

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT



EPISODE 249

On Being High Maintenance

SCHOOL OF
SELF-IMAGE

SCHOOLOFSELFIMAGE.COM

On Being High Maintenance

Someone recently called me high maintenance. So, I decided to devote an entire episode to the topic and why I am proud of such a title.

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

Well hello, my beautiful friends. How are you? I am doing great and it's been a crazy time for me. My goodness. However, one of the things I tell my clients, I'm like, "Listen, no matter what, no matter the goals you achieve, no matter all of the milestones that you have, you're still going to be human."

And I think one of the mistakes we make is thinking that there's going to be a day where we don't have craziness, thinking that there's a day when all of our problems are going to go away and we're going to be happy and there's going to be rainbows and unicorns and puppies and daisies and diamonds and designer purses, whatever it is that you see in your future.

And so, when that day doesn't come – because it will never come in this human experience – we often feel disappointed and we feel like something's gone wrong. And I just want to let you all know, no matter what you see on my Instagram or maybe other people that you follow and you have this story in your brain that everyone else's lives are trouble-free and people have it all figured out and that people are successful and maybe you're thinking that you're not, let me just tell you all this.

We're also human. And I want to always be transparent and open about my experience so that you know deep down that you do not have to be perfect. You do not have to have it all together. You don't have to have all the answers. You don't need to know the how in order to live an extraordinary life.

This isn't even the topic for today's podcast. But I just want to throw it out there. I'm feeling this intuitive hunch that someone listening to this needs to know this. you know, within the School of Self-Image, we are always thinking about our futures and we are doing the work to be a match for the things that we want, for our goals, for how we want to see ourselves, how we want to feel.

And at the same time, what I tell women, I'm like, "Listen, you have to know this. Even in doing all of this work, even in reaching your goals, life is always going to be about contrast." And I don't want any of you going into this process thinking that, "Oh, if I do all this work, I'm going to reach the glory land. I'm going to reach the promise land where everything's okay."

There may be moments in your life where you feel like it's okay for a bit. But just because of the nature of life and the cycle of change, eventually we're going to be thrown out of the promise land and we have to do it all over again. We have to reinvent ourselves. We have to set new goals. We have to deal with challenges and obstacles.

On Being High Maintenance

The difference is, when you learn the work and you apply the work that I teach within the school, the way you handle it is so much different. You learn to relax in the change. You learn to embrace it. You learn to not fight it. And that's where you get all of your power back.

Okay, now that that little Tonya rant is over, let's talk about being a high maintenance woman, something I was actually accused of being recently. Can you believe that? The audacity. It's 100% true. I am a high maintenance woman.

And let me give you a little pro tip, which again is off topic from what we're talking about, but I think you'll like it. Whenever someone calls you something and there's even the tiniest bit of truth in it, just agree with them. I am telling you, nothing will defuse it more than you being like, "Yeah, you're 100% right."

I do this all of the time. It's one of my little special secret tactics to just throwing people off-guard. Because people expect you to fight back, to defend yourself. But when you're solid in who you are, you'll find that you don't need to defend. Unless someone's just blatantly calling you something that you cannot agree with.

But for the most part, there's a little bit of truth in everything. So, when this person said to me, "You're so high-maintenance," as if it were a terrible thing, I was like, "Yeah, 100%." But I want to talk about it. And here's why.

I spent years priding myself on being a low maintenance woman, and it didn't serve me at all. But I had a fear of being high maintenance because it's often associated with being a woman who is self-obsessed, who spends a lot of time on her looks, who maybe is a gold digger, who maybe is demanding a great deal of attention or money or effort.

And most of us don't want to be seen like that. In fact, think about it, for you, what comes to mind when you think of a high maintenance woman? Is it a positive association or a negative one?

But I want us to redefine what it means to be high maintenance. Because as I was saying, I was scared of it because it implied all of the things I didn't want to be. In fact, do you all remember the Parent Trap with Lindsay Lohan? And if you remember, in that movie, her stepmother was what we would often associate with being a high maintenance woman.

And do you remember the camping trip that they took her on to scare her off? I never wanted to be seen that way. I didn't want to be seen as that needy woman. I didn't want to be seen as that woman who thinks she's better than or she is so highfalutin, as we call it in the South.

And so, because I didn't want to see myself like that, self-image, I took on the image of a low maintenance woman. I wanted to be the woman who was giving and caring and self-sacrificing. You all know the woman I'm talking about. In fact, many of you listening are her.

On Being High Maintenance

And so, for me, being low maintenance was my badge of honor, knowing that people were thinking, “That Tonya, she doesn’t need much. She’s so selfless. She’s such a good girl. She’d give you the shirt off her back. She’s so easy to be around.”

I mean, these seem like fantastic qualities, don’t they? But the truth is, when you think about it, do you want to be a woman that doesn’t need much, that doesn’t ask for much, that settles? Do you want to be a woman that ignores herself to give to everyone else? Do you want to be a woman that doesn’t make a fuss, who’s always quiet, who’s always the good girl?

Do you want to be the woman that would give you the shirt off her back, even if it means her walking around naked and exposed? Do you want to be the woman who’s so easy to be around because she lets everyone overstep her own boundaries? No. We don’t.

And that is exactly why I decided to be a high maintenance woman. Because when I was a low maintenance one, those were the years where my self-care was minimal, my weight fluctuated, and I was miserable.

I made a list for you all of some of the things I didn’t allow myself to do when I was a low maintenance woman. And this is just a small sampling of the many things I denied myself, and I highly recommend you do this as well. If you see yourself as a low maintenance woman, go deeper and look at what you’re denying yourself as a result of that label.

Here you go. I did not allow myself to buy organic ingredients, organic vegetables, “I don’t need that. I don’t need to spend that kind of money on myself. I can just eat the regular stuff.” Sound familiar? Another thing that I would often do, or not do, is send a meal back, even though it was prepared wrong, may even have been the wrong thing, I didn’t even order that. But I didn’t want to cause a fuss. I didn’t want to inconvenience people. And so, I would just tolerate eating steaks that weren’t cooked to my liking or maybe even the wrong thing. Because I was low maintenance.

I did not dare allow myself to go into a designer store like Louis Vuitton or Chanel, because low maintenance women don’t go into stores like that. They don’t need designer handbags. They don’t need designer anything. They can just go to Walmart and get their bag, which is what I did.

And now, listen, before any of you get all in a tizzy, there’s nothing wrong with a Walmart bag, if that’s what you truly want. Maybe that’s what you value. Maybe you don’t value designer handbags. Maybe that’s not something you’re interested in. If that’s the case, cool. But if it’s something you truly want but you’re not allowing yourself to have it because you want to see yourself as low maintenance, that is the problem, my friends.

Denying your desires is never going to lead to the life that I know that you deeply, deeply want. And so, you’re going to have to heal these internal conflicts that you have. You’re either going

On Being High Maintenance

to have to decide to get rid of desires and be low maintenance, which I would never encourage. Or to decide that you are a high maintenance woman. And we're going to talk more about that in a moment.

But here are some other things that I didn't allow myself to do. Take a nap, "I've got to go save the world. I don't have time to rest. I don't have time to take care of myself. I don't have time to rejuvenate. People need me. I need to be the heroine." So, I exhausted myself.

Buy myself flowers. That was ridiculous, "I need to save money. I need to be practical. I need to be low maintenance. Low maintenance women don't buy themselves flowers." What about book a massage or facial? Never. I don't think I had my first massage or facial until I was in my late 20s, number one, and then it was so awkward to do that for myself because it's not something I saw the women in my family do. I didn't see a lot of women around me doing it at that time. And so, I thought something was wrong with me that I actually wanted this.

I had a lot of guilt and shame around it. Fortunately I don't any longer. I don't want you to either. But I had to work through a lot of limiting beliefs and negative emotions around even having a regular massage. Because I spent so many years of my life being low maintenance and thinking that was a good thing.

What about enjoy being honored and appreciated? That is misery for a low maintenance woman. She doesn't want the attention. She doesn't want to be noticed. She wants to be the quiet good girl. And so, I would avoid attention like the plague. It was so uncomfortable.

And I really think part of my weight issue was that. I didn't want the extra attention. And in my crazy brain, I thought extra flesh would guard me from that. Ironically, it did the opposite. It caused people to notice me even more. Which was horrific for me.

I also didn't waste time, quote unquote, on skincare and makeup, "Come on, it's just skin and makeup. Who cares? It doesn't matter." These are the things that I told myself. But I won't deny, when I looked in the mirror and saw my face and how it obviously was not being cared for properly and secretly envying the women who I saw that took the time to put makeup on their face, those things were wakeup calls for me, for me to actually look at and investigate why I was denying myself of something that would actually good.

And then the other thing on my list that I didn't allow myself to do when I was low maintenance was to tell people to back the hell off, meaning having boundaries. I would just let people run all over me because again, I didn't want to inconvenience anyone. I am a people pleaser. So, my job was to please everyone at my own expense.

So, fast forward to today. I am now called, by some people, high maintenance. And it's not like I woke up one day and decided to be a high maintenance woman. But what I did do is I started to

On Being High Maintenance

make a series of decisions that affirmed what I wanted to believe about myself. Which was I am a woman who is worthy.

So, for this episode, I actually went to the Googles and looked up what high maintenance means. And here are a couple of the definitions that I saw, “Needing a lot of care and attention to remain in good condition.” I love that one. Also, “A woman who places exceptionally high standards.”

So, to me, low maintenance was really code for low self-worth. Low maintenance also meant having low standards. On the other spectrum, high maintenance means having a sense of self-worth, knowing that you deserve the attention and the care to keep yourself in the best condition. It also means having high standards for what you expect of yourself to what you expect from your life.

Because as I’ve said it before, you do not get what you want in life. You get what you tolerate. And oftentimes, when we’re being low maintenance women, guess what we’re doing? We’re tolerating a lot of things that we don’t want. And as a result, we keep getting more things that we don’t want.

But then, our society really rewards low maintenance things, so it makes sense that we would do this. We talk about low maintenance homes and low maintenance cars. These are things that don’t really need too much care and attention. But we’re not a home and we’re not a car. We are human beings.

More specifically, for the majority of people listening to this podcast, we are women. We are women with desires. We are women with wants. We are women who do require care and attention.

Think about the things we need. We need sunshine and water and rest and love and beauty, self-care, good food, laughter, connection. And then think about the things we want on top of our basic needs. In fact, I want you to ask yourself two things right now; what do I need? And what do I want? See what comes up for you.

And are you giving it to yourself? Are you making room for that in your life? Or do you pride yourself on being so low maintenance that it’s costing you an extraordinary life? If so, it’s got to stop, especially under my watch.

I want you to see yourself as a Ferrari. Ferraris are expensive to maintain. The oil changes, I don’t even know what they cost, but I’ve heard they’re very expensive. To get them worked on costs a lot of money. The gas that you need to put into a Ferrari is more expensive. The old that you use in a Ferrari, way more expensive.

On Being High Maintenance

I love that I'm talking like I know so much about cars. But this is just what I've heard through the grapevine. It's very expensive to maintain a Ferrari. But she's a Ferrari. She's hit. She's gorgeous to look at. She runs exceptionally well. She's fast. She's rare. She's exotic. And that's how I want us to see ourselves as women. Not a reliable Chevy. It's a big difference.

Now, you may be thinking, "But Tonya, what if I want to be a reliable Chevy?" And that's great. But I have a feeling that the majority of women that I'm talking to in my community, that's not what our soul's aspiration is. We didn't come here to be ordinary. We didn't come here to be practical.

We came here to experience the wonder and the awe of living an extraordinary life. And we're never going to have that kind of life by being low maintenance. But I get as to why this is confusing to women. Because in our society, if you take amazing care of yourself, you're called high maintenance and you're ridiculed, "She cares too much about her looks. She spends way too much money on herself," yada-yada.

However, if you don't do that, you're called lazy and you're ridiculed. So, as women, we must decide how we want to see ourselves and how we want to treat ourselves as a result. We must decide what our standards are for ourselves. And this is a lot of the work that we do within the School of Self-Image.

In fact, there's one whole class where women write out their personal standards. And the work is to live into them. But that's what a woman who is high maintenance does. She decides for herself what her personal standards are. But you also need to decide when you feel best about yourself and what you need in order to curate your life around that.

And here's what y'all must know. When you start to make high maintenance choices like putting up boundaries, taking time to take care of yourself, investing in yourself, there are going to be people that have lost of opinions about your choices. Let them have their opinion.

Because do you know whose opinion really counts? Yours. High maintenance women know this. You can't please everyone. And trying to do so is a low maintenance trick.

People have a lot of thoughts about me and how I live my life. I've had people make comments on how much money I've spent on a handbag. I have people that have made comments on me getting my pedicures and my facials and my manicures and my eyelash extensions, which by the way I absolutely love.

And they get to have their opinion. I know for me that my years of being low maintenance were the years that I struggled the most. However, when I started to make deliberate choices that were considered by some high maintenance, that is actually when my life got so much better.

On Being High Maintenance

I was happier, I was being more intentional, I was taking care of myself, I was setting boundaries, and yes, I was also starting to take care of my beauty in a way that I'd never done before. Even things like eyelash extensions and going to get my facials, that's just a small part of it.

Being high maintenance is not just about beauty. And I think this is why many women resist being high maintenance. Because we associate the term with being someone who's vain, who's so obsessed with their looks. But I also think there's nothing wrong with saying, "I do care for how I look."

I want to be someone who makes decisions that keep me in great condition. I have no shame in saying that. But high maintenance to me is about something so much bigger. It's taking care of yourself emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

And ladies, let me just say this real quick. Because for those of you who are single, there's a big fear around being high maintenance in a man's eye. We're afraid that if we're too high maintenance, we're going to scare off men. So, I just want to say a couple of things about this.

Become a woman that doesn't expect a man to do these things for you. Learn to take care of many of your own needs. Now, that is not to say that you don't have requests and you don't have desires from other people, especially the people that you're dating. And this is something that I've had to coach women around because they were confused. They were like, "But we shouldn't have needs? We should just take care of our own needs."

I'm all about being aligned, which means think about the person you want to see yourself with and think about how you would feel if you were with that person, and then do the work on feeling that way now.

So, if you think about it, you're going to be feeling loved. You're going to be feeling relaxed. Maybe you're feeling confident. Maybe you're feeling at ease. A lot of times, we mess this up because we want the other person to give us that, and so we're not a match for it.

You have to learn how to feel those emotions now in order to attract that into your life. And I'm also about women being honest about what they want. Having your desires but not wanting it from one particular person. Because if you're trying to get it from someone who's unwilling to give it to you, you're going to be perpetually frustrated.

So as a high maintenance woman, learn to maintain yourself and to create your feelings on purpose so that you can be a match for that of which you deeply, deeply want. And the other thing I just want to say is if you attract a man into your life who thinks you are high maintenance, this is a problem.

On Being High Maintenance

This is most likely a man who does not want to do the work that it's going to require to have a woman of your caliber in his life. He wants the easy route. He wants to be a lazy partner. He wants to not have to work that hard. And you just have to ask yourself, is that what you want? Do you want to be with a man who wants to drive a Chevy because it's not going to require that much from him?

Or do you want to be with a man who is willing to put in the maintenance to drive that Ferrari because he knows it's rare and he knows it's going to be a better experience for him?

Now, there are people that like Chevys, who want to be with a Chevy, and who want to be a Chevy, right? But then there are people who want to be a Ferrari and they want to be with a Ferrari. And you just have to decide which one you are. And I have a feeling everyone listening to this doesn't want to be a Chevy. You want more out of your life. You want more from the people around you.

This means you must embrace being high maintenance, and letting go of the people around you who expect you not to maintain yourself with high regard, with care, with love, with attention. The people always wanting you to sacrifice for their good, for their gain.

This is a hard transition to make, you all. I get it. It took me years of making intentional choices to weed out that noise and that clutter in my life. And even now there are people that slip into my life and call me high maintenance. And I admit how right they are and how I'm proud of it and how I can't imagine a life where I was anything other than that.

And that either shuts them up and they leave, or they become curious and they want to know more because they're willing to have their minds changed around the term. So, you get to decide for yourself. Do you want to be low maintenance or do you want to provide yourself with the care and attention that you need to remain in the best condition possible, also known as high maintenance?

It's your choice. I hope you choose the latter, my friends. Have a gorgeous week and 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 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.