

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT



EPISODE 234

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# How My Body Image Held Me Back

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## How My Body Image Held Me Back

In this episode, I'm pulling back the curtain on how my body image held me back for years. So, if you're a woman that finds yourself being negative towards your body, or maybe you are putting life on hold until one day when your body is different, or maybe you find yourself hiding from the camera or not showing up for your life because of your thoughts about your body. This episode is for you.

And my hope is that by listening to it, you will understand and realize the importance of upgrading your body image. Enjoy.

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

Well hey, my beautiful friends. How are you? I hope you are having the best day ever. I'm doing great, in case you were wondering. And hey, listen, before we jump into today's episode, I want to ask you a huge favor. I am a big believer in asking for what you want, because how will you get it if you don't ask for it?

And here's what I would so appreciate from you. If you listen to this podcast and you enjoy it, if it makes your day brighter in any way, if it's helped you overcome limiting beliefs, if it's just supported you at all in your life, I would so appreciate it if you would head over to iTunes and leave me a five-star review.

I read every single one of them. They mean the world to me. And I just love that I get to do this podcast for you every single week. So, thank you in advance.

I just returned home from visiting my parents. I was supposed to be there for a week. I ended up staying for two weeks. The day before I was supposed to fly out, I just had this deep sense that I wanted to spend more time with them. And so, I changed my flight and ended up staying two weeks and had the best time.

I went down to Charleston and saw my good friend Brooke, and then came back to my mom and dad's for Mother's Day. There was like 14 of us. It was just a lovely, lovely time. And I had a moment when I was in Charleston of remembering years ago being in the exact same hotel that I was staying in. And I remember how bad I felt about my body.

I struggled with a negative body image ever since I was probably 12 or 13. I was in beauty pageants when I was a little girl and, you know, it's not the best thing for little girls who want to build a strong sense of self a positive body image because you're being judged on your body and how you walk. And most of the judges were men. Sort of crazy now that I think about it.

But you're looking around at other women and you're thinking, "Oh, their body is slimmer than mine. Their boobies are bigger than mine." It was just crazy for me now, thinking back that as a little girl I was in that situation. And I don't blame anyone other than myself. I wanted to be in

## How My Body Image Held Me Back

beauty pageants for whatever reason. I don't recommend them anymore though. But, you know, to each his own.

So, my negative body image started very young and basically lasted until my early 30s. And what a crazy ride it was. I think about all of the behaviors that come from a negative body image. Everything from crazy dieting to bingeing. I was bulimic for a while, so purging. I at one point weighed over 200 pounds. So much body loathing and body shame. And I promised that if I could figure it out, I would help as many women as possible overcome this.

Because a negative body image will hold you back from living an extraordinary life. My whole body of work is around self-image. And your body image is a big part of that. So, what is body image? Well, it is your thoughts about your body and your appearances. And it's not based on what your body looks like. It's based on your thoughts about what your body looks like.

I'm actually going to be teaching about this the entire month of June within the School of Self-Image because I am sick and tired of seeing women sabotage themselves, hide from their lives, shrink from their lives, avoid opportunities that could forever change their lives because of the thoughts that they have about their bodies.

So, if this is something that you struggle with, I want you to come and join us, at least for the month of June. But I think you'll want to stay longer once you see how incredible it is inside that membership. Head over to [schoolofselfimage.com/join](http://schoolofselfimage.com/join) and you can read all about the membership.

So, in this episode, I want to just give you a personal account of how a negative body image held me back for years. I haven't written any notes down. This is one of those episodes that's just straight from the heart.

So, one of the things that happened for me – and I see it happening to many women – is that my body image caused me to hide. I hid from the camera. In fact, so many people ask me for before pictures and I don't have that many because I would avoid the camera like the plague. If I saw someone pull a camera out, I was out of there.

I did not want to look at myself. and I certainly didn't want anyone else looking at a picture of me. And so, I hid. I hid from the camera. I hid from opportunities. I hid from people. I'll never forget being in the grocery store and being so ashamed of how I looked and seeing an old friend that I had not seen in a while in the store and I literally ran away.

Really think about that; having so much shame about your body that you deny yourself of connection. But that's what a negative body image will do. And then there was my trying to hide my body with big, baggy clothes. Which is an awful idea. Now I understand, you're not really hiding anything. If anything, you're doing the opposite of what you're trying to do because big baggy clothes often make you look even bigger than what you are.

## How My Body Image Held Me Back

But I had so much body shame and such a negative body image that I would choose clothes that weren't even flattering. But deep down, I wanted to wear different clothes, but I wouldn't allow myself. I was too busy hiding. And here's the thing, you all, life cannot find you if you are hiding from it.

The other thing a negative body image caused me to do was to settle for mediocrity, especially in relationships. If you don't see your body as worthy of love, of pleasure, of praise, you will choose people who are less than what you deserve and less than what you want.

Anyone that will accept you, you'll say yes to. Why? Because you haven't accepted you. When you accept you, you don't need other people to. And that's when you get to raise your standards. But when I look back at my relationships at the time, I was settling because of a negative body image.

The other thing, which is crazy, is that a negative body image tells you that you need to change your body in order for it to be good enough. But you end up taking less care of your body when you have a negative body image. Because how you feel drives what you do. And when you are feeling so much loathing and so much shame, you take actions to reconfirm those thoughts and feelings about yourself.

This is why I cannot tell you all enough how important self-image is. You will always, always create results to confirm what you believe about yourself. So, as long as I was believing I wasn't good enough, I wasn't skinny enough, I wasn't pretty enough, beautiful enough, I subconsciously was sabotaging myself because I was taking actions to continuously reconfirm those beliefs about myself; actions like overeating, neglecting my self-care, lying around on the sofa feeling sorry for myself and hiding from the world.

So many of you reach out to me on Instagram, Facebook, sometimes I get emails, sometimes members within the membership will ask me, "Tonya, how did you lose weight?" And it's like you're asking for some magic formula of what I eat and how I exercise. And what I can tell you all, that is not what you need to be looking at. You need to be looking at, "What is my image of myself?" Especially when it comes to your body.

When you change your self-image, which includes your body image, remember, you will always create results to confirm what you believe about yourself. Which is why, if you want to lose weight, if you want to change your body, I'm totally for us being the best versions of ourselves. But I want us to do it out of a place of love for ourselves, not out of a place of loathing.

Because if you don't do it the right way, you will continuously sabotage yourself. I know this well, my friends. I know about the yo-yo dieting, losing the weight, gaining it back. Why? Because I never changed my self-image. I still looked at my body the same way.

## How My Body Image Held Me Back

And so, if you want to transform your body, upgrading your body image is step number one always. In fact, members within the School of Self-Image know that one of my big focuses this year is on getting in the best shape of my life.

And I was telling them, I do a monthly behind the scenes and in one of them I was telling them that my approach to exercise used to come from body-loathing and trying to beat myself into shape. Which caused me to do it for a while and then give up and go back to how I saw myself.

But this time, it feels so much different. It feels like love. It feels exciting and fun to take care of my body because my body image now is a positive one. I'm not constantly wrestling with myself. In fact, I love and appreciate my body now in a way that I never have before. And I'm also holding a future image of my body. And I'm going to be teaching about this within the membership next month. But I'm holding a future vision of my body and how I want to feel in the next year and the next five years.

And I'm living into that as well. I'm elevating my body image. But you can't do that if you're wrestling with your current one. And so, the best way to change your body is to upgrade your body image.

Another way that my body image held me back was it felt impossible to meet my goals. So, think about it. We have a finite amount of energy. And the saying is true, that where your attention goes, your energy flows. So, if your attention is always on your body in a negative way and that's where you're flowing your energy, guess where your energy isn't flowing. Towards your future and all that you want to create.

So, my personal hell was always saying one day when, "One day when I lose the weight. One day when I think I'm pretty enough. One day when I am more fit and my legs are more toned, then I will do whatever that thing is that I want to do."

So, I just kept delaying my life and delaying reaching my goals because I thought I needed to fix my body first. But really think about that. I couldn't change my body from a negative body image. I just kept reconfirming it over and over again.

So, it literally felt like life was on hold and I was stuck in a hell. And I know many of you know what I'm talking about. I have to coach clients through this all of the time. I had a friend actually call me up not too long ago and she was in tears. And I was like, "What's wrong?" And she was like, "I just can't seem to get my business growing."

And when I talked with her, it became super obvious as to why. She has a very negative body image, so guess what she's doing? She's not showing up for her clients in a way that she would like to. She's avoiding getting pictures taken to get her website up. She's sabotaging herself.

## How My Body Image Held Me Back

And then she tells me, “Well, when I lose the weight, I’m going to go get my headshots.” And I’m like, “What are you doing?” And I challenged her. I’m like, “You’re going to go get those headshots next week.” Guess what she did? She got them done, and she’s beautiful. She looked amazing in those photos.

But the sad part is she doesn’t recognize her own beauty. She’s trapped in a negative body image. And that is causing her not to reach her goals. How many of you are doing that to yourself? Maybe you’re not even aware of it. But if you pay attention, you’ll hear little thoughts like, “Well, when you lose those last 10 pounds, then... then you can start online dating. Then you can get those pictures taken. Then you can buy that dress or book that trip,” whatever it is.

That’s how you know you have a negative body image. And this madness must stop. We have this one precious life. Are we going to spend it obsessing and hating our bodies, the very thing that is carrying us through this ride of life?

The other thing that happened for me when I had a really negative body image is that I lived in constant fear of judgment. I was afraid of what people thought of my body, which caused me not to wear bathing suits, to hide behind baggy clothes, to turn down invitations. And the reality is everyone is going to judge you based on their brains. And I have found that people with negative body images are the ones who are judging other people.

And now, I understand it so clearly, the reason why I was so afraid of judgment is because I was judging myself so harshly and I was projecting that onto everyone else. If I think of myself this way, then obviously everyone else must think of me that way. They must see me the same way.

But people see you through the lens of how they see themselves. What I know is as I’ve cultivated a positive body image, I’m so much less judgmental of other people’s bodies and what they choose to do with it. It’s your business, my friends. I’m over here loving up on myself. I want that for you.

But I also believe, because of everything I’ve been through when I see someone who I can tell is struggling with low self-esteem and a negative body image, I have just so much compassion and empathy for them.

But with the fear of judgment also came the constant comparison to other women’s bodies. It’s crazy. It’s ludicrous. You walk into a place and you look around and you’re like, “Oh, her body is so much better than mine. I wish I had her leg. I wish I had her butt I wish I had her boobs. I wish I had her face. I wish I had her height.” I know what that’s like.

For my birthday this year, I was actually in Miami. And I knew I had arrived when it came to my body image because I was looking around the beaches and literally everyone’s body was straight out of a magazine. And guess what I did? I celebrated them. I’m like, “You get it, girl. So proud of you. And I’m over here loving up on my 45-year-old body.” There’s so much

## How My Body Image Held Me Back

freedom in that; when you can go and be around other people of all shapes and sizes and you're just in love with yourself.

That made me think of a time years ago, I was on the beaches of Saint Tropez in the south of France. It was in August. And I had worked on my body image some, but I still had a lot of insecurities about my stretch marks and my caesarean and how my belly pooches over it and all the things that we can obsess about.

And I looked around at women fully liberate din their bodies. I saw like a 75-year-old just rocking it. I saw this one woman just making out with her partner. I saw a mother of two kids flaunting a bikini having the time of her life with her children.

Now, a lot of us think, when you hear a story like that, they must have looked amazing. Their bodies must have been perfect. Because we think the only way to feel such liberation and have so much joy in our bodies is that it has to be a certain size.

But what I can tell you is that they were all shapes and sizes. They had cellulite. The 75-year-old, her boobies were drooping a little bit. It did not matter because they had a positive body image.

Now, I say that without having talked to them. But just based on how they were showing up and celebrating their bodies, I had to assume that about them. And I came home and I was like, "I want that. I want to feel that liberated and excited to inhabit this one body I've been blessed with." And that's been my work over the years.

Which leads me to the next point. The other thing that a negative body image costs you are memories. I think about the years that my daughter wanted me to get in the pool with her. And I was so afraid of someone seeing my backside I wouldn't get in the pool. I would just lay there with a towel over me or wrapped up in a sarong.

I regret that so much. I wish I had that time back where I could have gotten in the pool and played with her and enjoyed every morsel of those moments. Or what about the times that I was on a diet and I got invited to a party, and because I didn't trust myself around food, I didn't go.

Or what about the times that I said no to sex with my partner because I was so afraid to be seen. I was so afraid of judgment. Think about all of the pleasure I denied myself and all of the memories that that cost me. It breaks my heart for my past self. But I'm also excited for my future self and the woman that I've become because of all of those things, and the fact that I can pass the wisdom down to other women so that they don't have to live a life shackled to a negative body image.

## How My Body Image Held Me Back

Let me tell you something. If I can change my thoughts about my body, you can too. And it really is the secret to feeling truly liberated. Because if you think about it, we experience life through our bodies. The sensations that we have every single day, if you're so obsessed and you're full of self-loathing over your body, just think about all of the things that you're denying yourself and what you're cutting yourself off from.

Again, this madness must stop. I am a mother of a 23-year-old. I just had a beautiful nine-year-old come into my life. I have a sister-in-law, I have nieces, I have friends and their daughters. I cannot sit around and watch women one more day beat themselves up and not see the beauty that is within them.

I'm on a mission, y'all. I want to help women transform their body images. Don't let it hold you back. There is so much life to be lived, so much pleasure to be experienced, so many dreams waiting for you to show up for them. Do not let your thoughts about your body hold you back any longer.

If you want to transform your body image, come join us within the School of Self-Image for June. It's going to be fun. I'm sharing all the things of what I have personally done to change my body image, which crazily enough was the secret after all to creating a happy and healthy body where I am truly a woman who feels comfortable and good in her own skin.

And what I have discovered is that if a negative body image can hold you back, changing it will propel you forward. So, listen, if this is work you know that you're being called to do, I would love to support you. We're going to be focused on this for the entire month of June within the School of Self-Image, so head over to [schoolofselfimage.com/join](http://schoolofselfimage.com/join) and I cannot wait to see you inside.

And of course, I will see you in next week's episode. Cheers.

Hey, have you grabbed your free copy of the School of Self-Image Manifesto? If not, what in the world? Head over to [schoolofselfimage.com/manifesto](http://schoolofselfimage.com/manifesto) and get a copy that teaches you how to think and show up in the areas of mindset, style, and surroundings so that you can transform your self-image.