opposite.

One interesting theory I have about our current definition of success is that it actually prevents us from the financial abundance that most of us long for in many ways. We've been trained to think that doing more equals more money. But that's not inherently true. We see plenty of people that work a lot, that work three jobs or do tons of manual labor for 14 hours a day. That doesn't mean they're wealthy as a result, a lot of times those are some of the lowest paid people in our society.

I had an epiphany about this about two years ago. I was sitting in a business conference, that the reason I didn't already have the money that I wanted in my life or in my business was because I had been working too hard. You heard me right, not working not hard enough, no, working too hard. It wasn't because I hadn't worked enough, it was the opposite. I was doing too many things, trying to check all the success boxes, trying to look like success, maybe even more than being successful.

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Because let's be honest, the world's definition of success is way more about optics than actually feeling or being successful. Working too hard had me exhausted, it had me starting lots of things but not finishing them. It had me dabbling accidentally in a lot of things, thinking they would be the answer to success this time. So instead of slowing down, or constraining, or simplifying, or just consistently doing one or two things really well, I was trying to do all the things. Our culture says we can have it all, we should have it all.

Guess what? I have decided, this is one of my favorite things, I have decided that I no longer want to be all that I can be. And I for sure do not want to live up to my potential. And I laugh but I'm dead serious you all, I don't want to be all I can be. I can be a lot, my God, I have so much potential and possibility. And that's exhausting. And I don't want to be any of that anymore. I mean I want to be some of it but I no longer want to believe that I have to completely wring every ounce of potential out of myself.

And I don't want my daughter to do it either. I hope she feels free to be only as successful as far as cultural definition of success goes, only to be as successful as she feels like is right for her. I used to think the opposite. I used to think I wanted her to learn all the things, including back to the entertaining story. I wanted her to know how to entertain and do things just like me for the holidays so she could be the one that carried on this tradition forever. You all, I've changed my mind, I don't want her to.

I kind of don't want to teach her anything else. I mean if she likes it, fine. But I don't ever want her to feel obligated to do any of that if it's not what she really wants to do. I hope we start new traditions of pure relaxation for the holidays, honestly. And it's freaking exhausting to try to pull off society's definition of success. So, I personally am opting out. What about you? If you're a 100% honest with yourself, what does success look like for you? What does it look like in your day-to-day? What does it look like at work? What does it look like at home?

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For me it looks like a few key things, one, it looks like constraining a lot, which means saying no to a lot of things all the time. We don't like to say no to things as humans, and particularly as Americans we don't like to. We're taught to want it all, to get it all. And we have FOMO fear of missing out, fear of missing out you all is a success killer, not a success maker. We have it backwards. So, success for me looks like constraining.

It also, number two, looks like letting go of perfectionism. This one's hard. It's hard for interior designers in particular, our whole world is built on smoking mirrors, on optics, on making everything beautiful. Perfectionism runs deep in us. And honestly, it holds us back from making the money we want. But we think the opposite is true. We think the more perfect we are the more success we will create and it's just not true. So, number two, get rid of perfectionism.

Number three, this one is huge. Be willing to disappoint people. That doesn't sound like success. It sounds like failure. I'm telling you, it's success. If you're willing to disappoint people you will create success in your life because it's not just us believing in the cultural standards of success, it's the problem, it's that everyone else believes in it too. So, when we opt out, like I'm saying I'm doing, others don't like it. It's confusing and annoying to them. They want us to just tow the line and do all the things we've always done or that we're capable of doing.

Any time we disrupt status quo or even just opt out it will not be popular to those around us. We will disappoint people. But I believe really achieving your version of success requires you to be willing to disappoint people.

Number four, I think it requires us to get honest about what we really want and what we really like. And we've talked a lot about that in this episode. So just like realizing that occasionally I might like to entertain and get out the good China, I do love arranging flowers, don't get me wrong, I love it. But being obligated to do it because the world says it's December 25<sup>th</sup>, and I'm a woman, and a mom, and a southerner, and that that's my job is no longer in alignment with me and I see it now.

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So, getting curious and creative about how I might want to make adjustments or opt out of some expectations starts with me being honest with myself about what I really want and what I really like. The same is true for how many hours we work in the day. How many hours are you working in your business? Or what roles are you playing at work or at home? Or how much money do you really want to make? And think about how much money you want to make in conjunction with what it takes to make that amount of money.

Because really your entire definition of success should start with what you want and what you really like doing with your time here on Earth. And if to hit the definition of success you've had you have to do a whole bunch of stuff that you don't really like or you don't really want to do, and you're not enjoying at all, why is that still your definition of success? Get more honest with yourself.

And fifth, to really define success or redefine it, I think it makes us or requires to disrupt a lot of expectations like industry standards, cultural standards, the systems of patriarchy and white supremacy that set expectations on us for what success should look like and who's entitled to it because not everybody is under those systems. It requires us calling BS on a lot of what gurus, and doctors, and experts tell us.

It requires us to not trust the highlight reels we see on everyone else's social media feeds, not trust that they're the truth. They're a façade. And we must know at our core that they're not true, they're not real so we can stop being influenced by them. So, what are all the things that you will disrupt to get to the core of what success looks like for you? Is it in your industry? Is it culture? Is it a family system? Is it comparing yourself to other social media or following some guru like they're God? What do you have to get rid of?

For me it's these five things. And then when I'm doing those five things or to keep doing them it requires me to also put on blinders to stay in my own lane. So, I don't get sucked back into the old patterns of people pleasing or aligning with status quo, with culture. The status quo will try so hard to pull

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us back into hustle culture, productivity culture, diet culture, beauty culture which are all really part of success culture.

And holding these influences at bay, at arm's length, and forging our own path will not be easy but when we do that we'll start to feel the success that we thought we would feel, the way we thought success would feel.

So, one last thing before we go. I want to make sure that I address this because I think it's really important if you have a team like I do. So, if you're redefining success I believe it's not just for you or for me in my business as the CEO. It's not just for the CEO or the person at the top. I don't achieve this new version of success in my life by just passing the work down to other people on my team. Now, that's not to say I don't hire other people to help and do things and take on responsibilities both at home and at work to balance the workload, I do.

But as CEO and as a CEO focused on conscious leadership, I don't believe it's really freedom or success for me if I'm free but my team is still hustling. If we have a company culture where they're still expected to overwork, or where they aren't being paid a living wage, or hopefully way more than a living wage, then how is that really success? It's just me benefitting from their oppression, or taking advantage, or exploitation. Because every one of the people on my team and yours if you have one, also still have the same burden of unpaid labor at home.

They also have a desire for success and freedom, they are also impacted and potentially oppressed by cultural expectations, gender biases, the patriarchy, white supremacy and other systems of oppression. And guess what? If you want it, they want it. If it's good for you it's likely good for them. If you want more money, they want more money. If you want more time off, they want more time off. And a lot of times we think, well, that's not possible. And we only go for success for ourselves and I don't think that's really success.

So, if it's good for you, it's good for them, and likewise, if it's bad for you, it's likely bad for them. And I'm not saying everything has to be equal, of course. You're going to probably make more money as a CEO than some

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other people in your team but you also have different levels of responsibility and that's fine. But really hiring super cheap labor, and exploiting people, and not giving people time off, and putting urgency and deadlines on them so you can be free, and you can feel successful, I don't think that's really success.

I'm interested in a conscious workplace where we all collectively have redefined success. I'm interested in an equity centered, liberatory and just business, and team practices and procedures that benefit everybody. And I'm committed to redefining success for me and for my team. And hopefully giving you the tools you need to redefine it for you and your team. So, I think that's an important piece of this because if we just exploit other people in an effort to try and free up time or make money for ourselves, I don't really, really think that's success.

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So, I hope you enjoyed relistening to this, what we call encore episode of one of our best episodes and most responded to, most excitement building episodes in the last year. And I hope that you're really getting clear now on where you are at this midpoint in the year where you want to go next. And I will be back again like I said before, next week with another great episode of the *Design You* podcast. Bye for now.

Thank you so much for listening to the *Design You* podcast, and if you are ready to dig deep and do the important work we talk about here on the podcast of transforming your mindset and creating a scalable online business model, there has never been a more important time than right now. So, join me and the incredible creative entrepreneurs in my *Design You* coaching program today. You can get all the details at [TobiFairley.com](http://TobiFairley.com).