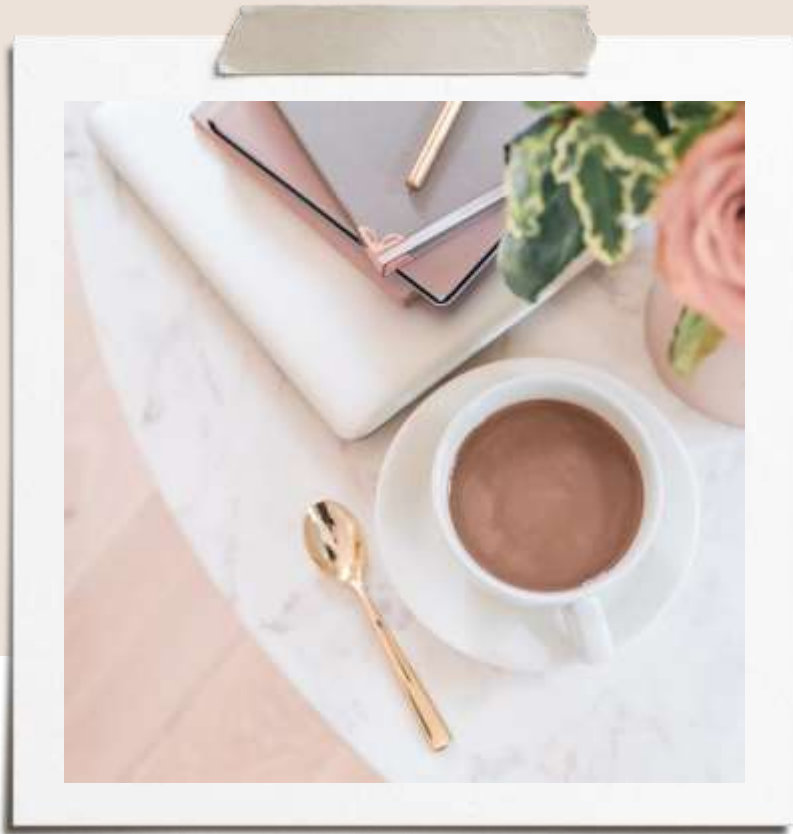


VIDEO TRANSCRIPT



EPISODE 214

My Self-Image Transformation

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My Self-Image Transformation

My friends, I am so excited because it's a new year and it's a brand-new podcast. Yes, we are officially the *School of Self-Image*. And in this episode, I want to talk about my own self-image transformation and what it really takes to change. Enjoy.

Bonjour, and welcome to the *School of Self-Image*, where personal development meets style. Here's your hostess master life coach Tonya Leigh.

Hello, my beautiful friends. Today is a very exciting day. First of all, happy New Year. This is the first episode of 2021 and I don't know about you all, but I am so excited about a new year.

Secondly, did you see that the doors are open to the School of Self-Image? We are welcoming in new ladies who have decided this is the year that they want to transform their self-image. Because if you've been listening to previous episodes, you understand everything you want that you don't yet have is going to require that you create a new you. It just makes change so much easier, versus working against a self-image that is opposing what you want.

And so, I am so looking forward to working with all of these new members. We have added more things into the membership. We are continuously making it better and better and I am committed to making this school the best school out there in terms of helping a woman develop her image.

And so, if you have not joined us yet, what in the world? Head over to schoolofselfimage.com/join. You can read all about it. And I would be honored to support you in elevating your self-image in 2021.

And then finally, did you notice, this is a brand-new podcast. We have officially switched over from French Kiss Life to the *School of Self-Image*. And it's bittersweet. What can I say? French Kiss Life will forever be a part of my story. It will forever be a part of my own self-image transformation. But when I decided in October to open up the School of Self-Image, I made another decision, and that is to go all in on it.

So, you can celebrate with me by sharing this new episode on Instagram or Facebook and then go check out the new site schoolofselfimage.com and I truly

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am excited to share all of the research and things that I have been learning over the past year on what it really takes to transform your self-image.

So with that said, let's talk about my personal self-image transformation. I've touched upon my story in previous episodes, but I want to dedicate this episode to talking about why I'm so passionate about supporting women in transforming their self-image.

And I also realize that some of you may not know my story. Maybe this is the first time that you've listened to the podcast, or you're relatively new to me and my work. So, I wanted to share my own self-image story and talk about what it really takes to change.

So, first of all, let me just explain what your self-image is. Your self-image is how you see yourself. It's how you see yourself in the mirror in terms of your attractiveness, how you think you look. It's also how you think about yourself, how you think about your capability and your personality, your skillset. And it's creating your entire life.

Now, what most people do – and let me tell you, I did this for many years – is we try to change without changing who we are. And the first area where I really struggled to change for many, many years was around my weight.

So, at one point, I weighed 75 pounds more than I do today. I was over 200 pounds. And I remember desperately wanting to be fit and healthy. And I would go on diet after diet. I would try to work out. I would try to lose weight. And sometimes I would. I was like a professional yoyo dieter.

I have gained and lost probably about 2020 people. And it always felt like I was white-knuckling it. It always felt like I couldn't maintain it. And now, I know that the reason why is because of my self-image. I was trying to lose weight, but I still saw myself as an overweight woman. I still saw myself as a woman with a weight problem. I still saw myself as a woman who could lose weight, but she was always going to gain it back.

And because I saw myself as that, that is what I created. But today, I am a completely different woman. When I think about myself in regards to my weight, I have very different thoughts. For example, I don't even think about dieting. I

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don't think about food as being good or bad. I don't think about myself having a weight problem.

I see myself as a naturally slim woman who enjoys food and enjoys taking care of herself and who doesn't fear ever having a weight problem again. And let me tell you all, that is miraculous because I do remember thinking, "I will never ever get over this. This will be a curse for the rest of my life."

But today, I think completely different about myself. My self-image around my weight has been completely transformed. So, let me tell you why. In the School of Self-Image, we talk about three different areas that shape our self-image. The first of which is your mindset; how you think, which creates how you feel, which then impacts how you show up in the world.

So, remember back when I was struggling with my weight, I was thinking in opposition of what a naturally slender woman thinks. A naturally slim woman doesn't think she's going to struggle with her weight.

Now, many of you may think, "But she doesn't. She's already naturally slim." But here's the thing. You have to be her now. And so, for me, I started to practice thinking the way I thought I would think when I was at my – I call it my happy weight.

Now, in the process of change, you're going to have to let a part of yourself die. And that is so uncomfortable. And also, you're going to have to let old habits die, which is also uncomfortable.

What I realize now, by having that old self-image, it gave me an excuse to overeat. It allowed me not to feel discomfort. And it kept me in the familiar, which is what the brain naturally wants to do.

But as I began to change my mindset and I went through the process of discomfort that comes along with that, I eventually birthed a completely different woman. I am feeling better physically than I have felt in a long time. And I never, ever worry about my weight and I never obsess over what to eat. A miracle, I'm telling you.

But the other two areas that we talk about within the School of Self-Image is your style, how you show up. My style when I was struggling with my weight was one

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of which I was trying to hide my body. And I carried myself in a way that exuded shame and being small, even though I was physically big.

Because style isn't just what you wear. It's how you walk into a room. It's how you carry yourself. And so, I started to work on my style. I started to dress the body I had in a way that when I looked at myself in the mirror, I didn't think, "Oh, you're disgusting."

I started to think, "Oh, you look cute today. Look at you." And that impacted how I saw myself and how I treated myself. I started to work on my posture, how I carried myself. And over time, I literally started to see myself differently.

And finally, the third area is your surroundings, your environment. It's so much harder to change when you stay immersed in the familiar environments that trigger you to think in the same old ways and to have the same behaviors. So, when it came to my weight, I was raised in the Deep South, where pies and collard greens and cornbread and fried chicken were always being served. You didn't have to go far to find some good fried food.

And so, when I was in that environment, even though I could change, it just made it so much harder. And so, I started to immerse myself in different environments. And this is what it looked like.

Number one, I would look at different types of magazines. I remember, I started to read about clean eating. I started to get acquainted with what that looked like. I also, at work, started to associate with people who were healthy, people that worked out. Because people in my immediate family and my immediate surroundings, I didn't have any examples of that.

But it worked. I remember, there were a few people that I worked with who were into exercise. At lunch they were always eating healthy. And so, I made an effort to put myself in their presence as much as possible because I wanted what they had to rub off on me. I wanted to see how they think. I wanted to see what they ate. I wanted to see what their workouts were.

I also started to listen to different kinds of information. I stopped buying diet books because- diet books are what overweight people buy. And I didn't want to be overweight. And so, I asked the question, "If I was not dieting, if I wasn't

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struggling with my weight, what would I be reading?” And it actually had nothing to do with food.

I wanted to read books about travel and style and beautiful novels. And so, I started to do that. I switched up my environment, which forced my brain to think differently, which then forced me to feel differently, and ultimately created very different results, to the point that my self-image was completely transformed.

So, that’s one example of my own self-image transformation; a transformation where I completely feel like I shed an old person and put on a new identity, to the point that I’m just now her.

The second area where I’ve experienced a complete transformation is around my style. I grew up wearing hand-me-downs, shopping at the Blue Light Special at Kmart.

My mom did make some of my clothes, just because it was cheaper. So, thank goodness for that because she’s an amazing seamstress. So, I didn’t grow up around what I consider to be stylish women.

Now, the women I did grow up with were amazing in so many other ways, but style was not something that was familiar to me. And yet, when I envisioned the ideal version of myself, she was a stylish woman. But I didn’t see myself as stylish.

In fact, I saw myself as very frumpy and then add on a weight problem and the way I dressed to try to disguise my body, I had a lot of thoughts around my style that didn’t support who I wanted to be. But fast forward to today and I consider myself to be a stylish woman. So, how did I do it?

For my style transformation, the environment was the biggest factor because you don’t know what you don’t know. When I looked around at my environment, I had no examples of what it even looked like to be a stylish woman. So, I started to immerse myself in the world of style.

I would buy Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, Elle, and I would just notice how outfits were put together. I started to study designers. I started to read books about how to cultivate style.

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And then the other big surrounding change that had a big impact on my style was travel. Traveling to new cultures – especially in Europe, because European style is definitely aligned with the kind of style that I wanted to have – gave me an example of what was possible when it came to my own personal style.

So, I started to edit my wardrobe ruthlessly. I would look into my closet and I would ask myself, “Do I love it? Does this represent the woman that I used to be or the woman that I’m becoming?” And I just started taking so many clothes out of my closet to the point that I only had a few really good pieces left. But then that became the foundation of which I’ve been- building my wardrobe for many, many years.

And my personal style is very simple and elegant and sophisticated, which are not the words I would have used to describe my style all those years ago. But the crazy thing that happened is as I began to invest in quality pieces and I began to wear things that were very actually uncomfortable to wear – not physically, but emotionally, only because I wasn’t accustomed to seeing myself in such a way – over time that became my new normal.

I stopped wearing khaki pants and big baggy t-shirts and I started to wear things that really did embody the woman I wanted to be. And I also began to carry myself differently, which is also a part of the style component. As I was saying earlier, I began to work on my posture. I began to really notice how my body language affects how I think of myself, how I see myself, and all of that impacted my mindset.

I was looking at a reflection of myself that gave me a very different message in terms of how I see myself and how I think about myself. And so, fast forward to today and my wardrobe is a true reflection of who I want to be. But it’s been years in the making. And it will always be a process, an evolvment, because as I think about who I want to become this year and in five years and in 10 years, I am sure that my style will evolve as well. And as my style evolves, so will my self-image.

Another big area, actually a huge area where I’ve had a complete self-image transformation is in my career. I was a critical care nurse for 15 years. And I could not have seen myself as an entrepreneur when I was working as a nurse. It was so foreign to me to think about having my own business, running a successful company. It just was not in the cards for me. But today, I’m doing that. I’m an

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entrepreneur. I have a very successful company. I see myself totally different. So, how did that come about?

Well, thank god for curiosity. I think that's been one of the traits that I naturally have that has led me on this path that I'm now on. But when I was working as a nurse, I deep down knew that there was something else within me that wanted to be expressed and experienced.

But maybe like man of you, I had no idea what that was. But I started to follow my curiosities, which led me to going to sommelier school, which then led me to going to Boston University to get a liberal arts degree while I was working as a nurse, which then led me to trying to figure out how to put all of this together. Because I had fallen in love with the world of food and wine. And then, at BU, I discovered I loved writing.

And so, one day, I was looking at an article in the newspaper that was talking about life coaches. And I was like, "That's what I need. I need a life coach to help me sort through all of these possibilities and these interests. And that's when I discovered the world of personal development.

And, you all, life forever will be changed for me because of that. And so, as I began to change my environment, put myself at Boston University, go to sommelier school, hire a life coach, that opened me up to the power of our own mind, I began to have different thoughts. It affected my mindset. I started to think, "Maybe there is something else that's possible for me."

I started to believe that maybe, just maybe I could start my own business. But I would not have gotten to that point unless I had put myself in new surroundings that opened me up to the possibility of that. And I see this a lot. So many women want to change, but they're sitting in the same environments day after day that don't expose them to what is possible.

But by following my curiosities and putting myself in unfamiliar spaces, I started to have different thoughts. It affected my mindset in a huge way. But then, when I started my business, all of my doubts came up. All of the thoughts such as, "You don't know what you're doing. This isn't going to work. You're not an entrepreneur. You've never even taken a business class. What are you doing? What in the world?"

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All of that stuff came up, which was a reflection of my old self-image. But then, I started to think about the woman I wanted to be in business and how does she think? How does she show up?

Even though I was working from home, I imagined the version of me that wakes up every day, gets dressed in something that feels good for her, that represents who she wants to be, and she gets to work. She's consistent. She shows up for her clients, even though at the time I had none.

And by doing this work and by putting myself in rooms full of entrepreneurs, networking with people who are way ahead of me, that gave me new thoughts to think and new beliefs to borrow and showing up as the most powerful and dynamic version of myself, it's completely rewired my brain to now I see myself as a very successful CEO. And I've been gathering evidence to prove that true.

And it's crazy to think, what, just 15 years ago, I was working in a CVICU and this was not even a possibility. But I had to transform my self-image. And I did that by putting myself in new environments, by thinking from my future, from where I wanted to be, and showing up on purpose and how I dress, how I carry myself, how I speak, which has completely transformed my career self-image.

Another area where I've had a huge shift in my self-image is around money. And I know so many of you can relate to this. Because many of us didn't grow up with money. And probably, by the time we were five years old, we had beliefs around money that we borrowed from our parents, "Money doesn't grow on trees. You have to work really hard for money. Money is not easy. There's only so much money. We have to be very careful with money."

And so, I definitely had a lot of beliefs around money that kept me in constant scarcity. And so, what I tried to do, which is what a lot of us try to do, is I tried to go out and make a lot of money.

When I was working as a nurse, I was always the first one to volunteer for overtime. I loved to work holidays, especially the night shift because I would get like time and a half. I thought the answer was to make more money to deal with my scarcity.

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But the crazy thing is, as I started to make more money as a nurse, I still felt scarcity. I didn't feel abundant because I still had a broke self-image. But fast forward to today, I think completely different about money. And I still have some work to do around money, y'all. So, I just want to put that out there. But my financial identity is completely different than that girl that was working as a critical care nurse.

And now, because my self-image has changed around money, I have created more wealth in my life. But I had to change my self-image first. And this is what we often get wrong. Like I said, we want to get a lot of money and think, "Oh, then I'll think differently about it." But that's not the way it works.

You have to begin to think about it differently now and develop a rich self-image if you want to create more wealth in your life. In fact, I created a whole course on this. It's called the *Wealthy Woman*. And when you join the *School of Self-Image* and you choose the annual option, you get access to this course and I teach you how I completely transformed my mindset around money to help me create wealth.

And listen, I've had women go through this course who are stay-at-home moms, school teachers, women who work in corporate, and also entrepreneurs. And they've had phenomenal results because it is about your self-image; how you see yourself in relationship to money. And so, today, my self-image is completely different than it was all those years ago around money.

So, what did I do? The first thing that I did was my mindset. I started to think more abundantly, even when I had very little money in the bank. I started to practice thinking like a wealthy person. Now, this required a lot of awareness and a lot of mental effort because I wanted to slip back into my old identity because it was so familiar. And the brain loves staying in the familiar. It doesn't have to work that hard. It's pretty cozy, even though it's not helping you create the results that you want.

So, I had to constantly be mindful of my self-talk around money. Was I talking about it with love and excitement and with abundance, or was I talking about it full of fear and scarcity? And anytime I would find myself in scarcity and fear around money, I would change it immediately. I would immediately go to gratitude and appreciation and shift that energy.

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The other thing that I did is I put myself in rich environments. I would go and sit in luxury hotel lobbies that didn't cost me a dime, but felt rich to me. I wanted to be in the energy of wealth and abundance.

I went to Monaco and I remember just being blown away with how much financial resources were in one country. And more importantly, I was intrigued with the people who had that kind of money. How did they think? Are they pinching every penny? Are they thinking that money is something to be afraid of? Or are they enjoying it? Do they believe in abundance?

And I wanted to meet these people and learn how they think, but I had to put myself in that environment first. I also began to immerse myself in books about money mindset. Think and Grow Rich is one of my all-time favorites.

And as I began to put myself in these environments, it triggered me to think in different ways. And then my style, to this day, I believe had a huge impact on my ability to create wealth. Because I used to spend so much money on the cheapest most low-quality clothes because I was always full of scarcity and I thought I needed more stuff to feel more abundant.

But then, I would open my closet and see nothing in there that really represented who I wanted to be and how I wanted to feel. And so, I started to buy less but higher quality. Instead of buying five cheap handbags, I saved up and I got one beautiful quality designer handbag. Instead of buying 10 different shirts because they're on sale, I would save up and buy a beautiful well-made shirt.

So, my closet had this simple refined elegance that I aligned with wealth. And then, as I began to show up that way, I saw myself differently. So, in a room full of people, I carried myself differently. And because of how I was dressed, they responded to me differently.

And all of this combined helped me to create more wealth in my life. So, today, when it comes to money, again, I have a completely different self-image than all of those years of growing up in a trailer, working hourly to make ends meet, being a single mom and believing that this kind of life was not possible for me.

And I say this to you because if I can do it, so can you. I am a great example of what's possible when it comes to money. Because I know what it's like to not have

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any. I know what it's like to be poor. I know what it's like to be broke. And I also know that the opposite is available to all of us if we're willing to create the self-image that allows for it.

If you don't have a self-image for wealth, guess what you're going to do. You're going to push it away. You're going to overspend. You're going to go into debt. You're going to do whatever it takes to prove your current self-image true.

So, if you want to prove something else true, create the self-image that you want to live into. And then you'll realize that we always come back to who we believe ourselves to be. I've seen it over and over, especially around money.

If you believe that your financial potential is, let's say \$50,000 a year, based on our past, based on what you've been told, you are going to work to prove that true. Is that what you want to prove true? Or would you rather prove that you can make \$100,000 a year, \$1 million a year, \$10 million a year?

Because you can easily create that self-image and then your mind is going to work to fulfil that because the mind doesn't like cognitive dissonance. The mind doesn't like when there's not harmony. So, it's always working to prove whatever you believe to be true about yourself true.

But a lot of you are proving things about yourself that you don't want to prove true. And you're trying to fix it with a lot of action, but that's not going to work because you're working against yourself. To create true lasting change, it requires that you transform your self-image.

And so now, when it comes to wealth, I'm thinking about what is the next version of me? Where is she placing herself? What environments is she in? Who does she hang out with? What is she reading? What is she listening to? How is she using her time?

I'm also thinking about how she shows up, how she carries herself, what is she wearing? And more importantly, how is she thinking? And then that is my work, to create that new identity for myself because I know, when I do it, I've got a lot of evidence now that when I do that, the world orchestrates to fulfill what you think about yourself.

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And then the final self-image transformation – I was trying to figure out how to explain it to you all, but it was last year. 2020 was a huge self-image transformation. And it wasn't in just one area. It felt like it was in all of the areas. The way I see myself today versus January one of 2020 is completely different.

I left a long-term relationship. I moved into a beautiful penthouse. I completely changed my business. I let go of so much. It's like a whole person of me died and I birthed a whole new one. And it's been the most rewarding year of my life and it's also been the most scary.

But the way I see myself now compared to last year is I see myself as even more confident. I see myself as stronger. I see myself as more creative. I see myself as more loving, more abundant. It's like everything changed last year.

And as a result, I'm healthier than I've ever been. I've been working out. I've been eating even better. And I already ate well. But I've been really listening to my body. I've had the most deep relationships form and my older relationships I've taken to an even deeper level. And then I've met new people; new people that have opened my world up to new possibilities.

Putting myself in a new environment, in a city and this new apartment has completely changed how I see myself and how I think about myself. It was such a transformative year. And I will tell you, it took a lot of courage, you all. Because it's easy to stay the same. It's easy to not make the hard decisions. It's easy to stay in the comfort zone. But that's not how you transform your self-image.

At the end of the day, transforming your self-image takes a lot of courage. And do you know what courage requires? That you feel a lot of discomfort. But listen, y'all, we can do hard things.

If you look back over your life, you've done many hard things. Some you didn't want to do. It was forced upon you. But what I'm asking you to do is to choose it on purpose, choose that discomfort on purpose and learn to navigate your emotional life so that you can transform your self-image to be a match for what you want.

When I look back over my life, it doesn't make sense that I've created what I've created. A girl like me growing up in a trailer in the South, in the Bible Belt, that

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struggle with her self-esteem, struggled with her weight, struggled with money, who didn't believe that the life I'm living today is possible, but now I'm living it. And now I know it's all because I transformed my self-image, which is why this work is the most important work you will ever, ever do.

If you want to make this an extraordinary year, focus on your self-image. Think about an extraordinary goal that you want to accomplish this year. And I've even done a podcast on this that we'll include in the show notes. But choose an extraordinary goal and then go to the end of you having already achieved it. And think about who you've become, how you think differently.

What did you have to let go of? Who did you have to become? What new environments did you have to put yourself in to make it possible? How did you show up in your style and your body language and your communication that transformed how you see yourself?

And then the work is to practice being her now. Not one day when you've created the goal, when you've gotten to the finish line, but now. Because when you do that, you're not going to be working against yourself. You're going to be working with yourself because the mind will seek to prove true what you believe about yourself. I want you to believe how extraordinary you are and I refuse to see you as anything less than that, my friend.

So, if you want to take this work to a deeper level, come join us within the School of Self-Image. You can go to schoolofselfimage.com/join. I would love to see you inside. But I want you to commit to making this the most extraordinary year ever. And I want you to focus on transforming your self-image in order to do so.

I love you all so much. And I want us all to commit to making this the year that we amazed ourselves with what's possible. And we did it by transforming how we see ourselves. I'll see you in the next episode. Cheers.

Hey, are you ready to transform your self-image but lack direction and support? If so, I'd like to invite you to join the School of Self-Image. This is an exclusive monthly membership where you'll create your own powerful before and after story. Through weekly classes and coaching, you'll learn powerful techniques on how to elevate the quality of your mindset, style, and surroundings, to change

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how you see yourself and create extraordinary results in your life. Head over to schoolofselfimage.com/join to learn more.