

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT



EPISODE 227

Living in the Question

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Living in the Question

Rainer Maria Rilke said, “Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day and to the answer.”

Welcome to the School of Self-Image, where personal development meets style. Here’s your hostess, master life coach Tonya Leigh.

Hi, beautiful friends. It’s so good to be recording another podcast. Because even though I’ve been in your ear every Wednesday for the last four weeks, I haven’t recorded a podcast for over a month. I batched a bunch of podcasts because I decided to go and spend a month in Mexico.

And part of that decision was simply because I was craving sunshine. I’ve been cold all winter and my body needed some vitamin D. But the other part of my decision to go to Mexico is that I’m living in a question, which is what today’s episode is all about.

So many of my clients come to me and are confused because they have life questions that they’re trying to gain clarity around. Questions like, “Should I stay or go?” Or, “Where do I start?” Or, “How do I grow my business?” Or, “What is my contribution to the world? What is my purpose? Who do I want to be? What do I want?”

And what often happens is that they sit in their home with the same brain that’s asking the question, and also the brain that’s creating the confusion, trying to figure out the answers. And they’re putting so much pressure on themselves.

And the more pressure that they put on themselves, it seems as if things become even more cloudy, less clear. And I’ve been there. I know what this feeling is like. In fact, sometimes I can have a question and my brain wants to do the same thing to me.

But I’ve lived in the questions my entire life. And I know that when you’re willing to live in the question versus trying to figure out the answer, that’s where the most magical things can happen in your life.

So, what do I mean by living in the question? Well, the best way for me to explain it is to share with you my approach to living in the question. The first step is to actually embrace the question, or as Rilke said, “To love the question.”

A lot of you resist the question. You don’t like the question because you’re frustrated that you don’t have the answer yet and you believe that there’s going to be a day when all of your questions are answered. But guess when that day is? When you’re dead.

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Hopefully, as long as you're living, you're going to have questions that you're living into, questions that you're curious about, questions that you are excited to discover for yourself. Because think about it, what fun would life be if you didn't have questions that you are exploring for yourself?

And so, for me, the first step is to love my questions. And that means they need to be good questions. In fact, I did an entire episode – I think it's episode 197 – on quality questions. Because it's not fun to live out questions. Why am I so broke? Or why am I always overwhelmed? Those are questions that your brain will always give you terrible answers to. So, you want to make sure that you're asking quality questions; questions that you're actually excited to live out and discover.

The second important piece to living out your questions is one of the hardest, and that is to relax. We often think that once we have the quote unquote right answer, then we will relax. And I've seen this with so many of my clients. They really believe finding the right answer is the secret to their happiness, to their wellbeing, to their joy. And as long as you believe that, you're going to be putting so much pressure on yourself to figure out the right answer.

And here's the truth. Nothing outside of you is creating how you feel. Do you know what creates how you feel? The thoughts in your head. And when I finally understood this, what ended up happening is that I stopped pressuring myself to figure out the right answer, thinking that it would lead me to happiness. And I started to create happiness right where I was.

And then, the more I felt happiness, the more I was better-able to discover my next steps and figure out the answers. But the first step is just to relax. I love telling myself, "I don't need to know right now."

Now, I'm going to say something and you may think that I'm speaking in contradiction to what I'm suggesting. I also believe in being decisive. But sometimes, we don't have enough information. For example, if you are thinking you want to move to a new place but you've never left your hometown, how do you know where you want to move to? You may not have that answer right now.

So, the next step for me is to be curious. Be open to all of the possibilities. I like to think of it like this. I like to think of my question, and then I like to try on many different options. It's like going to a store to buy clothes. You walk in and there are many different options, and it can be overwhelming.

But what you have to do is you have to start trying on the clothes, seeing which clothes fit you, which colors you love, what fits you love, what textures you love. And by trying on the clothes, you get clear on what it is you want to purchase.

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Well, you need to first of all be curious about the possibilities, and then you have to be willing to try a lot of things. And this is where so many of you sabotage yourself. You don't want to fail. You're afraid of what people are going to think. You're afraid of making the, quote unquote, wrong decision. And so, you sit around trying to figure out the answer and doing nothing.

And it seems as if you're stuck. And you're sticking yourself because living in the question means having the courage and the confidence to go out there and take action.

I love what Marie Forleo says. She says, "Clarity comes through action." I like to think of life as one big experiment. And whenever I'm approaching a question that I don't yet have clarity around, I just see it as putting together many different experiments to see what works and what doesn't.

You know, the question that I've been thinking about lately is, "Where do I want to live? Do I want to buy a home? Do I want to stay here in Colorado or do I want to go elsewhere? Do I want to experiment with working remotely?" Which is why I went to Mexico for a month.

Going on that trip gave me clarity around what I want and what I don't want. Sitting at home and trying to figure out that answer is practically impossible because how can you know the answer without the experience? Unless you just want to decide, and that is also an option.

But I'm all about experiencing life. And sometimes, I really truly believe that I will spend more of my life in the question than in the answers. And if life continues to be anything similar to what it's been, what ends up happening is that I suddenly find myself living in the answer without even realizing it.

I go and experience a bunch of things and follow what works, stop doing what doesn't, follow what feels good, avoid what doesn't feel good. And before you know it, I'm living in the how.

I tell clients all the time, I'm like, "Do you know how you're going to figure out to do what you want to do?" When you've actually done it and you're like, "Oh, that's how I did it." But so many of you want people to give you the how. You want people to tell you what to do. And I always say, we're so much bigger than that.

I never tell my clients what to do. I don't want to take away the joy of them figuring it out for themselves. Now, I'll ask them the hard questions. Sometimes, I may offer them different options to try on to see how they feel and how they fit. I may share my experience. But just because something works for me, doesn't mean it's going to work for you.

We are all so individual. We all have our own paths and our own journeys. And so, just because something works for me, doesn't mean it's going to be a good fit for you. I feel like the best coaches in the world know this.

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We would never assume that we know what's best for our clients. What we believe is that your answers are within you, but you have to have the courage to go in there and live out the question. And I feel like the hardest part is understanding that there are no guarantees.

When you start taking action and trying things and experimenting in an effort to find your answers by living out the questions, you don't know what's going to work and what won't work. Last year when I decided to completely change my business.

I was living out the question, "What is next? What am I being called towards?" And I paid attention to what was calling me. I paid attention to what I wanted more of, what I wanted less of, the feeling that I wanted within my business. And I had to be willing to fail.

I had to be willing to put something out there that may not work. And that's the risk you take when you decide you want to live an extraordinary life, when you want to live a bold, daring, and audacious life.

But what I knew is that I had the confidence to have my own back. That if things didn't work out, I would try the next experiment. I would keep showing up and living out the question, realizing that life is not a destination. It's this beautiful journey that we're always going to be called to say yes to. Say yes to our dreams, to our desires, and to be open to how it may play out.

Looking back over the last 15 years of my life, all I have been doing, my friends, is living in the question. There is no way 15 years ago I could have told you how I would get to where I am today. But question by question, and the courage to step into the question and follow it to stay open to where I'm being called, to stay open to what feels hot, to what feels cold, to take a lot of action. Until I find the answer. That is how I've landed at this moment in my life.

Now, let's really think about that. 15 years ago, when I was sitting at home and I was wondering, "What is next?" Imagine if I would have just read a lot of books and put a lot of pressure on myself to figure out the answer without going out and experiencing life and taking the action. I probably would not have moved the needle of my life that far.

But by living in the question and letting the answer be revealed to me by having, again, the courage to take a lot of action, that is how I've landed up here. And I continue to do this process.

So, let me break it down for you. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to think about a question that you are trying to get clarity around. And make sure it's a good-quality question. Meaning it's a question that you want the answer to.

For example, let's say you've been asking yourself the question, "Why can't I figure this out?" That is not a good-quality question because your brain is going to give you all of the reasons that you can't figure it out. It's not going to provide you with useful answers.

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A better question would be, “How will I figure this out?” Now your brain’s going to be like, “Oh, we’ve got to come up with some different suggestions because the quality of the question had changed. So, therefore, I’m going to have to provide her with better-quality answers.”

But once you have your question in front of you, I just want you to relax. What if there’s nothing really serious happening, you all? I know everything can seem so serious. But what if very few things are that serious? And what if we just relaxed?

I love telling myself, “I don’t need to know right now. I have this question. I’m willing to live in it. I’m willing to take action to figure it out. But I don’t need to know the answer right now.”

All of a sudden, my nervous system calms down and I actually can think more clearly. I’m more excited. I’m not in resistance. And then, I start to get really curious with my question. When I’m in that relaxed state, I can begin to play around with all of the possibilities.

So, for example, the question that I’ve been asking recently that I just shared a few minutes ago is, “What’s next for me? Where do I want to live? What kind of lifestyle do I want to have? Do I want to own a house? Do I want to live in different places? Do I want to work remotely? What’s next?”

I’m relaxed around it. I don’t need to know right now because I’m going to have a good time no matter what. So, I don’t put that pressure on myself thinking that my best life is going to be in some other location.

And from that relaxed place, I start to be curious and I start to dream about all of the different options. And I’ll write them down. I could live in the US. I could live abroad. I could live a month here, a month there. I could travel for a year. I could buy a house here in Denver. I just put all of the options from where I am right now that I can see, I will write them down.

And then, it’s all about the courage to live in the question. So, that means trying some of these options on. Now, you can try options on in your mind. I could try on living here in Denver and buying a house here. And I can imagine it and I can feel it and I can see how it fits versus imagining me renting a place in Mexico for a month and then maybe going to Puerto Rico for a month and then maybe going and staying with my parents for a month. I can try that option on and I can see how it feels mentally.

But oftentimes, I like to put myself in the situation. I want to book the place and go and try it out and see the pros and cons, see how it fits. Taking the action and putting myself in these situations provides me with so much data and leads me to the answer eventually.

But I see it all as an adventure. So, I’m not in a hurry to get there. I have a friend who is thinking about buying a home. And she’s been considering this for over a year now. And I

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finally asked her the other day, I'm like, "What are you doing? What have you decided?" And she was like, "I just don't know." She's spinning in confusion.

And I told her, I'm like, "Listen, let's live in the question. Here's what I would suggest that you do. Why don't you just call up a real estate agent and give them an idea of the kind of home you want to live in, what neighborhood you're thinking about, and start to have the conversation with someone that can provide you with more clarity? They can talk to you about your budget. They can show you what's in your price range. And then go see some of these homes.

"Put yourself in those homes and imagine yourself owning it and living there and see how it feels. You don't have to buy it. You're not committing to anything. But you're going to have so much more clarity around this question if you actually put yourself in the question and live it. Start to have the conversations. Go visit the homes. Talk to someone at the bank." That's how we get our answers. Not sitting at home just thinking about it.

I have another friend who is on the fence as to whether she wants a relationship or not. And again, like my other friend, she's just sitting at home trying to figure it out with her brain that's confused. And I told her, I said, the best way to find out if you want a relationship is to start going out there and dating. Put yourself out there and have little mini relationships with people to see how it fits, how it feels. Live out your question. That's when the answers will be revealed.

And I see this with some of my coaching clients, especially those who are in business. They'll tell me things like, "I don't know what niche to pick. I don't know what to charge. I don't know what to create." And I'm like, "Listen, you've got to start coaching. You've got to just start picking prices that feel in alignment with you, seeing how the market responds. You can adjust later. You need to just get on the playing field. Stop trying to be perfect. Stop waiting for the right answer. Because you may end up spending your whole life waiting, waiting for the answer to fall out of the sky when all along it was waiting for you to live in the question so that it could be revealed to you.

When it comes to living in the question, there are four traits that it's going to require that you cultivate. And that is curiosity; being curious about the question, being curious about how it's going to reveal itself to you, staying open to how things feel to you, where you're being drawn, where you're being encouraged to leave. Just being curious about it.

It's also going to require courage. Listen, it's easy to sit at home researching, reading, taking in a lot of information, spinning in confusion. And none of that requires much from you. But those who are daring enough to live in the question know that you have to have the courage to step into your life and take the action so that the answer can be revealed to you. And that may mean booking a trip. That may mean putting your work out into the world. It's going to require some level of risk if you want to live a big life. So, courage.

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The other trait that it's going to require from you is confidence. Confidence is believing in your ability. And I like to think of it as believing in my ability that no matter what happens, I have my own back. I will figure it out. I will figure out the next steps.

And then, the final trait is one of my favorites. And that is to have a sense of adventure. Our lives are just one big adventure and it saddens me to know that many of you are just sitting at home and not taking the call.

It's like your life is calling, saying, "Hey, something great is out here waiting for you." And you're not picking up the call. Pick up the phone and say yes to the adventure of the questions that you are asking yourself. And be daring enough and bold enough and audacious enough to go out there and live in the question so that the answer will reveal itself to you. Live your questions now.

And what you're probably going to find out is that one day, you will be living in your answer and you may not even notice it. I've had many moments where I look around and I'm like, "Oh, this was the answer I've been searching for." But my answer found me because I was willing to simply go out there and live my life, to live in my question.

It didn't come by me sitting at home trying to figure it out. It came because I had the confidence and the courage just to take a lot of action and to follow my heart and my instincts and where I was being called. And as I said earlier, you all, I think when I look back over my life, I will discover that I spent way more time living in the question than I did in the answer.

And honestly, I wouldn't want it any other way because what would life be without that sense of curiosity and wonder and magic that happens when you're willing to step into the unknown? Which is what living in the question requires.

Life is just one grand adventure. I want you all to be willing to say yes to it. Have a beautiful week, my friends. And I cannot wait to see you in next week's episode.

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