

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT



EPISODE 265

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# My 5 Takeaways from 2021

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## My 5 Takeaways from 2021

Would you like to trade in boring resolutions and do something different to start off your New Year? Something fun and life-changing? If so, I would love to invite you to join me for my popular workshop called Live Like an Editor.

This is a five-day live experience where you will receive daily classes, daily coaching from me, and daily inspiration so that you can learn how to create your life one edit at a time.

Jamie, a participant in the last workshop sent me a message and she said, 'I had no idea that I could change my life in five days. This workshop is unlike anything I've ever done before.' I cannot wait to get a message from you like the one I got from Jamie. So, all you need to do is head to [schoolofselfimage.com/workshop](https://schoolofselfimage.com/workshop) and join us. Let's start 2022 out with confidence, clarity, and of course, in style. I can't wait to see you in the workshop.

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

What in the world? This is going to be my last podcast episode of 2021. I cannot believe that we are about to welcome in a new year. I don't know about y'all, but I am excited. I love a new year. It feels like a fresh start, new possibilities, a reset. I'm super excited for a new year.

But one of the things that I love to do before I ring in the new year is to spend some time thinking about the current year and who I've become, what I achieved, just to really relish in what has been.

I encourage you all to do the same. Before we rush into a new year, setting our goals and picking our word of the year, let's just take a pause, take a breath, and celebrate our year, look for the good in it. Look for what went well and right. And also, at the same time, look at what you wish could have been better so that you can take all of that data into the new year.

So, that's what I've been doing. I actually spent about three hours yesterday just brain-dumping everything that has happened this year and what I've learned and what I'm taking into 2022. And from that brain dump, I came up with five takeaways from my year that I want to share with you, in hopes that you can apply these takeaways, maybe see them more into your life so that you can create the results that you want to create. How does that sound? Let's do it.

Takeaway number one, trust the compound effect. If you want to learn more about the compound effect, I encourage you to check out a really great book by Darren Hardy called The Compound Effect. I also did an episode. I think it's 171 called The Power of Tiny Habits. Both of those are great resources so that you can dive deeper into this concept.

But the compound effect is the strategy of reaping huge rewards from small, seemingly insignificant actions. In other words, small choices plus consistency plus time equals significant results.

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In my life, I have so much evidence that the compound effect is real. In fact, just listening to this episode – how many have I done now? This is 265, 266? I can't remember. But I remember when I first started recording my podcast and I didn't have any listeners yet.

That first one that I was recording, I didn't know who was going to be listening. I didn't know if it was going to be successful or not. But I had a strong desire to put my work out into the world through a podcast. And that was back in 2014. And here we are today, I don't know how many millions of downloads we've had, but this podcast has touched the lives of so many women, and maybe even some of my male listeners out there. I appreciate all of you.

But now, I'm reaping the benefits of the work that I did, what, six years ago, seven years ago. It's now coming to fruition. I'm feeling the effects of my actions six or seven years ago.

Recently, I was going through some video content for my video editor. And I was looking at some of my old, old videos, some of my very first videos. And I remember how awkward it felt. I remember how I had this story that I wasn't good on video. And boy, did the videos prove that. It's the power of self-image, my friends.

But I kept showing up. I kept putting myself in that very uncomfortable space, creating content through video. And now, fast forward, I feel so much more comfortable in front of a camera, videoing content for you all. But even more than that, I have a whole library of content now. I'm feeling the effects of showing up. Those little actions that I took all those years ago are now adding up.

Another area of my life where I have felt the impact of the compound effect is around money. Putting money away, investing money, at the time doesn't feel like it's going to do that much. It feels sort of insignificant at the time, putting \$100 away here and there. But over time, the compound effect on money and your investments, it adds up.

And now, I'm thanking my past self for making those seemingly small sacrifices at the time that now have created big results as far as my finances go. But this year, I've found myself facing the compound effect again around my fitness and my health. And I had to remind myself and I had to trust the power of the compound effect.

So, a quick backstory, just to bring you up to speed. I can't remember if I've mentioned this on the podcast or not. I know I've mentioned it in the membership. But 10 years ago, about 10 years ago, I was involved in a wakeboarding accident, and I fractured my L2.

Up until that point, for like a decade, I had been very active. I had been very fit. I had run two marathons. I was going to yoga all of the time. But that accident stopped my fitness journey. I was bedridden for two weeks. I couldn't even get out of the bed.

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And it was something that I thought I could heal on my own, so I didn't seek medical attention. That was mistake number one, which I would have now. I didn't go to physical therapy. I'm very stubborn in many ways. And sometimes, that stubbornness doesn't serve me.

But I had decided, I'm going to deal with this and heal it on my own. Well, I've had back pain ever since. And I haven't been as active. I would go for walks. I would do stuff around the house. I would occasionally go the gym. I would lift a little bit of weight.

But in those 10 years, I've become less fit. I've become less strong. My muscles started to atrophy, my glutes weren't as strong, my hips definitely weren't as strong. And when you've had an accident like that, what ends up happening is you overcompensate in certain areas of your body, and you start having aches and pains.

And that, my friends, was basically how I entered into the new year. And I realized, I've got to get back into the gym. I need to focus. I need to get strong and fit. But here's the thing. When you go to the gym once, especially if you haven't been going for a while, it's hard, it hurts, it's uncomfortable, and you don't see results right away.

It was just like when I started my weight loss journey. Like, one day of eating well, you don't see the results immediately. And sometimes, when we're not seeing those results immediately, we give up and we throw in the towel.

But when you understand the compound effect and you trust in it, you keep showing up, you keep doing the work, you keep committing to your goal and to the process to get there. And over time, just like the compound effect says, the seemingly insignificant actions in the moment lead to big results.

And so, I have been going to the gym a lot this year. I have been stretching. I have been lifting weights. I have been doing cardio. I've been getting my body back together, feeling strong. And it has only been within the last couple of months that I am experiencing the compound effect.

My hips aren't hurting as much. I can feel myself becoming more limber, more energetic, more fit, and strong. But when I started this journey – in fact, it was last year, at the end of last year when I started, I can tell you, it was hard, and I had to trust the compound effect.

And so, this year's takeaway is, keep trusting in it. It works. No matter what your goals are, whether it's to grow your business, lose weight, build wealth, get strong, get in shape, you're going to have to have the goal, but let go of the goal and just focus on the process, showing up every day and doing these seemingly small things that will add up over time. So, that's takeaway number one. Trust in the compound effect.

Takeaway number two is, life is just one big experiment. And the more you experiment, the better you get, the more you learn, and the more you grow.

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I'm sure many of you have heard of the 10,000-hour rule. So, they say, if you want to get really good at something, you need to practice that thing for 10,000 hours. But I recently listened to a podcast by James Altucher where he talks about the 10,000-experiment rule.

And he says, "An experiment means try something that everyone else is afraid to try. Try to learn what happens on the other side of you can't/shouldn't do that. Then you are the only person on the other side of can't. That is success. Each experiment lets you skip part of the 10,000 hours. I know this because I've done it. You can fail on 10,000 experiments. But then suddenly, you're Thomas Edison. That's why years of invisible work seems like overnight successes. I used to cry after failing. Sometimes I still do. It's so painful. I always feel like giving up. But maybe the one thing I learned is to keep the experiment small. Tomorrow is always another day, a new experiment."

So this year, I've experimented a lot. I've experimented with my investments. I have experimented with the foods I eat. I have experimented with my health and fitness. I have had a lot of experiments in my business. And I also experimented with moving to Puerto Rico. I was there for two weeks and decided to move back.

But in all of those experiments, that freaked me out. Some would consider them a failure. I learned so much. And when I look back over my life, especially throughout my business, what I have noticed is that the more I experiment, the more successful I become.

And it's not because those experiments always go right, my friend, because they don't. Just like if you think about scientists in a lab, so many of their experiments are failures. But then, they keep experimenting and, all of a sudden, they come across a cure, they come across a new discovery.

This is what I believe is required to live an extraordinary life. You must be willing to experiment. But you also must be willing to fail because not all of your experiments are going to succeed. In fact, I would say the vast majority of them won't. And that's what I see stopping so many people from creating the results that they want in their life. They're so afraid to fail. They're so afraid to put themselves out there. They're so afraid of what people are going to think.

And this stops you from the experimentation process that you're going to have to embrace in order to create the results that you want because what you think will work won't always work. You might be surprised by what actually works. But you have to be willing to experiment to stumble into that discovery.

So, no matter what your goals are, be willing to experiment with how you're going to achieve them. If your goal is weight loss, for example, you're going to have to experiment with what foods work great for your body. You may have to go to a doctor and experiment with

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hormones. You may have to hire a trainer and experiment with what kind of fitness program your body really responds well to.

But you must be willing to experiment in order to achieve your goals. And one of the things I've been thinking about a lot, you all, is that this is it. This is our one life. What are we going to do with it? And I believe we all should experiment more and have fun with the experimentation process.

You're going to win some and you're going to lose some. But that's the process. That is the journey of creating success. So, that's takeaway number two; life is just one big experiment. And the more you experiment, the better you're going to get.

Number three, for me this year has been you must protect your brain. Your brain is creating your entire life. But how good are you at protecting it? Putting that red velvet rope around your brain?

And I'm going to talk about this in two ways. The first way I'm going to talk about this is literally your brain and how healthy it is. This year, at the beginning of the year, I was noticing that I was having some brain fog. I wasn't as sharp as a typically am.

I was forgetting names and places. I was like, "What is happening?" And my grandmother died of Alzheimer's. And so, I know that that is in the family. And so, I'm very mindful of what is going on in my brain. And it is my most valued asset.

And so, I was like, "Okay, Tonya, we've got to figure this out." And I will say, by exercising, I've been really careful about alcohol consumption, I've been playing a lot of brain games, I've been playing chess and things that really stimulate the brain and keep it active, I've been increasing my omega threes, I've been eating healthy fats, all of the things that they say you should do for your brain health, I've been really focused on that.

So, that's one part. As well, I need to mention working with my doctor around my hormones because, as we age, our hormones change and that has an effect on our brain. The other half of this is what you consume with your mind, with your brain. And the last two years especially, it's coming at us.

You go on social media, you turn on the news, you maybe even go to a friend's dinner party and there are a lot of opinions about what is happening in the world and a lot of divisiveness and a lot of things that, for me personally, are not healthy for my brain.

And I don't believe they're healthy for any of our brains. And so, I've been diligent in putting up a red velvet rope around my brain because when you're trying to create, when you're trying to reach your goals, when you have a vision and you're heading in that direction, so much of what

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we consume is just noise that slows us down. It's like putting the brakes on when we're trying to speed up.

And the way it does this is that we take in all of these opinions. Because most of what we're taking in are opinions. And they start to create fear. They start to create anxiety. Maybe they start to create doubt. Maybe they start to create feelings of unworthiness or not-good-enoughness. And that energy slows us down and prevents us from taking the actions that we need to take to achieve the results that we want to achieve.

This can show up in many different forms. For example, someone I know that I care a lot about wants to start a business. But what she does instead of doing the work to start her business is she sits around, and she scrolls through Instagram and then Facebook and whatever were scrolling through these days. And she ends up feeling anxious and feeling bad about herself. And so, she takes no action on starting her business.

Another friend of mine who has started her business and she had momentum going, but suddenly she started going through Instagram, the same feeds as my other friend, and she started to see her, quote unquote, competitors.

And her brain started to create this story that she's not good enough. There's already a lot of people doing what she wants to do. And so, she started to feel anxious, and it just slowed her progress down. She wasn't taking the action that she needed to take.

And then, there are the numerous women that I've coached this year over their anxiety and fear around the pandemic. And I get it, y'all. I turned the news on not too long ago and I'm like, "If I were watching this all of the time, I would be so freaked out and so anxious I wouldn't be able to work effectively."

That's why I decided to turn it off and focus on something that is productive, something that I hope betters the world and helps women calm down and focus and create results in their lives. And so, the question becomes, how do you stay informed? How do you know if what you're consuming is good for you?

And what I say is, look at the results you're creating in your life. Do you like them? And look at how you feel on a daily basis. If you're full of anxiety, if you're full of fear and you don't like the results that you're creating, you may want to assess what you are consuming with your brain and switch it up, try something new.

Maybe you want to turn the news off for a while. Maybe you want to go on a social media cleanse where you just turn it off for a while. Or you maybe want to come up with a plan to better manage it.

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Personally, I enjoy social media. And when I use it effectively, meaning I have set hours, I go in, I check on my group, I check on Instagram sometimes and I jump in and I jump out, it's invigorating. It's fun. But when I use social media to procrastinate, to numb out, to avoid my life, that's when it can have a negative impact on my life and your life as well.

In terms of staying informed, I just trust that I will know what I am meant to know. I don't like the news. And this is my personal preference. Some of you may be upset with me for saying that. I just don't enjoy it at all. I don't like how I feel. It's just like there are certain movies I watch, and I feel icky afterwards. I'm like, "I don't like the way this movie made me feel. Good to know. Don't watch movies like that."

I don't like the way the news makes me feel. And so, I just don't like doing things that don't feel good. Because inevitably, if I do that day after day, I'm going to be programing my brain and programing my overall state of being to be low-energy, to be anxious, to be fearful. And I just don't want to do that.

And so, this year has been me protecting my brain even more. And I know I can do an even better job of this. But it's something that I'm more mindful of now than ever and I want to do an even better job. So, that was my takeaway, number three, you must protect your brain.

Takeaway number four is, lead, don't please. Okay, this is for all of us people pleasers out there. And there's a lot of us. I don't like when people are upset with me. I will just tell you, I don't like it. I really don't. I want to try to make everyone happy. I don't want to upset anyone. I don't want to offend anyone. And that has held me back for so many years.

Sometimes, I think about if I had not had this people pleasing syndrome, where I would be in my life right now. But then again, I trust that everything has happened the way it was supposed to and here we are.

But this year, I've been intentional about working on my people pleasing. I asked myself at the beginning of the year, I asked, "Tonya, do you want to be a leader or a people pleaser?" And my immediate response was, "I want to be a leader. That is who I am called to be." And I feel like all of us are called to be leaders in our lives.

But you cannot be a leader and a people pleaser at the same time. It is impossible. Being a people pleaser keeps you from expressing your true wants, your opinions, and it keeps you from telling the truth about who you are.

And the result of that is you're going to make some really bad choices. And people pleasing is impossible. You will try to please this group over here, and then the group over there is upset with you. Likewise, if you try to please this group over here, the group over there is going to be upset with you.



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You've put yourself in a no-win situation. People pleasing also leads to excessive worry and the ability to be unable to say no, and then that leads to overwhelm and stress. And it also causes you to be unwilling to have difficult conversations, to take in criticism, and to be effective in your own life.

And so, this year, I have made such progress in this area. I'm super proud of myself, y'all, and I've done it through literally transforming my self-image. I'm telling you all, self-image is everything. That could be a takeaway because it is.

But I have envisioned the version of me who is not a people pleaser, who doesn't lie to people. Because when you're a people pleaser, you lie. You say things that aren't true. You're not honest. And so I, at the beginning of the year, started to imagine this version of me.

My word of the year was audacious. I'm like, "My audacious self is not a people pleaser." And what was her biggest belief that she had to shift? And that was, it's okay if people don't like me or agree with me. And I've had to practice it. I've had to make decisions that felt true to me, that felt good to me with the potential that it would upset people. And being okay with that.

And it's not because it's not kind and loving, because I tend to think I'm like the most loving person. But lying is not loving. And I don't think people pleasing is loving. And so, what has come along with that is the discomfort and the willingness of people being upset with you or not liking you.

But on the other side of that, you all, there is so much freedom. And that's what I want for each of us. I think about the Anthony de Mello quote where he says, "I'd rather walk the earth in freedom alone than to be in prison in the company of others." Really think about that, "I'd rather walk the earth in freedom alone than to be in the company of others in prison."

And when we people please, when we won't express our truest self, when we say yes when we mean no and yes when we mean yes, we end up being shackled to others. And I believe that the way to be the most loving and the most kind is to be honest about who you are, to be honest about what you want, and to take action to get you there.

And if you're people pleasing, it's just slowing you down, putting the brakes on your goals and your dreams and your vision. You cannot lead and people please. It's impossible. You have to decide which you're being called to do. And no one listening to this is being called to be a people pleaser.

But you're going to have to tackle the fear and overcome it in order to be the leader of your life. And so, that's been one of my big takeaways this year; be a leader, not a people pleaser.

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Finally, takeaway number five, a big life requires big decisions and the capacity for big feelings. Here's what I mean by that. If you step out of your comfort zone just a little, it's going to move your life just a little.

Now, with the compound effect, over time, those little shifts, and those little habits every single day will add up. And that has been my process for so many years. I would take a little step little step, little step, little discomfort, little discomfort, little discomfort. And over time, that has added up. But I've realize this year, if you want exponential growth, if you want to fast-track your results, the more willing you are to make those big decisions and then feel the big discomfort that comes along with it, the quicker you're going to move, the faster your momentum is going to become.

I experienced this actually at the end of 2020 when I changed my entire business. I started the School of Self-Image. I didn't know if it was going to work, but I believed in it. I committed to it. And it was a huge decision for me.

I let everything else go and just focused on this. And I remember feeling nauseous. I remember being afraid. And I did it anyway. I had to be willing to feel all of those big emotions. But the result of that has been just extraordinary.

The work that we're doing within the membership, the transformations that are happening, and the focus that I've been able to give that one thing has been transformative for me. But when I made that decision, it was not comfortable.

A lot of you all are waiting for it to feel good before you do it. You're going to feel sick. You're going to feel nauseous. But that's the capacity to handle big emotions. But on the other end of that, some of you – and I've been there too – you're afraid to feel the big emotion of success, the big emotion of joy.

We limit ourselves because it's so outside of our normal state of being. So, we like to keep everything in the middle. We'll feel a little bit of discomfort, a little bit of joy. I want us to be people who are willing to feel a lot of discomfort so that we can feel a lot of joy. Because you can't have one without the other.

As much as you're willing to feel one side is the extent that you're willing to feel the other side. I recently experienced this with a live event that I'm doing. I'm so excited.

For you all that are coming, I cannot wait to see you in South Beach. But it's called SOSI Beach Live, and I put it out there only to members of the School of Self-Image. We sold out in no time. But when I was planning that, I didn't know if it was going to work. I had never done an event this size.

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But you know how you find out if something's going to work? You try it. You experiment. And the bigger those decisions, the bigger you're going to have to feel the emotions that come along with those decisions, but the bigger your life becomes.

Some of those experiments will work. Some of them won't. So, you're going to have to feel the negative of the ones that don't work in order to feel the positives of the ones that do. But a big life requires big decisions and big feelings.

I went and moved to Puerto Rico this year. I sold my car. I let go of my apartment. I put some things in storage. I packed up my bags. I had like four suitcases. Off I went to Puerto Rico. Big decision.

I was there for two weeks, and I said, "This is not going to work. I get to change my mind." And I made a quick decision, another big decision to move back. I had to feel a lot of emotions in that process. But I learned so much. I don't regret it at all.

Now, was it a success? Well, it depends on how you define success. If you define success as, did it work? Then no, it was a huge failure. I moved back. If you define success with, did it grow you? Did you learn a lot? It was a huge success.

But again, it was a big decision that required me to feel big emotions, the emotions of uncertainty, the emotions of doubt, the emotions of confidence. I had to feel all of that in order to make that decision and then to quickly make another big decision to move back.

But this year has been extraordinary. I chose audacious as my word of the year, and I have done some audacious things. I'm very proud of who I've become this year. My self-image has transformed in big ways. And I feel like I'm just getting started.

I am truly excited about next year and I'm so, so grateful for 2021 and the lessons I've learned, who I've become. And I'm grateful for you. It is an honor for me to show up here every single week and record this podcast.

Recently, I have been getting more and more messages from you all, from the listeners, you out there who I may never meet in person, but you send me messages telling me how this podcast has changed your life. And I'm so grateful for the compound effect. I'm so grateful for the me years ago who decided to start recording this because, truly, it is one of my favorite, favorite things to do.

And so, thank you. Thank you for tuning in. Thank you for sharing this with your family and friends. Thank you for the reviews. I appreciate you more than you will ever, ever know. And 2021 has been a wild journey. And thank you for letting me be a part of yours. And let's go, 2022.

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Hey, before you go, don't forget to sign up for my upcoming five-day live workshop called Live Like an Editor. You can head over to [schoolofselfimage.com/workshop](https://schoolofselfimage.com/workshop) and I cannot wait to see you inside.