

Ep #267: Parenting, Change, and Being Different with Monica Berg



Full Episode Transcript

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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 267.

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, hey friends, I have a wonderful episode for you today just in time for Mother's Day that's coming up in just a couple of days in the US. And our guest is a repeat guest that I have loved having on the show in the past and I'm so happy she's back. It's Monica Berg and Monica is an international speaker, a spiritual thought leader. She is the author of several books including *Fear is Not an Option*, *Rethink Love* and *The Gift of Being Different* which she's going to talk about on this episode, which is a brand new children's book, her very first that she has written with her daughter.

She's also the co-host of the *Spiritually Hungry* podcast with her husband. And we're going to link in the show notes the last episode. I remember when it came out it was so well received. I remember specifically my mom saying how much she loved that episode. And I'm sure my mom will love this episode too because she's so aligned with Monica's philosophies that we're going to talk about today about parenting and all sorts of things. So I'm going to be quiet and let you just listen to this fabulous episode and I'll see you back on the other side, so enjoy this conversation with Monica Berg.

Tobi: Hey, Monica, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I'm so glad to have you back, which I don't do very often. But you are one of our few people that are coming back for a second episode, so welcome.

Monica: Thanks. Thanks for having me again.

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Tobi: So if people didn't hear that first episode, why don't you tell everybody a little bit about you. And then maybe tell us kind of the real reason you're here because you've been up to something in your life and with your daughter and we want to hear about that too.

Monica: That's always funny when I have to give my bio kind of. So I do a lot of different things. I'm an author, a speaker, a motivator, mentor, the list is long. I am very interested in change, call myself a change junkie. And yeah, been busy on many things. My husband and I also have a podcast, *Spiritually Hungry*, but the latest thing that I'm most excited about is my first children's book that I co-wrote with my youngest child, Abigail. It's the first in a series of 10. And this one is called *The Gift of Being Different*.

Tobi: I love that. Okay, so we're going to talk today about a lot of those things. I can't wait to come back to this idea of being a change junkie. But let's start with the book and with your daughter. So what inspired you to write this with your daughter? I have a daughter, mine's almost 18. And I'll tell you in a minute, we're starting a venture together which is exciting, but tell me a little bit about the story behind the book and why you wanted to write the first one with your daughter.

Monica: So I've written other non-fiction books and I am a storyteller. I'm also really inspired by all of my children. In different ways they have all and continue to teach me something different about myself and about who I want to become. And so Abigail was struggling with learning to read and write and even just her alphabet, first grade. Second grade the differences became much more apparent. But the teachers were confused at first because she was excelling in critical thinking and problem solving, far surpassing her peers.

So it wasn't obvious at first what it could be. We ended up getting her tested in mid second grade. And we found out she had dyslexia. So when I found out, I have already worked through framing things and reframing things for myself and my own life. My second son was born with Down's

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Syndrome. So I'm very now good at kind of having a situation or a challenge and then pausing and saying, "Okay, how do I want my experience of this to be and of course for my children to be?"

So I did the same thing in this situation and I didn't tell her right away because I wanted to do my research and I really also wanted to understand how she learned and how her brain works. And before I could have the conversation with her about two weeks later, which also was a crazy time because my mother-in-law was on her deathbed and it was a very challenging time. But Abigail came to me, and of course it's one of those moments, you're thinking about a 100 things. I was rushing to dinner. I'd just got out of the shower.

She was coming to the bathroom to brush her teeth. I had to get her to bed before I left and she just looked in the mirror and she said, "Mommy, do I need all this extra help because I'm stupid?" And I just thought, first of all, none of my children are going to grow up with that thought in their mind.

And I also felt so grateful that she felt safe and comfortable to talk to me and share that because I know I had negative thoughts about myself growing up but I never felt like I could go to my mother or anybody really with that. And it's not because they didn't love me. It's just I didn't feel safe or secure enough to do that. So we sat down on the bed and I told her what she had. And of course she had never heard that word before and it's kind of scary when you hear a diagnosis or something about yourself and especially if you don't understand it.

So I tried to tell her how it's part of what makes her brilliant. And I could tell that she sensed bias. So I brought out this book that I had been reading called *The Gift of Dyslexia*. And there is this list of all of the characteristics that somebody who has dyslexia has. And there was a list of eight. And in the margin I had written, 'Abigail to a tee'. So she said, "What does that mean?" I said, "Well, that means that describes you perfectly." I said, "Tell

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me if this sounds familiar.” So some of the things we learn with pictures instead of words, feel things with my heart instead of my mind.

And her eyes started to light up. So I said, “Okay, we’re making progress here.” And then I started to list people who were very notable or successful who had dyslexia like Albert Einstein, Steven Spielberg, Anne Bancroft. And then she was like, “Wow, this is amazing.” And so it dawned on me in that moment that there’s something really powerful here. And that if she could turn this around within a few hours, I mean literally the next day, she went to everybody in our family and to all of her friends and said, “I have a super power, it’s dyslexia, what’s yours?”

I mean she was thrilled about it. So that’s really what inspired us to write the book among other things.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that so much. Okay, so tell me, what was that process like? How involved was she in the process? Did she just inspire you to write it or was she actually participating in the creation of the book with you?

Monica: Well, I feel if you’re doing this parenting thing right, they’re all involved in the creation of what’s happening. So this is another message of the book. She wrote her first book technically before she could really read or write with fluency. So you just need an idea and you need to believe you can do it. And I think we make a great team. It’s her story. And also with all the books it’s kind of like we’ve made this one character, she’s the narrator, but it’s both of our experiences from my childhood and hers. So it’s really powerful.

So it’s really based on the conversations we have and the intimacy of our relationship. So yeah, she’s co-creator.

Tobi: I love that so much. Okay, so tell us a little bit about what you’ve learned from her because you’re telling us so far about what she’s learned from you. And I know you’re like me in a lot of ways, we found that the last time you were on we had so much in common. And I often say that my

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daughter has been my greatest teacher which is so beautiful. And sometimes it's really hard too. So can you tell me a little bit about that from your perspective. What have you learned from this? What stands out in this process both of her diagnosis and then also writing the book with her?

Monica: Well, the diagnosis, I guess that I did my research. I'm really fascinated with seeing the world through her eyes. And how she doesn't think in a limited way. And how she's heightened other parts of her, being her personality, her memorization, different skills that she wouldn't have if she didn't have dyslexia. I'm inspired by her perseverance. I'm inspired by her courage. We have traveled all over the world, speaking to thousands of children in different schools. She insists on reading from the book out loud and reading more and more pages.

And we even went to one school where the principal sat in and she came to us after and she said, "I just want to tell you that I have dyslexia. And I struggled. I graduated from university. I've created this life for myself." She said, "But I still can't read out loud in public. I will freeze up and I can't do it." And she was just so inspired by Abigail. And every time that she speaks, we have done interviews, she's just more and more into her being. And it's such a perfect beautiful example of your imperfections as we see them. We all have them.

The parts of ourselves we try to hide, when you really understand the good and the parts of yourself that you don't like that much, but you start to grow them, it really does become your strength. And I get to witness that every day.

Tobi: That's so good. So as a parent, I have often, but not just of my own daughter, I just have one, but even other children that are her friends and my niece and nephew and other people that I know, friends' children. I've found it really frustrating that in our kind of traditional educational system we only measure people's intelligence and their skill sets in a very limited number of ways. I think I've even read and researched this a little bit, it's

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been a while but I feel like there was something like schools traditionally measure dozens of types of intelligence.

So does anything come up around that with you? Does that resonate with you? What have you all found? Because my daughter's a creative. She always deals with, as all kids do, she has some sensory issues. She has other things happening in her life. And so it's been interesting to watch when a child isn't just gifted in a certain way that the school wants them to be or expects them to be.

It's a whole other kind of conversation, not even necessarily with the school but with your child to kind of help them understand that the school might have a limited view of all of the amazing ways that they're beautiful and different and smart. So what do you think about that? Is that true for you all? And have you felt the same frustration?

Monica: Well, here's the thing, if I feel frustrated about something I tend to create change in it. So I think with Abigail when she went to the first school, it was a dual curriculum. She was trying to learn two different languages at one time and that added to the struggle. They were very supportive with her. But what I didn't see was there was no conversation in the classroom about learning differences. So she felt a bit ostracized by some of the children, not her peers but looky-loos, she's still doing her test or sitting in the back of the room while other kids have moved on. We're in a special group.

And I think that that stigma, that's what needs to change. I think that the word 'disability', which is why I didn't use it in my book. Technically it is a disability. But people see that as an inability. And I thought instead of re-educating people about that word, I'm going to call it a super power. Because then you can understand it a bit clearer. So it has nothing to do with intelligence. It's just that you learn in a different way. And I think that that is a truth about any difference we have.

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We just understand things in terms of the norm of something. You're normal, if you are in this box or this percentage, that's the normal height, that's the normal weight, that's the normal whatever just based on where you fit in that percentage, which again is so limiting. It's not even a truth. And in reality everybody is different. The world would be very boring if we were all the same. But the thing that we really need to change is that idea that we're all meant to be the same, and then if you are, then you're normal.

Tobi: Yeah, I agree so much. And it would be so boring. And the other thing that I've learned just in the last few years. I've done a lot of work on diversity and inclusion, injustice and a whole lot of other things. and what became so profound to me is that it's really not that people, humans, children are disabled. It's that when they act in the environment that is considered normal, it creates a disability for them, which is so interesting because I love that we can all be different.

But it's the world being a certain way that creates that situation. Because as an interior designer I think about it a lot even with people who have physical disabilities. And the world is not set up for them. And so it doesn't mean that they themselves are the one with the problem. The world's the part with the problem because they didn't create things that are accessible to them or usable to them. And that's what's coming to mind when I think about what you're saying.

It's not that anything is exceptionally wrong with people for being different. It's that the world just hasn't accommodated them and that's the part that's so frustrating. Yeah, I love that. Yeah, so let's talk a little bit about this idea of being a change junkie because you can't see it probably, I'm wearing a shirt that says, 'change maker'. I'm Enneagram eight. I'm all about change as well. I kind of thrive on and have trained myself to thrive on the discomfort of doing new things and changing things and forging paths that other people haven't been down before.

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And I feel that that's kind of what you're saying about this idea of being a change junkie. But can you tell us kind of how you define that? And some other places besides just the situation with your daughter or your other children, that you really practice this idea of creating change?

Monica: Well, really, I mean nobody likes change because usually the change we experience is something that was forced on us. And that's the worst change of all. The reality is, we're changing every single day and every month in ways that go unnoticed until we see the bigger change. And it's a change we either like or we don't like. And then we ask ourselves, "How did I get here? What is this? It's not the life I wanted or this is not the marriage I wanted", or whatever, fill in the blank.

So what I realized is that, and the opposite of that is control. The more that I try to control my life, the outcome in any capacity, and that's really my nature is very Type A person. I like a daily planner. I like to have a schedule, but I learned to train myself to be equal parts flexible, meaning I will have my goals. And I'll have everything planned, let's say for a week or two or even three weeks out. But if in that moment it gets canceled, I've changed myself in my mind to say, "Okay, that is no longer an option, so now what is it that you want to do?"

And it is really a recipe for happiness because that other way of living is not. And I think that if people really looked at their lives and they looked at the most difficult parts, the biggest challenges and they asked themselves that question, who am I after this happened? Who was I before and who am I after? Then the next question to ask yourself is, do I like that person that I've become? And if not then choose something else. So it's very freeing and very liberating.

I think that I was able to arrive here also mostly because when Josh, my second child was born with Down's Syndrome, shortly after his birth it was the biggest shock of my life. I was terrified. And also two days after he was born the doctor sat us down and told us all the things he'd never be able to

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do in his life. So I remember in that moment, my husband and I got up and we were very young, so the doctor brought in seven colleagues. They sat us around a round table at the hospital. “He won’t be able to do this. He’ll never have a good life.”

I mean I’m not really sure what they were asking us to do, you want us to give up on him is what it sounded like, but why tell us this? So I got up and I said, “I hear you but I don’t hear you and we’re leaving now.” We walked out. And we made a choice from that day on that we’ll always be given information that tells us this is good or that’s not good, or this is bad. And then you can respond to that. But instead I thought, okay, I have information and now I can choose what I want to do. That’s the change I’m talking about.

That kind of internal thing that happens where you have choice and you have freewill and you can make the life that you want, no matter what comes to you.

Tobi: I love that so much. So, so many people pride themselves on being control freaks. They really talk a lot and their identity becomes people who hate change and they reinforce that language all the time.

Monica: Really? Nobody that I hang out with.

Tobi: I mean I’m not that kind of person either. And I definitely have people in my life, they don’t even really like it if you change plans for dinner. They’re like, “But I thought we were going to this place and now you’re going somewhere else.” And it kind of becomes a narrative around, you never do what you say you’re going to do sort of thing because just you’re open to change and being flexible. And so for me being a creative, I’m always changing things. I’m changing my hair, I’m changing the living room drapes. I’m changing what we’re going to have for dinner.

That’s what’s so fun for me. And it sounds like that it’s very much a part maybe of who you are, possibly innately but you’ve definitely developed

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this. So can you think of some ways, when people are really, and I guess we saw this a lot during the pandemic too, because everybody thought they had certainty. And then they realized that certainty and control are really an illusion all the time. And anything can turn on its head and all of a sudden you find yourself in a place where you didn't think you were going to be.

So do you have any thoughts or ideas or tips for people who really crave this kind of certainty but obviously are human beings and live in a world that changes all the time? How do we start to get more comfortable with certainty, I mean without certainty, with giving up control? Yeah.

Monica: Well, it's interesting that you're going there because I was on a radio show this week and it was all about certainty and uncertainty so it's funny that you're going there. But the thing is I think we have to start with this. Most people misunderstand what certainty is. Certainty I think most would define as feeling safe and secure and being okay with anything and having a knowing. You're never going to know. We live in the unknown and that's the most terrifying thing of all. So first accept that. You're never going to know.

And you can have, again, intention, you can raise a child a certain way but you really don't know exactly how they're going to turn out. There's many variables. So certainty isn't saying you're not afraid. Certainty isn't saying, "I'm really sure this is going to happen." Certainty is saying, "I am afraid, but in spite of being afraid, I'm still going to go forward and believe that whatever outcome's going to happen, even if it's not the one that I want, is the best thing for me." That's something that you have to tap into a higher source, to God or to nature, whatever you believe in.

That you're able to find that resolve within you because that's where we come from. That's true certainty. And that is a muscle that you need to build. And that is the method to of course, relinquishing control and embracing change, they're all related.

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Tobi: Yeah, I love it so much. It reminds me, when you were saying, something you mentioned also reminded me, because we've been on this topic of parents and children. And I think one of the things that also is difficult for a lot of people is that when their children are born they have a vision themselves for what their lives will be, who'll they become. And my experience is that a lot of that is going to be absolutely incorrect and the opposite of what happens because it's really not your place to be creating the expectations, it's your child's life.

So can you talk a little bit about that because you have multiple children? And did you find yourself early on, maybe with your first child or at any point, having that vision? Because we all think our kids are going to grow up and they're going to do certain things and get certain jobs and maybe get married or whatever. And then a lot of times we find that we have no control over that, it's really their lives. And we have to readjust our expectations. So what do you think about that? What comes to mind when you think about your own experience?

Monica: Yeah. It's interesting. I think that funnily enough as much as I was a control junkie before, as a teenager especially I really remember disliking very much feeling controlled. I felt very controlled by my Middle Eastern family, very much so. So when I became a mother the first time, it was really important for both my husband and I to really see our child. For us, we wanted him to be happy and feel safe and secure. I think that that was the main thing.

And I think with all of our kids, I can say actually wholeheartedly, we really tried to see who they are and also more importantly, who they're expressing their desire to be. The only thing that we really, really put our foot down about is that they need to be kind human beings and be people that give back to the world in some way. And the rest by the way, if you figure that part out and that's your intention then all the other stuff, of course now you're operating on a different frequency. So you're going to feel free to go explore the things that light you up.

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They all come hand in hand. We never told any of our kids, “You need to be a doctor, a this or a that.” And that’s scary but you have to let go of control for that and then it’s a beautiful thing. And then what happens when you do that with your children, you allow them to create a friendship with themselves and start to hear their own voice and not be afraid to say what they want or have shame in wanting and expressing what they feel. And then they can go out and explore because they feel safe in the space that you’ve created for them.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that. And I definitely had the parent, or more my dad than my mom who had a plan for what career I would have. My brother and I, it’s funny, we both ended up getting accounting degrees and then neither one of us liked it. My brother being the Type A, first child. He’s still practicing his accounting degree. I immediately was like, “Oh, heck, no, that is not for me.” And I went back and got my design degree, but it’s been really handy to know about business, so there was that.

But then I also had a mom who from a very young age was really intent on me making my own decisions for a number of reasons, although it was really hard at times when I was growing up. I had a lot of support but there was something so beautiful about learning from the consequences of your own decisions or the benefits of your own decisions. And so I’ve tried to parent my daughter in the same way. And so that was coming to mind when you were talking about, if you just put a few guardrails on of the things, your values basically is what you’re saying.

Values based parenting but beyond that, they’re allowed to make their own decisions. I think that that creates a totally different kind of child in the world and I love that. So in that process of letting your children become who they are, have you found that they also are change junkies or do they still show up some of them as control freaks? Some of that stuff’s innate and I think some of it’s environmental. So how have they grown up in this environment?

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Monica: No, I agree with you. I think the other part besides values, I want to say that we've raised them is with a strong spiritual belief in the creator and the connection to the creator. So I think that's a big part of it. It's funny, my oldest is just free as a bird. I'm like, "Are flights leaving?" He's like, "No, it's fine." And it always works out for him. I have to say, I learned a lot from him. I mean I'm very much inspired by him. I'd say my three oldest kids are really just kind of go with the flow and they've lived with that, they don't know anything else.

We don't really get stressed about the small stuff. And even the big stuff, I think we hold a really calm resolve. My youngest, Abigail. She's the most like me by nature. We're still raising her in the same environment but there's a lot of things I feel like I have to undo in that area which I didn't have with the first three.

Tobi: What are some of those things that come to mind that you have to undo, the unlearning?

Monica: She stresses about missing a flight. We have to literally go three and a half hours before a domestic flight if she's with us. Just worrying, worrying about a lot of things and also that control, that need. This came up actually two nights ago. We're trying to get our book out to everywhere, so we're writing letters to different people. And she writes personal letters and I do and it's work. She's having to work and she's already done her homework and she's tired. I'm like, "It doesn't have to be done today." She's like, "But I told myself I was going to do all of these things today."

And that's not something she's learning from me because the funny thing is the night before that, she asked me, and not even connected. She asked me, "Do you finish", well, sometimes I go back to work after they go to sleep. She's like, "Do you finish everything you planned to do that day?" I said, "Absolutely not, it spills over to the next day and the next day and the next day." So I reminded her of that and she's like, "But I told myself I

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would do it.” And I was like, “Well, then un-tell yourself that because you don’t need to.” So yeah.

Tobi: That’s so interesting. But also in some way such a beautiful quality to kind of have your own back too and follow through with what you say. I guess that’s like anything, there’s two sides of that coin and your greatest strength a lot of times are also the things that cause you the most suffering.

Monica: She has that disposition and my whole thing is be kind to yourself, the kind voice, if you didn’t do it, it’s okay, it’ll go to next day. And it will get there whenever it needs to get there. We don’t know. Maybe they’re out of town, maybe it’s better, they’ll be in a better mood to receive the letter a week from now, who knows. So it’s reinforcing that kind of belief systems.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that so much. So along those same lines, you’ve had to spend a lot of time with I’m sure all of your children, but you’ve mentioned two children in particular who have had certain challenges. And so can you talk to us a little bit, those people listening that are parents or that mentor other children, how is it that you suggest we do pour into kids and that we speak life into them and encourage them? Because there’s so many other messages that are coming at them, not even necessarily from us, all the time in the world.

And so I know there are some parents who worry about, I don’t want to be the parent who thinks every kid should have a trophy or makes life too easy. My experience is the opposite, it’s the more I pour into and love on my daughter, the more secure she feels to go out and do big things in the world. So is that true for you too? And how can you help us as parents know how to practice that support role in a way that really works?

Monica: Look, life is going to be hard and have its challenges. I don’t need to create them for my kids. Again, I think they need to feel your love, no judgment, no fear. So I think the first thing a parent should ask themselves is what are the negative emotions they offer to their child and they share,

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not just even in words but in thought because that's where it starts? And I think that children pick up on that.

And if you do have fear about the way they're behaving or a diagnosis or their future, if you have judgment because you feel like their choices are wrong or very far from what you think is right. And you want to check all of those things and instead ask yourself, what do I need to offer my child to become the adult that I hope they'll become for them to be happy, not who I think they should be, not what I think is right, not what is going to make me feel like a good parent, I did a good job because I can be proud of their career or whatever it is.

But when I look at healthy well rounded human adult and I see my child, what do I need to instill in them to help forge that and create that?

Tobi: What are some of those things? Just give us some examples maybe of things like that, that you're thinking that you want to instill in your kids besides the kindness piece and kind to themselves, what else stands out?

Monica: Mistakes are very healthy and necessary, a big part of life, so is failure and rejection, expect it, look for it, learn from it. No guilt, no shame and no blame, work through those emotions so you never have to have them again. Learn from each thing you do, when you know better you do better. Giving that space to just grow, grow in a healthy way. I remember when I was growing up, you made one mistake, it's like, "What did you do?" I thought it was the end of the world.

And I also thought I'd never get an opportunity in that way again. And then I had to really realize that that's not true, that was just their belief system and choose a different one for myself. So I think that's a really big one because that's how we stunt their growth. And then they become paralyzed like oh my God, I don't ever want to try anything that scary because I never want to feel like that again.

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Tobi: Yes. I remember probably the biggest lesson I've ever learned in my daughter's entire life was around those lines. And you're so inclined to want to fix everything, when something's hurting for them or something didn't go their way or whatever. And I remember, I don't remember if someone told me this or if I figured it out on my own. But I remember there was a moment where I realized that all the most important growth comes by letting them go through the pain and not just swooping in and fixing it for them.

And so I had this vision of every time I swoop in and try to fix I'm preventing her from becoming the person she's supposed to be. She was probably 11 or 12. From that moment on I had a completely different perspective on not trying to fix things but standing there with her while she went through the hard stuff which is a totally different way of parenting. But it changed me probably as much as it changed her, but I'm so grateful for that moment.

Monica: I couldn't agree more. I never try to fix things for my kids. When they come with a problem, my first question is, "How do you feel about that?" My second question is, "What do you think we should do about it? What are the options?" And then I let them start to hear that. I want them to get connected to that inner voice and then they ask me my opinion. Sometimes if I feel like it's too early I'll say, "Well, I'll tell you what I think but let's talk about this a little bit more." And that's what I call unconditional love.

I think when you allow somebody to have their process, however painful it even feels for you because you love them, that you do stand by their side. And I wrote about that in my book, *Rethink Love*, that my father did that for me when I was anorexic. And I had this great idea we should hike the Grand Canyon from rim to rim in one day. He was a diabetic, his friend that came was also diabetic and one more friend that was okay but not athletic at all. So we did it. And it's all downhill, you hit the Colorado River and it's all back up.

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It took about eight hours and he didn't tell me, "What are you doing? This isn't healthy for you, this isn't safe." We did it and it was one of the most powerful memories I have with him. He passed two years ago but just he didn't scold me. I needed him to just hold space for me. And he did that throughout that time in my life, I mean on multiple occasions. And of course he was in pain, of course he was worried. But he knew that I didn't need a talking to, I just needed that love and support.

Tobi: That's so good. Well, as we wrap up, have we covered all the good stuff? Is there anything that either has come from this book or your experience of being a mom that you want to add as we wrap up? Because I think this is so inspiring, not only for our kids but just reminding us as humans that failing our own way to success even in parenting is the only way for that to really work. So anything beyond some of these big ideas that you've shared so far?

Monica: My husband and I always say, "We just want to be a good enough parent." When we aim for perfection, we end up putting too much pressure on the child and then we make lots of mistakes as well. But many other things have come up with the gift of being different is that it's helped a lot of teachers teach about bullying and more from the perspective of having other kids have empathy for children that have learning differences and what that might feel like.

Because we teach a lot about how to deal with a bully but the onus is still on the person being bullied. It's very hard to stand up to a bully. But if you have a whole classroom of children that understand what's really going on and feel empathy for the child that's being bullied then you can effect real change. So we've gotten a lot of feedback from parents and educators alike that this has helped their children understand what a learning difference is. In the third grade a lot of kids go to different schools because of learning difference.

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And then you think, I don't want that. I don't want to have to change schools. They were never explained to that it's just they learn in a different way and they're going to go to a school that can help them learn. It's not better, it's not worse, it's just different. So we actually got to go back to the school that Abigail was at when she was diagnosed. And she read the book out loud to her classroom. She signed autographs. She had a full circle moment.

And the kids actually went home and told their parents and mothers reached out to me saying, "Thank you for helping my child to have empathy and understand what learning difference is." And now they're seeing their own struggle. One had a stomach issue. Another one had something else. They're recognizing that that's their super power too.

Tobi: This is so good. I love that so much. Well, thank you. I've been looking forward to this for a while. And I knew after I heard from you, okay, I want to bring this episode out right around Mother's Day, which is when it's going to come out. It's such a perfect time to think about this story. But I just appreciate you being willing to share so much honesty and transparency about your own journey as a parent and your daughter's struggles. It's just so helpful and I know we'll get a lot of feedback here too. So thank you so much.

Monica: I do have one question for you. You said you are working on a project with your daughter.

Tobi: Yeah, okay. It's so funny. I always say, my daughter was creative like me, but being that parent who doesn't want to just decide what she's going to do in her life or assume she wants to work with me in my business. In fact, she always said she didn't want to be an interior designer and I was like, "Okay, fine, be whatever you want." So I thought she was going to be a makeup artist or she's really into fashion. And so she's going to school in the fall to college and she is going to study apparel merchandising.

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But we are now launching together an ecommerce shop that's so fun. So I was going to do this anyway in my business and bring my furniture lines and things that I've been creating for years to the internet. I've been going to get around to it for a while. And it just so happened that the timing of me doing it now, she was also so interested in having an opportunity to have a boutique that had apparel and other things. So she's not quite 18. She'll be 18 in June so just a few weeks from now.

But I decided to just go ahead and leap, so we're doing this together. The website is about both of us. We're going on buying trips together. And so she comes along with me, sometimes gets bored a little bit with the interior design stuff, although she secretly loves it. She's the one now always asking me, "Can we watch design shows?" But then we're dipping our toe into carrying apparel and going through that whole learning process of what it's like and how much it costs to invest in a business at this level.

So we have jumped in with both feet together. And our goal now, and we'll see, she may change her mind and I'm totally okay if she does in college. But if she stays on this track and really does continue to love apparel and her interest in this then my goal is by the time she gets out of college in four or five years from now, that the online boutique and we'll have a little bit of in person, a physical location that's tiny. That those will be making enough money to support her if she wants to come to work in the business.

Monica: That's so subtle.

Tobi: Yeah, so it's so fun. And I didn't think we would be here. I had decided to let her become whoever she wanted to be and not have an opinion on it. But how fun that I almost feel like the letting that be, I don't know, the story and the atmosphere in our household, that it allowed her to decide that she kind of maybe did want to come back and be somewhere adjacent to the work I've done forever. So I'll keep you posted but it's launching June 1st.

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Monica: What is it called?

Tobi: So this was the other funny thing. So she said, "Now, I don't want to just be part of a business that's just an extension of what you've already built. So I don't want it to be like Tobi Fairley Home and we throw some clothes in there or something." And I was like, "Okay, that's valid, I completely agree. We're going to do this together." So we worked together to come up with a name and it's called Fairley Fancy, because our last name is Fairley, but it's spelled like our name with an E-Y in it.

And then we have all this fun stuff we've come up with, all of these fun quizzes and taglines and things, we have a tagline that says, get fancy. And we have these quizzes about find out how fancy you are. And we have all these personas. And so we're having a lot of fun building the marketing and all those kinds of things. But she was the one who came up with the idea of fancy. And people kind of think we are just a little bit extra. We're good southern girls. We always have our lipstick on.

We always have a little bit, a bold outfit on when everyone's wearing black. So Fairley Fancy, and yeah, so we're starting that together which is so fun.

Monica: And it's so nice to do it with your daughter. Wow, she'll remember this for all of her life. It means more probably than you even realize, maybe not today but you know.

Tobi: I think of that a lot. And I feel like kind of that's my role. And I'm having so much fun with that being my role to help her. I've done this for 25 years and it's allowed me to have knowledge and experience and all the things to create this platform if she wants to for her to step into this role. And again, I'm so not attached to it. I think about it all the time and I think, well, at least the parts of the shop that I'm doing that are more kind of in my lane will continue whether she really wants this later or not.

So I'm committed to it and at the same time I feel like I'm holding it a little bit loosely so that she can move around within the parameters of this and

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see what she really wants to do. But I kind of have a feeling right now that maybe, yeah, maybe it will be an ongoing thing. So I'll keep you posted. I'll let you know when it launches. But yeah, it's so fun and such a gift. Like I said earlier, I've learned so much from her. She has been my greatest teacher in so many ways, things about body and body image and which ties directly into this whole fashion thing too.

And so it's so fun now to get to see kind of the adult version of her that she's becoming and see what happens from there, so yeah. A whole other story, yeah, thank you for asking about that, that's so fun. Well, again, thank you so much. I loved this. And tell everybody where they can find you, where they can get the book, if they want to read more about you or your story, where are the things that are online that they can find you and your daughter?

Monica: So *The Gift of Being Different* and my other books are available on Amazon and at local bookstores. You can follow me @monicaberg74 or my website, rethinklife.today. Or listen to my podcast with my husband, called *Spiritually Hungry*. And our next book, *Tale of the Other Glove* is coming out in the fall.

Tobi: Wonderful, okay. Well, we will look for all those things. I'll share all of that in the show notes and on our Instagram so everybody can find you. And happy Mother's Day in advance. And thank you again for being here.

Monica: Thank you. Good talking to you.

Okay, friends, so you heard all the places you can get Monica's books including on Amazon or your favorite local bookstore. Check them out. I loved this story and it's so fun. Isn't it fun when you get to know someone and then you invest in their book, especially something like a children's book? It makes it so much more special that you feel a connection. And that's how I feel definitely about this book. I can't wait to get my hands on

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

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one of Monica and her daughter's book. And I'm excited for the book she said is coming out in the fall.

So she's very much a prolific writer. And if you want to hear from her on the regular then be sure to check out her podcast with her husband. It's really great. She's also on Instagram with him a lot and you can find her there. And I will be back next week with another great episode of *The Design You Podcast*. But in the meantime to all of you celebrating, all the moms out there and people who have been mom figures for other people and mentors for other people, I'm wishing you the happiest of Mother's Days and I'll see you back here really soon. Bye for now.

Thanks for listening to *The Design You Podcast*, and if you're an interior designer or creative looking to uplevel your business, I have something for you. It's my Build a Better Business guide, because burnout, rampant undercharging and the feast and famine cycle are epidemic in the design industry. And there's a better way to run your business.

So head to tobifairley.com/betterbusiness and get my manifesto and guide that will have you on your way to a business with more ease, more joy and more money. That's tobifairley.com/betterbusiness.