

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT



EPISODE 264

My Gift to You (It Will Change Your Life)

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My Gift to You (It Will Change Your Life)

I have a special gift for you. But now, listen, before I give it to you, I want you to promise me that you are going to take it, you are going to practice it, and you are going to use it to change your life. Do we have a deal? Good. Let's dive in.

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

Hello, my friends, and happy, happy holidays. I absolutely love this time of the year. I have had such a stress-free and effortless holiday. It's been simple. I've only purchased a few gifts. And I have not done anything that I did not want to do, unlike all of those years of trying to get the Christmas cards out on time because everybody else did it, and trying to host extravagant dinner parties and putting up crazy Christmas decorations.

I've kept it so simple this year. I did go out to dinner with some dear friends at this beautiful restaurant in Boulder. That was super fun. And I'm heading up to my dear friend Brooke's house to celebrate the holidays with her and her family. But other than that, it's just been super simple.

And in that simplicity, I've had so much time to think. And one of the things that I've been thinking a lot about is you and this community. And I asked myself this question; if I could give you any gift, what would it be?

And I had a lot of really good answers. But today, I want to give you a very special gift that will change your life in the most extraordinary ways. But here's the deal. You have to make me a promise. When I give you this gift, you are going to use it, you are going to practice it, and you are going to apply it to your life. Do we have a deal? Okay. Do you want to know what your gift is?

I want to give you the gift of self-validation. Now, I looked up the definition for you because I know what it means to me to validate myself. But here's the definition from Merriam Webster, "The feeling of having recognized, confirmed, or established one's own worthiness or legitimacy."

One of the things that I coach a lot around is women's need to be approved of, to be validated, to be assured. And when you get it, it feels great. But what happens when you're not getting it? What do you make that mean about you?

If you're someone who hasn't practiced self-validation, you most likely make it mean that you're not good enough, that you're not worthy, that you're not deserving. And when you walk around the world in your life with those belief systems, it causes you to play small and not to create the results that you want to create.

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I was coaching my friend recently. She came to me specifically and she said, “I really need your help. I need you to coach me through this.” So, she is starting her business. And because she hasn’t created the result yet, because she doesn’t have the external validation, she is using that against herself.

She said to me, “But what if I’m not good at this? What if no one likes what I have to say or what value I want to put out in the world?” And I told her, I’m like, “Listen, I would never think like that.”

I remember early on, you all, I was a baby coach, just starting my business. And I had a lot of doubt, a lot of fear, a lot of anxiety. But I just kept believing that I was a good coach. I practiced validating myself. Now, some people would come to me, and they didn’t like my coaching style. I wasn’t their flavor. But other people came to me, and they did.

Now, think about it this way. If I was looking outside of me for validation, I would be getting very mixed messages. I would be thinking, “Am I good or am I not? Some people like me. Some people hate me.” And that kind of split energy would have kept me spinning.

I just decided that I was a good coach, and I was excited to share my gifts with the world. And isn’t that a beautiful thing, that you get to decide what you think about yourself? But a lot of y’all are looking outside of you at everybody else’s opinion and wanting them to validate you.

Chances are, they’re probably not even validating themselves. How in the world are they going to validate you? People project onto you who they are. People project onto you their beliefs. And we are living in a world with so many different beliefs, so many different opinions. And so, it becomes a messy business when you’re needing these people to validate you.

I was coaching a woman recently who was feeling really frustrated and underappreciated because her boss was not giving her accolades. So, I asked her, “How often do you appreciate yourself? How often do you pat yourself on the back? How often do you recognize yourself?” And she answered, “Never.”

So, you want your boss to do something for you that you’re not even doing for yourself. And here’s the beautiful thing. When you start recognizing and appreciating and confirming your own value and worthiness and legitimacy, you don’t need it from other people.

Now, if they offer it to you, it’s like a cherry on top. But you’ve cut out the middleman. You’ve cut out the need for someone else to behave in a certain way in order for you to feel good about yourself.

I think about me. I don’t have a boss over me. I am my own boss. Which in some ways, is a great thing. In fact, in most ways, I find it to be where I feel safest. But I have to give myself my own accolades. I have to praise myself.

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I don't have someone I can go and sit in front of to give me a review of the year and say, "Hey, good job." Now, fortunately, I have an amazing team around me, and they sometimes tell me, "Hey, good job." But I can't depend on them to do that because what if they don't? What if, one year, they just decide, "You know what? We're not going to tell Tonya anything good that she's doing." Not that they would ever do that.

If I needed that in order to feel valuable and worthy and good enough and I wasn't getting it, I wouldn't be doing this podcast right now for you. I'd be in a hole somewhere feeling sorry for myself, that no one appreciates me, that no one loves me. I get to appreciate me. I get to love me. And then, I get to share that energy with the world.

Some of you may know that I am in a relationship. I am deeply in love with this man. And him giving me a lot of accolades isn't who he is. Now, I know he loves me. I know he appreciates me. But it's just not the way he operates in the world.

If I needed him to validate me and tell me I'm beautiful and to tell me how amazing I am and I wasn't getting it from him, imagine the drama that I would cause with him, and then I would deny myself of the experience of just loving him and enjoying him and appreciating him.

And here's the crazy thing, you all. What I have noticed is, by me not needing it – and listen, in all transparency, I used to need it. It was like crack cocaine to me. Not that I've ever done crack. But I needed that validation. And when I got it, I had my fix. And when I didn't have it, I had major withdrawals.

And like I said earlier, when you're getting it, it feels amazing. But if you need it and you don't have it, and then it's taken from you, you will do anything to get it. You will do some crazy things to get that attention, to get that acknowledgment, to get that appreciation.

But in this relationship, I've really worked on my self-image to the point I really don't need it. I am constantly validating myself every single day. And so, what I've noticed with him – we haven't actually talked about this. I want to have this discussion with him, if he's been around women who needed that from him. And because oftentimes, we push someone to give something they're not willing to give, it pushes them further and further away.

But because I just enjoy myself in his presence and have a good time and validate myself, I don't need it from him, I've noticed that he's starting to give it to me. It's really strange, and it's a beautiful thing. I enjoy it. But I also know, I don't need it.

This is a lot of the work I've been doing on myself this year. I coach on this so much. I see so many of my clients, the members of the School of Self-Image, they'll come to me, and they'll want to go out and create something. But they want someone to give them permission. They want someone to tell them that they're good enough. They want someone to tell them that they are worthy.

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And of course, I am there to remind them of that truth. But more than anything, I want them to be reminding themselves of that truth. Because what happens one day when you're at work and you have put your heart into a project and no one says anything to you, no one says, "Good job," no one says, "Wow, I really appreciate you," and I'm not there, you don't have a coach there or a mentor there to support you in that moment, I want you to remember this; you get to give yourself all of those things.

Now, as I was saying earlier, it's normal to want validation from others. We want our parents' approval. We want our spouse's approval, our partner's approval, our boss's approval, our kids' approval, our friends' approval. But when you need it to feel good, when you rely on it to feel good, it leads to anxiety and feelings of depression.

I see this a lot on social media. I see this with my daughter and her friends and even some of my peers. They'll post something on social media and then they'll sit by the phone waiting to see how many likes they get, what the comments are. And if it doesn't fit their expectation, they start to doubt themselves, "What's wrong with me? Did I say something wrong? Is the picture bad? Is no one interested in what I have to say?"

We even start to look out to strangers for approval, people who have never really met us in person or people that we barely know, and we start seeking approval from them. And then, we question our worth if we don't get the response that we want.

When I post something on social media, I'll go in and check my comments or my team. But I don't care how many likes I get. I really don't. I used to. I used to be in that trap, years ago. But now, because I've worked so much on this area of my life, I really don't care.

Most of the time, I don't even look at it. I have a team that supports me around social media. I don't want my validation, my worth to come from an app on my phone. In fact, I don't want it to come from anywhere outside of me because then I become needy. I become desperate.

And when we are needy and desperate, as I was saying earlier, we act a fool. God, I remember in my 20s in relationships, if a man was not telling me what I wanted to hear, if he was not validating me, I would literally lose my mind. I would cry. And then, I would come after him. Like, "Hey tell me what I want you to tell me so that I can feel better."

And then sometimes, they would. And then, all of a sudden, I'd have a little bit of relief. But inevitably, we'd go through that dance again. And one day, I just decided, I didn't want to do that dance anymore. It was exhausting. And so, I had to give myself the gift that I want to give you today; the gift of self-validation.

When we rely on others to validate us, to make us feel good, basically what we are doing is we are handing over our worth to them. We're like, "Here, tell me if you think I'm worthy or not." Now, I want you to hear this. If you handed me your worth, I would tell you how amazingly

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worthy you are, what an extraordinary person you are. Why? Because of my brain and how I see people.

But if you hand your worth to someone who doesn't see their own worth, who has their own limitations and their own doubts and their own stuff that they're working through, chances are, they're not going to give that back to you. Or it may just be that that's not their thing. That's not how they express their love and appreciation.

They may like to do things for you. They may like to take out the trash or they may like to take you to dinner. But they may not tell you the things that you want to hear to make you feel worthy.

And so, to take back your power, don't hand that over to someone. When you rely on other people to dictate your worth and to validate you, what ends up happening is you stop trusting yourself and your own thoughts and your feelings and your judgments. You start to assume that everybody else knows more than you do about you.

You'll ask people, "Do you think this is good? Do you think this is a good idea? Do you think I can do it? Do you think I should do this or that?" And everybody outside of you is going to have a different opinion. And so, you're going to be perpetually confused and you're not going to take the action that you need to take in your life to create the results that you want to create.

I used to do this in the beginning of my business because I didn't have the experience yet, I didn't have the results yet, I didn't quite trust myself. And so, I would ask 10, 20 different people what they thought I should do. Should I name it this or that? Should I do this color or that color? Stuff that really doesn't even matter because it's all about energy, right?

I should have been working on my energy and not worrying about naming conventions or fonts or colors. But every time I would ask someone else's opinion, what I was doing was chipping away at the relationship with myself. I just don't do that anymore.

I decide what I'm going to do, and then, I may ask for feedback, ideas. Maybe I'm having an obstacle that I'm trying to overcome and I'm part of a mastermind full of incredible women, and I'll bring it to the table. I'm like, "This is what I want to do. This is my obstacle right now. Either coach me on my brain or give me some ideas that I can work through."

But I don't ask people what I should do with my life and my business. I decide. And this has become even stronger, I will say, in the last year; learning to trust myself, learning to believe in myself, learning to validate myself. And who knows more about what I should do than me?

Who knows more about what you should do than you? But if you are not practicing self-validation, chances are you're handing all of your power over to someone else.

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Listen, again, external validation is fun, it's great. But it should never replace self-validation. It should be an addition, not a replacement. Do your work to validate yourself so that you don't need it from other people. And then, when it comes along, you can enjoy it. It's delightful. But you know you've got your own back.

So, I want to give you some things to practice, to put this into action so that you can feel the results of it. The first thing I recommend all of you do is celebrate you every single day. If you keep a gratitude journal, you need to be at the top of that.

What are you grateful for, for yourself? What are you proud of? What do you want to celebrate about you? Give yourself credit every single day. Now in the beginning, this is going to feel very odd because our brain can always go to all of the things that we think we didn't do well and right. And then, it wants to beat ourselves up over it.

But that's just a habit. That's just you not being intentional with your brain. I want you to begin to practice a new pathway in your brain, one that automatically goes to celebrating yourself, giving yourself credit, acknowledging yourself.

The other thing I want you to practice doing is stop asking people about what you should do. Again, this makes other people the expert of you. And no one can be the expert of you but you. I want you to learn, deciding for yourself, what do you need? What do you want? What feels true to you?

Practice deciding for yourself. Don't give that power over to other people. Now, once you've made your decision, get support in helping you break through any limitations, anything that might be stopping you from following through on that decision. I'm all for it.

But I never tell a client what they should do because I don't want them to give me that power. I want to support them in trusting themselves enough, validating themselves, and building an incredible relationship with themselves.

So, if I swoop in and save the day, I've taken something from them that will stop their growth. I've disabled them even more. I always support my clients in deciding for themselves and trusting their decisions. So, stop asking everybody else what you should do. Decide and then get support.

The other thing that's been really helpful for me, when I've wanted that validation, is before seeking it, ask yourself this; what do I hope that person tells me? I've noticed for myself, when I've asked this, one of two things will come up.

I'll want them to tell me something I already know. You all know what I'm talking about. For example, maybe they might say, "Yes, you should leave that relationship." I already knew that. I just needed them to confirm it. I needed them to validate my own knowing.

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Or the other thing I may want from them is for them to tell me I'm okay, that I'm not a bad person, that I'm good enough, that I'm worthy. I want them to see the best in me and to believe in me. Then the work is whatever you want that person to say to you. You get to give that to yourself. You get to remind yourself that you're good enough, that you're an amazing woman, or man, if you're listening.

You get to believe in your decision. You get to trust yourself. You get to give yourself all of the things that you're wanting that other person to give you. Do that work.

Another approach that's been super helpful for me is to ask myself this, "What would I tell my best friend right now?" And then, I tell it to myself. So, if my best friend brought me the same problem that I'm wanting to bring to the world to get validation or permission, I'll ask myself, if my best friend brought me this, what would I tell her? And then, I tell it to myself.

Lastly – and this is a really powerful one that I offer my clients often because, unfortunately many of us didn't grow up with the love and the support and the kindness and the words of affirmation that we needed. And so, as a result, many of us are very hypercritical of ourselves and don't know how to love ourselves because it was never exemplified during our childhood.

But now that we are full-blown adults, we get to parent ourselves. So, it's being the loving mother to yourself, or the loving father to yourself that maybe you never had. What would you want your mom to say to you? What would you want your father to say to you? What would your mom or dad offer you right now in this moment? And then, you get to parent yourself as an adult. You get to give that to yourself.

Sometimes, I love to look at pictures of me when I was a little girl and I had big buck teeth, they called it. I had big teeth. My two front teeth were so huge because my face had not grown into them yet.

And I remember that little girl had experienced some trauma and she felt unseen, and she felt scared to be seen. And seeing how that's played out in my adulthood, I had to literally go back and talk to that little version, that little girl version of me and remind myself, "Listen, I've got your back now. I'm an adult over here. I've got you. And I love you. And I want the best for you. It's safe. No harm is going to come to you. I've got your back.

And by parenting myself in that way, it's led to me validating myself. Everything that we're wanting from the outside world, we can give to ourselves. And this is part of evolving your self-image. How do you want to see yourself? I'm sure you don't want to see yourself as someone that's needy and desperate for external validation. Because we know the pain that creates, when that expectation is not met.

So, therefore, we have to practice it now. And the more you practice it, the more you get off of that drug of external validation. You're going to start to find peace and you're going to start to

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show up in better and better ways. You're going to tell yourself you're good enough. You're going to tell yourself, "If you fail, I got you. It's part of the process. You're still amazing and worthy and I'm proud of you for going after it. I'm proud of you for believing in yourself. Let's keep going."

When people come along and they may say to you, "I don't like you. I don't like what you're putting out there," you're going to be like, "Well, too bad. You're missing out because the party is within me. You should hang out with me more often."

You're going to start to have this amazing relationship with yourself that no one else can ever give you. And no one can take that away. People can come and go out of your life, but you are with you for always. Why not focus on being that person for yourself, validating yourself, giving yourself what you need so you're not dependent on it from other people.

Now, again, I'm not saying that wanting external validation is wrong. But when it starts to cause you pain and suffering and anxiety and you try to replace your own self-validation with that, that's when it starts causing problems in your life. We all want to be loved. We all enjoy being appreciated. We all enjoy the accolades and the recognition because we're human.

But I don't want you to need it. Because you don't need it to live an extraordinary life. I'm proof of that. Because of the work that I've chosen to do in making my voice and face public, my thoughts and ideas are out there for the whole world to see and to judge, I receive a lot of feedback. Some – most actually – is very favorable and I do appreciate it. It feels good.

But if I needed that, then I would be devastated when the not-so-good comments come my way. There are people out there who wish that I would never show my face or share my thoughts and ideas in public ever again. Now, imagine if I looked to the world to tell me my worth, to validate me. I would be in trouble.

I probably wouldn't be recording this episode right now because their opinion would cause me to start to doubt my own and to run the story of I'm not good enough, I shouldn't be doing this, and then I start asking everybody else their opinion, "Do you think I'm doing the right thing? Tell me that I'm good. Tell me that I'm okay."

I just started skipping all of that. I get to decide what I believe about myself. I get to pat myself on the back. I get to trust myself. I get to make decisions for my life and my business. That is a gift that I get to give myself and let everybody else off of the hook. And that is the gift I want you to give yourself.

If you did this over the next year, you would blow your mind with what you're able to create and who you become as a result of this work. I want to give you the gift of self-validation. Practice it every single day. And don't judge yourself when you're wanting validation. It's normal.

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But then, work through the exercises that I just gave you. What do you want that person to give you? Practice giving it to yourself. Be that parent to yourself. Be that best friend. And the result of this, well more confidence. You will take inspired action. You will create better results. But the best result is the relationship that you will have with yourself. Because you will know that you have always had what you needed. And now you know that you just get to give it to yourself.

Happy, happy holidays, my friends. I can't wait to 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.