

Ep #253: How to Dream Again



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With Your Host

Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 253.

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.

Hello friends, I hope you are loving 2023 so far. I sure am and I'm kind of hearing people are liking it a little better than last year at least. I am definitely rocking and rolling and enjoying the hell out of this year so far, all five weeks of it. And I just had a birthday so that makes it fun too. It was my 51st and I celebrated in Los Vegas with my mom and my daughter and with Adele. Yes, I hung out with Adele on my birthday. Seeing her was on my bucket list and I tried to get tickets last year for my 50th birthday and thankfully it didn't work out.

I didn't get the lottery pick on my 50th because she ended up cancelling her entire show last year. So when they reissued tickets earlier this year or earlier actually last year 2022, late in the fall my daughter was chosen in the lottery to buy tickets and we were able to get them for my actual birthday. So I saw her on the night of my 51st birthday, so incredible, so worth the wait. So we were celebrating my 50th and my 51st this year with Adele.

Now, I'm not typically a big birthday celebrator. I mean I love birthdays and I enjoy making them special but I'm not one for big parties usually or anything like that. And so I usually keep my birthdays pretty low-key, just a nice dinner out with family. I love to get flowers and a few gifts but not usually a big party or a big trip. But since my word of the year this year is 'play' and I'm really leaning into that whole attitude of play and creativity going big for my birthday plans this year was just perfect.

And I will say, I maybe should do bigger birthdays because I think this was maybe my favorite birthday ever. So I definitely know that part of the reason it was so good is because I am in this attitude of play. It's my thinking that's different and I did not take work with me. I didn't even think

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about work. And I think I was telling my mom while I was there because I was saying, "It's amazing kind of how I've been able to turn work off even more than usual." And I think part of that is not just my attitude of play.

But I think it's also because I've been continuing my creativity practice pretty much every day but at least several times a week. And it's not only feeding my soul to be practicing creativity but it's really helping me shift out of work mode more than ever. I used to just think about work all the time and work was my hobby. And now that I have these other hobbies that I'm really practicing regularly painting, needlepoint, I'm learning to crochet now and other things. I'm really getting into the habit of working really focused work in certain times of the day and of the week.

And then I'm really learning to be able to turn that off in a different way and move into play and creativity. And so I'm really loving this creativity practice, getting creative not only about how I want to spend my time in hobbies but how I spend my time, in general, is really making a difference in my overall life experience. So I think that yes my attitude of play is coming into this kind of shift for me. My creativity practice is coming into this shift for me.

But there's something else, there's a third part of the equation and I'm going to talk about that in today's episode that I think is really making the difference for how I'm feeling this year. And so we have the one part mindset, the part two is creativity and I would say part three of the equation or that third leg of the stool that's making life so amazing is dreaming. Now, dreaming, I have found is also a habit or a practice just like creativity. And here's the most important thing about dreaming that I want you to hear. Too many of us stop dreaming, we stop doing it. We forget how to dream.

And so for example I decided I wanted to see Adele for my 50th birthday in Vegas and that was certainly due to dreaming. It was on my bucket list. And even though it didn't work out until a year later it turned out to be the perfect thing. And that's how I find dreams to really work. They don't always come on the exact timeline we want them to. But if we aren't willing to have

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the dream and to believe in it then it's hard for it to happen at all. So that's what I really want us to talk about today, dreaming.

And you may have heard me mention this before but I think of this example so often when I hear week after week, the people I'm working with, the creatives I've coached or I'm coaching, friends of mine especially women. When I hear them feeling stuck or frustrated or not knowing what they want to do next it always brings to mind a podcast I listened to a few years ago. So it was an episode of a Tim Ferriss podcast, don't even know. I don't listen to him regularly I just happened to be searching something or I heard someone.

Actually no, a friend of mine, one of the owners of Woodbridge told me about this particular episode. And it was Tim Ferriss and he was interviewing Tony Robbins. Now, I know that a lot of us think Tony Robbins is problematic. He can be. But he also sometimes has some brilliant things to say. And so this isn't about, again, as I've said before whether we like specific people or coaches that I'm bringing to mind, yes, some of them are an issue. But what he said in this podcast was so profound that I can't not tell it to you.

So Tony was talking about coaching Andre Agassi. And Agassi had become the best tennis player in the world. At this point, he was at the top of his game. He had won everything, probably the grand slam in tennis, Wimbledon, all the things. And shortly thereafter he hit a gigantic slump and he was losing all the time and he was falling off his game. And he was in a funk. And he hired or talked to Tony Robbins to coach him to figure out what the problem was.

And what Tony realized is that Agassi had dreamed his entire life from a really young boy, of becoming the best tennis player in the world and he had done that. But after that, he had no vision of what he was going to do next. He had stopped dreaming. That was the end of the dream to become the best in the world. And so his brain even subconsciously didn't know what came next in his story. And so what ended up coming next was

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basically nothing. He hit a slump. He'd checked the box, he'd done the thing but he didn't maintain his top-level status. He hit a slump.

He stopped growing, he stopped achieving. There was no longer a target to aim at. He had done it all. And once that box was checked he didn't have another box in place. And I think even if you've heard me say this before I want you to really think about this today because how many of us are in this exact place in our lives or our careers? It is known that women especially stop dreaming around middle age because we check the boxes which again are different for all of us but whatever those boxes are that we had in mind.

Or a lot of times it's the boxes that our parents had in mind for us or society had in mind for us. And so we check all of those boxes and then we don't know what comes next. So we might graduate from high school and maybe we go to college, for a lot of us we get married. For a lot of us, we have kids. A lot of us start a career. And you've checked all of those boxes. Some of you even check boxes in your career like I've done. And then once those boxes are checked we find ourselves feeling burned out or in a slump or in a funk or feeling old or uninspired, bored.

There are so many different feelings. We can feel frustrated. We get to the top of our game and think now it's just going to be coasting the rest of our life. We get our businesses built up and we start making a lot of money. And we're like, "Okay, we'll maintain this amount of money." And then we don't and things start to fall apart a little bit or revenues start to slump a little bit or clients stop calling a little bit. And we're like, "Well, maybe we're old new. Maybe we're broken. Maybe the industry's broken", all the things.

And we're definitely not broken. That was a podcast a few weeks ago. The industry sometimes can have things about it broken but I want you to check in and see if the real reason that you are feeling these things is because you also stopped dreaming. You only had a vision to a certain point and maybe after this, you thought, well, after that I'll just retire and be a grandparent or something. But that does not necessarily light you up if

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you're not really at retirement age yet or you're not really ready to be a grandparent yet or any of those things.

And so there is a gap for a lot of us. And I work with so many people especially women often somewhere between late 30s and mid to late 50s that feel so frustrated, that feel depressed because we discover that the last time we really remembered dreaming was probably in our 20s when we were starting our careers or starting our families or had these exciting things to look forward to. And most of the people I talk to that started in a creative career, some of us took breaks to have kids. Some of us kept working like I did while raising kids.

But we get our kids grown if we had them, or we get to a certain place in our career and we feel like we're on autopilot and that's where the slump kicks in. So many of us are so out of the practice of dreaming we don't even really know that that's the problem. And when we finally discover that the issue was that we forgot how to dream it's often extremely emotional. I coach so many people and it brings us to tears, first, tears of frustration probably because we think we can't dream. We have these practical things to do.

And then when it finally clicks in our brain of, oh my gosh we did forget how to dream, it's like the emotional floodgates are open. There are often a lot of tears, sometimes sobbing and it's very normal. I've done all of those things. A lot of times it's the practical parts of our life that are in the way of our dreaming. When I ask questions of people like, "What do you really want?" Especially women most of the people I ask cannot answer the question or are afraid to speak it into the world.

And when I ask them maybe to go out, three to five years they can maybe get a little bit more in touch with their dream because it's out there. It's not here today. Maybe if we go 10 years we even get a little more in touch with it of what do I want to be doing or have 10 years from now? But usually, that whole practice and that whole exercise is followed by something very practical like, "But, Tobi, right now I just need to pay the bills, my business isn't doing great."

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Or, “I just have to get more money or I have to have better clients or I have to put my kids through college.” Or some have to right now, practical reason that’s absolutely shutting down, squelching our ability to dream. And what I help them understand is that when we are trying to achieve from scarcity or lack, not enough-ness, not enough money, not enough time, when we’re desperate for money or time. And don't get me wrong, we are feeling desperate for those things and we really need them at those times.

So I’m not trying to gaslight us and pretend we don't need those things or do some Jedi Mind Tricks life coach stuff on us. It's not about that. It's not about saying that it's not true that we need those things. We do. We do need both more money and more time in those moments. But what I am trying to help you understand and I want you to reframe for a moment is that when we try to create from those thoughts and those feelings of lack and scarcity, especially when we’re trying to create more money from that feeling of desperation and scarcity. It makes success even harder.

So there's something about trying to produce from that desperate energy, I call it grippy energy, I’m trying to grasp onto it and hold on to it and squeeze it so tight, I need it so bad. That always seems to keep my results and my dreams at arm's length for me. So I struggle to produce results from this place of fear because I'm usually in fear in those moments. Scarcity is fear. We use the term scarcity a lot, it gets overused and we don't really know exactly what it means. But what it really means is coming from a place of lack.

And when we’re lacking time or money the underlying emotion is fear, fear we’re going to fail, fear we’re not going to provide something, fear it’s not going to work. And I have a lot of trouble producing results from fear. I have more success producing from calm or even from excitement. So how are we supposed to get from fear to dreaming or from scarcity to excitement? It's difficult for sure, but one of my favorite practices for this is very much like something that’s called design thinking.

Now, I didn't make up the concept of design thinking. It's been around for a long time. So design thinking is a non-linear iterative process and I love

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iterative processes, failing your way to success basically is what that means. Non-linear, it's not a straight line. So it's a non-linear iterative process that teams use when developing products or processes to understand a few things. So they're trying to understand the users of the product or process or the future users of it.

They're also trying to challenge any assumptions they might be making or any biases they have first. Then they try to redefine all of the problems so that's like white-boxing it, starting from scratch, suspending all those biases and just starting from a clean slate, redefining the problems. And then they can create innovative solutions. And once they have those solutions on paper they can prototype them and test them and see which ones work. And so I love this process of design thinking.

It's probably what a lot of you might call creative thinking but it's actually organized in five steps. So the five steps of design thinking are empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test. Now, all of these pieces and parts are important and it's funny because we say it's non-linear. But when we describe it in five steps it seems linear but within each of those steps, we're not going in a straight line. We're literally allowing anything to be possible. So the key parts of design thinking that make it so valuable in my opinion are a couple.

Number one, I love step number one that's called empathize. So empathize is actually about putting the user at the center of the process. So it's user-centric and it's rooted in empathy, empathizing with what problems they have. So design thinking is all about finding solutions that respond to the human need and bring in the human feedback into the process. There is a feedback loop happening. So this means that people, not technology are driving the innovation.

And so an essential part of this process involves stepping into the user's shoes and building genuine empathy for your target audience which if you're doing this on yourself you're building genuine empathy for yourself. So by understanding the person that's affected and what the problem is you can have more impactful solutions. So we're going to get really

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empathetic with ourselves. We're going to have compassion. We're going to believe all those things like our needs and our wants, we get those. We understand why we're in scarcity.

We understand why we're feeling this way. We get that we stop dreaming but there's another huge piece of this and that's in step three which is ideate. And here's what I love about the ideation process. It requires us to suspend bias to move into this process. So we're going to be empathetic. We're going to hear all of those issues and problems and really the biases in the empathize part. And then we're going to suspend those for just a bit. We're going to just park them over here on the side because ideating involves suspending disbelief in an effort to eliminate that individual bias. That's how it's baked into design thinking.

And so this is the part of design thinking that I think is so aligned with dreaming because we can't dream and ideate and think of the possibilities if we've got that little practical voice running in our head that's like, but Tobi, but Tobi, but Tobi, I need to pay the bills. But, Tobi, where is the money going to come from? But Tobi, that's not possible. But, Tobi, I don't even know how to do that. So we've got to suspend all of that.

So what I love to do if those are coming up is I write them all on a piece of paper like a journal and sit them to the side and I'm just like, "Yes, I see you. Yes, I empathize with you but for just a little bit I'm going to park you over here and pretend you're not there." So that I can move into that possibility place, that dreaming place. I find that the biggest barrier to most people of learning how to dream again is all of this practical thinking that gets in the way.

But yes I have to pay the bills, Tobi, or it takes a lot of money to do this thing and I don't have that money or have access to that money. Or, Tobi, when would I have time to build this other thing? It's just a pipedream, Tobi, it's not reality, Yes, all of those things are what are keeping you from dreaming. Reality or what you think your reality is today and dreams are kind of on two different plains in a way. And not to get too woo-woo, some

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of you may say, “Well, they vibrate on different levels”, whatever. I don't know.

I'm not necessarily into all of that stuff although I know there's some truth in it. But I want you to just realize that when you move into this kind of, I don't want to call it negative, just reality thought spiral of paying the bills, it's bringing you out of the possibility place. So they're on two different plains or in two different parts of your brain.

And so here's what we've got to remember. No one would ever have thought of the technology we have today like say for example the iPhone a few decades ago. Thank goodness people like Steve Jobs can suspend bias and suspend reality at least for a period of time and move into thinking and dreaming of what's possible, move into that ideation place so that they can come up with something that they bring to reality in our future that can change the world.

And so all our dreams don't have to change the world. They might just change our world but if we can't suspend bias and suspend that reality at least for a little bit and park it at least on a piece of paper for a period of time we're not going to be able to access our dreams and what we really want and what's possible for us. And I find that every decade or so is time for me to dream big dreams again. And that really makes sense to me now in hindsight. There's a saying about how we humans overestimate what we can do in one year and underestimate what we can accomplish in 10 years.

And I have found this to be totally true. So I started my design business at 27, and then by 38 which was 11 years later I felt really burned out and exhausted and I needed to completely rethink things. I had been very successful in those 11 years in my design business. And I'd been nationally published and I was a mom of a five-year-old and married and had a retail store and had team members and all these things and it looked amazing from the outside. But I was really struggling. I needed a new vision.

So I regrouped and I started dreaming again at about 38. And then by 44 I had five licensed product lines and was thriving in an online business. I had

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created *Design You*. And then in my late 40s, so 10 ish years later I felt tired and uninspired again. So I regrouped again and started dreaming again. And now at 51 just three or four years later I'm building an e-commerce shop. I'm building a small retail store with my daughter again. It's part of her dream. I'm building a short-term rental business with my mom and I'm reimagining and growing our design business, our design firm again.

I've been really focused the last few years on our consulting business and we're not getting rid of that, it's thriving. But I needed something to get excited about again. And so I'm working on all of those things plus I'm working on designing a niche product line that I produce myself, not a licensing agreement this time but something that I'm going to make with my own money, with my own creative vision and it's not under a relationship of a licensing agreement with someone else.

And this most recent time that I needed to dream in my late 40s that have really led to these dreams, late 40s, early 50s or so, it didn't feel as hard as the last time I had to do it in my late 30s. And here's why I think it wasn't as hard. It's maybe because when I started to feel burned out and uninspired this time I recognized the pattern. And I knew what I needed to do. It didn't really sneak up on me this time. I now fully expect to do this process again once I accomplish a lot of these dreams, so probably in my late 50s.

So five, six, eight, nine years from now I probably will be doing this again because the dreams of my 50s right now are all the things I just mentioned plus I know there's a book or two in my future so probably at least one of those before I turn 60. But then what do I want next? And so I recently began dreaming again about a few other things. Dreaming about a new house, which at the end of my 30s I started dreaming into a new house. And I dreamed into the house I have.

And a lot of what brought all of those things in my early 40, my product lines, I had a column in *Traditional Home* for a whole year, that was all based on this current home that I have. And so I had a dream for it. Then I found one. Then I designed it and I used it to propel me forward. And now

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I'm kind of ready to do that again, not quite ready but sort of getting bored of this house. I'm sort of ready to dream about the next house and what it could be. And am I going to build for the first time because I'm only renovated in the past? Or maybe do I want to do another renovation?

And so that's just the tip and the beginning of a dream about a house. But all of these dreams of what's possible even though I don't yet know how that is going to happen. They move me into creation and innovation energy. They move me out of stuck energy and yes when I dream of all these things I'm suspending bias. I'm not saying we can't move right now or when we have the money or would anybody buy our house right now, or is it a down market? Everybody's talking about a market being down and a recession.

I'm not thinking about any of those things. I don't know where everything's going to come from or exactly when it's going to happen but I allow myself to start dreaming while suspending those biases. And I trust myself to figure out the how part. I always do, I always have. But I only am able to do that after I really dream and decide what it is that I want. If I'm not willing to believe that I can get access to money or an investor or a partner or that I can make a dream of a new house become a reality then am I really suspending my biases and dreaming? No, I'm not.

A lot of what we teach in my *Millionaire Mentorship* program is this exact kind of thinking. We help people start this process even in our *Design You* program because so often that's where we see people feeling really stuck. And so it's definitely a practice and it's a practice you want to start before you're ready for the thing. You heard me say, I started reimagining and dreaming again in my late 30s. And it became a reality by 44. There's a period of time there that you have to start dreaming, practicing the dream, putting the dream into kind of reality starting to move towards it.

But if you can get to the dreaming first I can help you or we can help you in our programs figure out the logistics, the details, the money parts. It's when people can't or don't allow themselves to truly lean into and access their dreams and desires that we don't have anything to work with. And this is

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not some woo-woo manifesting thing. I know a lot of you believe in manifesting and that's great. Maybe what I'm talking about you would call manifesting. I don't really call it manifesting, I call it creating. And so I dream something and then I create that dream into my reality.

But many of you are blocking yourself from those dreams. You're not allowing yourself to even go there. You're shutting them down with the practical and you're killing the possibility of what you could create in your life before you even consider it. I do what I call a feasibility study of everything I consider, the creating or the building after I have the dream in my brain.

So I have the dream, I know what I want, I know what the end result looks like and then I start the feasibility study. And it's still free, I haven't spent a dime other than some of my time, maybe a little bit of other people's time if I've needed to call them to ask some questions in my research but it's still essentially free to dream and start mapping out the dream. But if you'll allow yourself to have the dream and get it on paper then all of the figuring out of what it's going to take, how much time, how much money, everything else to make the dream become a reality. That part gets easier.

And even if you're looking at it on paper and you're saying, "Well, that's going to be too expensive, I don't have that money now." We have to keep practicing, yes, but suspend that bias because we don't know what's possible yet. Let's just get it on paper. And this process is how I've truly built every single thing I have including two-million-dollar or multimillion-dollar businesses. They have both made well over \$1 million. I've really created that dream of a new house and then I got this new house. And then I got it published.

All the things I've done have been through this process of being willing to dream again when I got to the end of a dream or a vision and then put it on paper and then see what's feasible, what it would take to do it and then start solving every single roadblock one at a time. It's how I'm currently building the next set of dreams of the businesses and the things I told you

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I'm currently creating. And I don't have the money sitting in a pot waiting to be spent on those dreams.

I don't have the money sitting in a pot to build my e-commerce shop and my retail store and my Airbnb or short-term retail business with my mom. We have some money that we've created and put in there and we need a lot more money and we're working on how to access that because that's how this process works. We create the dream then we create the feasibility study with the cost and the spreadsheets. And then we go out and create the money to build the dream. And that can look like a lot of different things.

Sometimes I'm building on other people's money like a licensing deal where I bring the idea and they bring the money to manufacture the products. Sometimes I'm spending my own money that I just generate first and then spend it to build the thing. So the dream takes a little longer and has to wait a little bit. Sometimes I'm borrowing money from a bank or getting an investor or a partner to bring money into the relationship. There are so many ways to access money if you're willing to first have the creative ideas but it depends on what you're willing to do.

But we can't even get to the money part if you aren't willing to suspend all of those current biases and fears and practical thinking for just a minute. We're not throwing them away, we're not pretending they don't exist. We're not pretending we don't have to pay the bills but in our dreaming sessions, we have to suspend them and park them so we can get to the full dream in vivid color on paper. Seeing it like it's going to be in the future. And as scary as that might be we have to be willing to paint that whole picture and write it all down and look at it so that we can see what it will take to build it.

So are you ready to dream again? Is it time for you to dream? Are you at the end of one of those cycles, you've come to the end of all the things you had in mind and you're frustrated about what to do next? If so I want to help you do this process. I want to help you dream again. So you can start that with the three steps we talked about today, one, thinking differently. As I said, I started doing last year, thinking. I moved my mindset to play. And

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then I started practicing creativity and then I started learning to dream again, leaning into the dream.

And I hope you'll consider those things. You've got to think differently, practice creativity and leaning into the dream. And if you want to do this alongside us, hop in one of my programs, Test drive *Design You* if you want to by coming to a free Q&A call that I have on February 2nd. So you may be listening to this that day, it comes out that day. And at 3:00pm that day I'm going to do a live Q&A call where I coach people. You can ask me anything. And you can register for that by going to tobifairley.com/chat. So you can chat with me about your dreams or how you're stuck or anything.

And then if you've listened to this after that Q&A has already happened then you can register for a free masterclass that I'm going to teach on February 7th. And you can get to that by going to tobifairley.com/renovate because we're going to talk about how to renovate your business and ultimately renovate your life. And I'm going to teach you the three V's that I help you renovate with. And trust me, there's a huge component of dreaming in those three V's.

So if you want to sign up for either of those things, tobifairley.com/chat to get on the Q&A on February 2nd or tobifairley.com/renovate to get on the masterclass on February 7th or both. Those are going to really help you know what it's like to work with me in my programs, in particular, *Design You* because we're going to be opening the doors to *Design You* again really, really soon. And our entire focus for 2023 in *Design You* is to renovate your business. And the first place we're going to start is getting you tapped into what your dream for that business even is.

So join me on those calls, please, I would love to see you there. We hope you'll join us in *Design You* but at the very least please take a step towards dreaming and do that by being willing to think differently, maybe that's your word of the year that's guiding you like mine is, mine's play, to practice creativity. I've been painting and needlepointing, remember, that gets me out of scarcity thinking, it gets me out of the loops I'm stuck in, in my business and then learning to dream again.

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Because those three things are going to take you a long way all by yourself before you even come listen to my masterclass or come chat with me on the Q&A. Think about those three steps first and I'll be back next week with another episode. I'm bringing you an episode that's so inspiring because it's about someone who did dream big and who was willing to dream big and who's still dreaming big in his business. I think it's going to inspire you so much.

And I can't wait to help you dream big all year long in 2023 and to renovate your business and ultimately your life, let's do that together. Okay, friends, I'll see you back here 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.