



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE N° 183

The Freedom of Self-Discipline

FRENCH KISS LIFE

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The Freedom of Self-Discipline

“Discipline can seem like your worst enemy. But, in reality, it is your best friend. It will take care of you like nothing else can and it will put you on the path to strength and health and intelligence and happiness. And most important, discipline will put you on the path to freedom,” by Jocko Willink.

Bonjour, and welcome to *The French Kiss Life Podcast*, where personal development meets style. I’m Tonya Leigh, certified master life coach and the hostess of this party, where we explore how to live artfully and well. Each week, I’ll be sharing inspiring stories, practical tips, and timeless wisdom on how to elevate the quality of your everyday and celebrate along the way. Let’s dive into today’s episode.

Hey, my friends. How are you doing? I’m actually a little bit sad and a whole lot happy. I call it sappy. Does that ever happen to you? It’s like you’re so happy and yet there’s this one little thing that you’re feeling sadness around. This is what *joie de vivre* is all about, right?

It’s the joy of living. And part of life is happy, and part of it is sad. Part of life is amazing and part of it is awful. But when you embrace all of it, that is the joy of living; not fighting it, but just being like, “Bring it, I was made for this.”

So, here’s the reason why I’m feeling a little bit sad. Like so many of you, I’ve been sheltering in place for, I don’t know, I’ve lost track of time. How many weeks has it been? Anyway, when this all happened, my daughter came home. So, she lives in Denver and she’s been with me ever since.

And there’s nothing like me in my office working in the morning and then hearing her in the kitchen and I just jump up to go and run and tell her good morning. And then we talk and we laugh and we have such a beautiful relationship. We still butt heads, like any mother and daughter. But all in all, we are friends. I am her mother, but she’s becoming a woman, so our relationship has changed.

Well, I just watched my daughter pull off to go back to Denver. And it’s such an interesting experience because this whole time is just so surreal for me. And while I’m so looking forward to us being able to get back into public and to be able to hug each other – I don’t know when that’s going to happen – there’s been a part of

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this time that I've really cherished. Just the slowing down, the connecting with your family, really just enjoying the simple things in life.

So, when I watched her drive away, I felt quite a bit of sadness. And that's okay. If you're feeling sad right now, that's okay. It's part of life. And I feel like, when people come into *French Kiss Life*, they think, "Oh, we're going to learn how to be happy all the time and we're going to learn how to dress amazingly and throw dinner parties." And yeah, that is part of life, but it's not all of life.

All of life includes all of the things. It's not about trying to feel good all of the time. It's about feeling all of the time. And it just so happens that when you get to a point where you're not fighting the sadness and you're like, "Bring it. This is part of life. I'm going to feel it. I'm going to understand it instead of rejecting it." That's when the sadness just doesn't take over you.

I can watch my daughter pull away and I can feel sad and I can allow for it, and then I can come into my office and record a podcast for you.

Let's do a Community Spotlight, shall we? Today's spotlight is on Terri. Terri left a five-star review on iTunes titled FKL Brand Ambassador. Here's what she said, "I discovered FKL a little over a year ago by accident while scanning the web for ideas about France for a girls' trip my BFF and I were taking. I've been hooked ever since.

I think I'm one of FKL's biggest brand ambassadors. I tell all of my friends and family about FKL. My favorite was one night over pasta and a glass of wine, one of my girlfriends from Ireland who was in Phoenix on a work trip and was frustrated with life in general. And after telling her about living with elegance and joie de vivre, about loving yourself, and basically reciting one of the recent episodes I'd listened to that had resonated with me and seemed appropriate for her situation, she is hooked. And now, her mom and boss in Ireland are listening too.

From Tonya's no-nonsense approach, TL, peaceful and fun voice and her funny giggle, you feel like you are listening to a trusted friend. I've incorporated so many of her lessons into my life, and during this pandemic, I feel a lot of those teachings are helping me stay grounded, looking for opportunities instead of panic, using that

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red-velvet rope policy to manage my thoughts and enjoying the little things like my cup of tea in the morning.

Tonya, you are an inspiration and I look forward to your podcast each week on my way to work, and now working from home. Thank you so much, Tonya. I cannot wait to take your courses in the very near future. Love you, Terri.”

Terri, I love you back. Do you know what’s so fun, is when I get messages all of the time from so many of you and they’re like, “Did you know that you’re my best friend?” And I’m like, “Well, thank you.” How amazing is that?

I definitely have those people in my life that I have never met but they’re just like my BFF. I listen to them on a podcast. I read their books. It’s like I know their mind and I feel like they understand mine. And because of that, I feel like we have this really beautiful intimate relationship.

So, for any of you that are thinking that I’m like a friend, I want to tell you that that is such an honor to me. And it’s why I do what I do.

This past week, I went onto Instagram stories and I asked the community, “What do you want me to talk about?” Because right now, I am overflowing with so many topics that I can’t wait to address here on the podcast. But one of the options that I gave was discipline. And it was by far the number one choice. So, here we go. Let’s talk about self-discipline.

And I want you to notice what comes to mind when you hear the word discipline. Now, for some people, they love the word. They get excited about discipline. And those are the people who are often living the most free lives. But then there’s another group of people, the group that I used to belong to, that when I heard the word discipline, I was like, “Ew, I don’t want any part of that.”

Because I associated being a free spirit with a lack of discipline. And it felt as if there was this dictator that was overseeing me. Now, the dictator was myself. It was my own brain. But I didn’t want to follow the rules and I thought it was really cool not to follow the rules, to be again, free-spirited, to be sort of a renegade, to be just that spirit you can’t control, like a wild animal.

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I actually thought that was a good thing. It was like that rebellious nature. And now, looking back, I realize I was rebelling against how discipline had been used against me as a child.

You know, when I was preparing for this podcast, I was thinking about discipline as a child, like what I experienced. And in many ways, discipline served me. For example, my parents expected me to respect other people. I grew up where you had to say, “Yes, ma’am,” and, “No, ma’am,” and, “Yes, sir,” and, “No, sir,” and, “Thank you,” and, “Please.” And I actually think that was a beautiful, beautiful thing.

The other thing is that I was not given a lot of stuff. Now, I was given so much love. I was given a lot of support. But in terms of material things, just because we didn’t have a lot of money, my parents just didn’t hand me whatever I wanted. And so, they had an expectation that I was going to work. And I’m so grateful for that.

I, from a young age, was disciplined into having a very strong work ethic that has served me my entire life. But then, on the other hand, growing up in a Pentecostal church, there were so many things that I could not do. I couldn’t go to the movies. I couldn’t wear makeup. I could not go to dances. I couldn’t go to the bowling alley.

There were so many things that were on the do-not-do list. And if I got caught doing them, I was punished. And so, when I think about that kind of discipline, that’s the kind of discipline that I was rebelling against as an adult; the kind of discipline that separated me from my soul and from my wants and my desires.

But then, the problem as an adult is that no one was telling me what to do or what not to do. It was all happening in my own head. And when I look back over my life – well, when I look back over my adult years – the years where I lacked self-discipline were the years where I was the least free.

Now, some of you may be thinking, “I don’t want to be disciplined. That sounds, like, so not fun. I want to be able to eat whatever I want. I want to be able to do whatever I want. I want to be able to spend however much money that I want to spend. I just want to have absolutely no rules around my life.”

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And here's what I want you to ask yourself. I want you to ask yourself, why? Why do you want to live a life where you have no self-regulation? I asked myself this same question when I was preparing for the podcast. I went back and I thought about those years when I was overeating, I was constantly procrastinating, I was overspending.

And the reason why I wanted to live that way was really one thing. I was afraid to feel the discomfort of showing up for myself. I was taking the easy route. Because self-discipline is not easy. But the results that you create from having a self-disciplined life are so worth the discomfort that you will feel.

Because I want you to think about this. I want you to imagine a life where you do everything that you say you're going to do. Really think about that. Like, when you say, "This is the year I'm going to lose 30 pounds," and you create your plan and then you show up for it. Or, "This is the year I'm going to write my book." You create your plan, you show up for that.

Imagine what your life would be like if you followed through and you did everything that you said you were going to do. You would probably have a completely different life. And I started to realize that when I started to look around at the people that I admired and the people that I considered to be successful, the one trait they all had in common was that they were self-disciplined.

They didn't live their lives as unruly toddlers. Which to me is what lacking self-discipline feels like. That's what it felt like for me. I felt like an out-of-control toddler who had no parents looking over it. And so, you think about that. Imagine a toddler running your life.

You may think it's fun in the moment, but when you look at the aftermath of what that causes, the results aren't fun, my friend. Let's just call a spade a spade. And so, when I looked around and I started to see, "Wow, the people that I so admire, they are self-disciplined." I started to practice self-discipline in my own life.

And I can't tell you that it was an overnight success story because I'm still practicing it. I still have that little spirit in my that's like, "Screw this, I'm just going to abort my plan and go and do what I want to do." But then, if I'm honest with myself, what I really want to do is to show up for myself.

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And in that moment, what I'm trying to avoid is an uncomfortable emotion, which happens when you sit down to do those things that are going to lead your life forward. This is why self-discipline is all about emotional maturity. It's the ability to live your life based on your desire and not your current mood.

Because let's face it, our moods are always changing, right? And what is happening is that a lot of you are listening to your mood versus your desire, versus your vision for your life.

A great example is, you know, sitting down to record this podcast. I'm feeling sad. But I didn't let the sadness stop me. I wasn't in the pantry looking for food not to feel sad. I was like, "Listen, I'm going to feel sad and I'm going to show up for what I've committed to do. Because I know, at the end of the day, I will be so proud that I did this podcast. I'll be so proud of being a woman that shows up for what is important, for what I've committed to."

And here's the thing. Some days, my discipline is around pleasure. It's around fun. It's about you deciding ahead of time of what you want for yourself and for your life and then you following that. It's you showing up for your own set of standards that you have created for yourself.

If you think about the word discipline, the root of discipline is disciple. And a disciple is a follower. And this is not about your following someone else's rules for you. It's about you creating your own rules that you want to follow for yourself so that you can create the life that you want to live, so that you can reach your goals.

The way I like to think about it is there's that highest version of ourselves. It's that version of ourselves that says, "This is what I want. This is what I desire." And then there's the disciple within ourselves that is going to follow the lead of that higher self.

But if you're allowing your toddler to run your life, you're missing out on the beauty of having these two parts of yourself work in tandem to create what it is that you want. Now, listen, you're still going to have the toddler. I have the toddler. She's constantly screaming in my ear, "But I want to go have fun." And I'm like, "Listen, showing up for ourselves is fun and it's creating more freedom, so that we can have more fun later on."

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Although, I love to bring fun to everything I do. But I still have that part in me that always, always, always tries to tell me that I can do it tomorrow, or why bother, it's not good enough. I just choose to not listen to that part of myself because she has never led me to where I want to go.

Now, I have a lot of compassion for that part of myself. I don't deny it. I'm not upset with that part of myself. I just don't let her drive the bus of my life.

Now, when I'm teaching self-discipline to my clients, one of the things that I point out to them, I'm like, "Listen, there is an area of your life where you are disciplined." And for everyone listening to this, there are areas in your life where you do experience discipline.

So, for example, I bet every single one of us brush our teeth at least once a day, most likely twice a day. We're disciplined in it and we've done it for so long, it's just who we are. It's just what we do. So, we probably don't have a lot of drama around our dental hygiene. We probably feel very free in that area. And the reason being, because we're disciplined with it.

You know, some of my women will come to this realization, "I'm very disciplined with work." They show up on time. They get their job done. They're committed. They don't slack off. And because of that, they have a lot of freedom in their work. They don't sit around worrying about their work. They don't sit around thinking, "Oh my gosh, am I going to lose my job?"

They just know, "I've got a job, I show up for it, I do a good job and I feel good about that area of my life." But then, there's usually one or more areas where they feel like they don't have self-discipline.

Maybe it's around food. And they think discipline is going to take away their freedom. But when they realize, "Wow, I have no freedom now. It takes up my mental space. It takes up my mental energy. I think about it 24/7." It really is all-consuming.

But then they think, "If I'm disciplined in this area, I'm going to feel deprived. I'm going to feel like I just can't eat whatever I want," and they begin to run this story

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that discipline equals a lack of freedom. But I show them, “No, look, are you free now?”

If you’re thinking about it all of the time, if it’s this constant desire to want to get healthy and to lose weight and you’re not showing up for it, are you really free? And they begin to put two and two together and they begin to realize, “The areas in my life where I am disciplined are the areas where I feel the most free.”

Think about money. People that are disciplined with their money, they have freedom with their money. They don’t have a lot of drama around it. And they have more money, which causes them to feel more free, versus the people that are so afraid of not being able to spend whatever they want in the name of being free-spirited, they are the least free.

In fact, many of them – and I’ve been in this camp, you all, so I get it. We feel trapped. And what I’m offering you is that self-discipline is the key to your freedom.

Another important aspect of self-discipline that I want to address is the energy behind it. And this is why I rejected it for so long. Because if you think about disciplining your children, there are some people that discipline their children to behave a certain way to please others. And maybe we’ve all done it as parents.

Like, we’re in a restaurant and the kid’s just being a kid and we’re like, “You need to be quiet. You’re going to offend other people.” It’s driven out of an energy of lack and not enoughness, and out of fear. That is a very different energy than disciplining your children out of a place of love, out of that, “I want everything for you. And because I want everything for you, I’m going to put together some standards that I want you to rise towards, that I want you to embody because I do love you so much.”

You see, I used to discipline myself from a place of not enoughness. Like, “Your body’s not good enough. I’m going to whip you into shape.” And that didn’t feel good. That’s actually what made me rebel against my own self-discipline. Or, “you’ve spent way too much money. I’m going to cut you off and you’re not allowed to spend any more money.” So much scarcity and fear around that, right?

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And so, of course, I would do it for a while and I would white-knuckle my budget and the, all of a sudden, it was like, “Screw this. I’m going to go buy all the things.” But things changed for me when I started to put standards in place for my life out of a place of love and abundance and enoughness.

It’s like saying, “I want so much for you. I want you to be proud of yourself. I want you to see what you’re capable of. I love you that much, so here’s what I expect of you.” Can you see the difference in the energy? It’s a complete gamechanger. It actually made me fall in love with self-discipline. When I shifted the energy behind the action, everything changed.

So, when it comes to self-discipline, I’ve discovered there are only three things that you ever need to practice self-discipline around. And those three things are your thoughts, your feelings, and your actions. And these are all intertwined because our thoughts create how we feel and our feelings drive what we do or what we don’t do.

And so, being disciplined with your mind is about you paying attention to the thoughts in your head and simply asking yourself, do I want to believe that or not? And if I don’t, I get to change it. I get to focus on something that feels a little bit better.

So, an example is, I’m writing my book and I sat down yesterday to write and I had this voice in my head that was saying, “This is terrible. What is happening?” And for any of you writers, you totally get it. it’s part of the writing process. But in that moment, discipline was saying to myself, “Do I want to believe this? Does this support me at all? Does this serve my vision of writing a book?”

Because if I listen to that thought, guess what I’m going to do. I’m going to feel really overwhelmed. I’m going to feel really frustrated. And then, when I’m going to be tempted to do is just to not write, to think that that is the answer to the problem.

No, the answer to the problem is to change my thinking. So, in that moment, I decided to think, “Just write, Tonya. Stop judging yourself. Just write from your heart. You can go back and edit it later. But just keep writing.” That’s how we become self-disciplined with our mind.

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Then, being self-disciplined with our feelings, with our emotions, is about just allowing for them, not resisting them, and not giving into them. Just this morning, I woke up, and I love to come downstairs in my robe and have my cup of coffee. And there was this one moment where my brain was just like, “Why don’t you just stay in your robe all day?”

But I know, I don’t feel good when I stay in my robe all day. To me, it just feels lazy. Unless it’s like a day where I’ve decided, “I’m just chilling out today.” It’s pre-decided. It’s intentional.

But this morning, it wasn’t intentional. I was feeling sad. And so, my brain was trying to tell me, “Oh you should just hang out in that robe all day and just be sad.” No, I can be sad and go put my clothes on. I can be sad and still show up. And it’s really interesting, by listening to my intention, by listening to how I’d rather feel and showing up as that version, I’m not denying the sadness. I’m leaving space for it. But I’m not indulging in it. Does this make sense?

And so, I put my clothes on. I’m like, “Listen, sadness, I’m going to feel sad, but I’m going to dress up and feel sad.” To me, that’s what it’s like to be self-disciplined with your emotions. It’s not indulging in them. It’s not listening to them. But it’s leaving space for them and you continue to still show up for your life and what you say you’re going to do.

And that leads me to the last one; being self-disciplined in your actions. So, for me, being self-disciplined in my actions is being intentional with what I do and the way to do this, it’s actually really simple. It’s to decide what you’re going to do ahead of time, and then you show up for those decisions. And for me, my decisions are made in my calendar.

So, I know at 10AM on a Tuesday, I’m going to be meeting with my team. I know that at 11Am on Wednesday, I’m going to be recording a podcast. It really is that simple. And then it’s just showing up for it. But in that moment, you have to realize, your brain and your emotions are going to try to tempt you to do something else. And that’s why you have to be so disciplined with all three; your thoughts, your emotions, and your actions.

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Now, you may be thinking, “Well, this just sounds like a terrible life.” And what I’m here to tell you, it’s so insanely fun and amazing. And here’s what I want you to know. And I tell clients this all the time. I’m like, “Even pleasure requires discipline.”

If you think about it, true pleasure, so many of us put it on the back burner. We say we don’t have enough time. But when you’re disciplined with your pleasure, you make time for it. So, this isn’t just being disciplined around the things you don’t want to do. It’s being disciplined around the things that you do want to do. And it changes everything.

It makes you want to do all of it. It makes you want to show up for it when the energy behind your self-discipline is so much love and so much self-respect and so much joy because you no longer feel out of control in your life. Because I will tell you, when you lack self-discipline, that’s what ends up happening.

You feel like you have lost control of your life. And that is not a good feeling, my friends. Trust me, I know. I totally understand it. And the other thing that I want to say is that when you have been so undisciplined in a certain area of your life, it takes practice.

This is where you have to give yourself so much grace. You have to be curious with yourself. You have to watch yourself in those moments where you aren’t disciplined and figure out why, like, what happened? What was I thinking? How was I feeling? And how did that affect how I showed up?

And with that kind of grace and with that kind of awareness, you just get right back on track and you just keep practicing until it’s just who you are. I say time and time again, but whatever you’re practicing the most is what you’re getting the best at.

The reason why I’m so self-disciplined now is because I’ve practiced it a ton. And now, I’ve also equally experienced the benefits of it, which makes me want to practice it even more. But I do remember, in the early stages, especially around food – that was a big one for me – I remember failing time and time again.

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I remember saying, “Today’s the day. I’m going to show up for it.” And then, I would do it for the first part of the day, and then the afternoon, it felt like it would just go off the rails. But the difference was – here’s a big one, you guys – the difference was, in those moments, I practiced self-discipline to forgive myself and start practicing again.

And, over time, not only was I able to lose the weight and keep it off, but I experienced the beautiful freedom of being a self-disciplined woman. So, here’s what I want you all to do. Are you ready for this? I’m going to give you a challenge for this week.

I want you to pick one thing that you’re going to commit to do this week, no matter what. And I want it to be something that typically you don’t show up for, something that in the past, you have put it off. You keep saying, “I’ll do it tomorrow.”

I want you to commit to doing it this week. But I don’t want you just to do that. Here’s the other thing that I really want you to do. I want you to look at how you’ve currently been doing it, meaning the thoughts driving the attempts in the past, and I want you to ask yourself, “What would it look like if I approached this from a place of love and abundance and excitement?”

What would you need to think to approach this completely differently, in a much more loving way? And I want you to practice that. Because again, it’s the energy behind the self-discipline that will either make us want to do it, or that will cause us not to want to do it.

And I want you to experience this week what it feels like to be disciplined around something that you want for yourself. It will be uncomfortable. That is the payment for the freedom that self-discipline will give you.

Okay, so, one thing this week that you’re going to be self-disciplined around. Go and make yourself proud. Okay, do we have a deal? Okay, good.

It is time for a J’adore; the part of the show where I get to share something that I love with you. And this time of the year is the time where many of us, if we’re in

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the northern hemisphere, are starting to pull out our summer dresses, things just feel lighter and brighter and more fun.

And it's been really fun for me because in the Slim, Chic, and Savvy Society, which is my membership program, our focus for the month of May has been on decluttering. And I chose to declutter my closet, my clothes.

And every season, I love to look at what I have and what I haven't worn. And it's a constant editing. And so, when I was looking at my wardrobe for the spring and the summer, I was realizing, I have so many great pieces. But one area that I wanted to add to is within the shoe department.

Now, it will be of no surprise to you that I love beautiful shoes. I consider shoes to be art for our feet. Like, we're walking around with art. That's the way I think, you guys. But listen, I name my clothes too. I name my purses. I have a very intimate relationship with my wardrobe.

But when I was looking at my summer shoe collection, what I realized I wanted was a really fun pair of sandals that are super-versatile, that I can wear with literally everything. So, because I knew what I was looking for – a very versatile sandal that I can wear a lot, and it has to be comfortable – I was able to really focus.

I think this is something we all need to learn to do when we're shopping for pieces is to really go in with a plan of what we're looking for. And that could be a whole different episode. But I knew in my mind what I was looking for.

And so, I came across this sandal that is so fun and so comfortable. Now, here's the disclaimer. I've only worn them around the house for a day. But I usually have a hard time finding comfortable shoes.

Like, the shoe that is comfortable to most people will not be comfortable on my feet. And so, I did wear them around the house. And I'm happy to report that so far, so good.

Okay, so here is the sandal. It's by a company called Cult Gaia. And I love what they're doing. I came across this company maybe two years ago. And they have

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really fun shoes and handbags and even their clothing is beautiful. It's sort of like sophisticated boho, if that's a category. I just made one up.

So, what I love about this shoe is that it looks like you're not wearing anything because the strap is like a vinyl, like a clear vinyl. And then, it has this round ball that's an acrylic heal. And so, it literally just looks like you're floating on nothing. So, imagine, you can literally wear this shoe with everything.

Although, there are probably certain things I wouldn't wear it with. But I could pair this with a pair of capri jeans. I could pair it with a summer dress. I could pair it with a pair of black pants. Literally, when you see the show, you'll get what I'm saying. You can do so much with it.

But here's the thing. Cult Gaia has so many beautiful designs. Actually, I bought two pairs of their shoes, but this is the one I'm most excited to share with you. So, if you're looking for a summer sandal, I just want you to check these out. You can go to frenchkisslife.com/clearsandals.

And don't forget, we've created a whole page on the website for all of my J'adores. So, if you want to go back and look at some of the previous ones, you can go to frenchkisslife.com/jadore.

And, you know what? I adore you. Have a beautiful week, everyone. I will see you in the next episode. Cheers.

If you enjoyed this episode and you want to dive even deeper into the French Kiss Lifestyle, let's start with a makeover; a mindset makeover. You can download my free training, The Three Mindset Makeovers Every Woman Needs, by visiting frenchkisslife.com/mindset. Because, after all, mindset is the new black.