

EPISODE NO. 316

My 2022 Gift to You (You're Welcome)



Mary Oliver posed the question, are you breathing a little and calling it a life? In this episode of the podcast, I want to give you a gift. In fact, I was thinking if I could give you anything for the holidays, what would it be? And here's a hint. It is so needed in our world right now. In a world that's so stressed and so serious and so uptight, this is a gift that will change your life. You ready for it? 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 beautiful friends. Welcome to this episode of the podcast. We are about to head into the holidays. So crazy to believe that another year is almost past. And last year I did a whole episode on a gift that I wanted to give you. And it was the first time I'd ever done an episode like that. And I decided I want to make this a tradition. Every single year, I want to think about if I can give this community any gift, what would that gift be? So I encourage you to go back and actually listen to last year's podcast because the gift that I gave you was the gift of self-validation, not waiting for other people to tell you that you're good enough or that you're doing a great job. Because if we wait for that, we're often very disappointed. We end up letting ourselves down and we put our own feeling state, our own wellness, our own psychological welfare in somebody else's hands.

Never a good idea, my friends. So I was thinking about the gift that I wanted to give you this year and I wrote down a bunch of things.

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And a lot of them were very heavy and very serious. One of them was like the gift of self-acceptance, the gift of forgiveness. And listen, all of those things are very important, very important. But I was like, this doesn't feel right. This isn't what I want to give people. What do people really need right now? And the word that came to mind, my brain sort of laughed at, it was like, no, people don't need this right now, you need to be more serious. And this is when I knew it was exactly what people needed. The gift I wanted to give you all, if I could give you anything, it would be the gift of fun. Are you ready to have more fun?

I don't know about you all, but the world can feel heavy, especially right now with so much information out there and so many opinions about how you should think and how you should live your life and all of the terrible things. Because usually that's reported, the terrible things. It feels like just heavy. And I think fun and love and joy is an antidote to all of that.

And so I want to encourage all of you that are listening to this podcast to decide that you are going to have more fun in your life. And I want to sell you on why this is so important. Because if you don't trust fun, you will continuously put it on the back burner. And a lot of people will don't trust fun. We're taught that fun gets you in trouble, that you can't reach your goals if you're having fun. And that you need to be serious to be taken serious. And all of this stuff that makes it so that fun is something that we put on the back burner. But secretly we're all dying to experience it. We're dying to have a lighter spirit and to laugh more and enjoy our lives more. And so we have to get comfortable with fun.

So when it comes to fun, you have to ask yourself, is it an action or is it a feeling? And I personally think it's both. I think there are things that you can do that create a feeling of fun in your body. And I also think that you can have that feeling of fun that you can infuse into everything that you do. The party lives within you. I want you to really take that statement to heart. The party is within you. It's not something that you have to go out there and find. It's not something that is outside of you. It is within you. And you can take that feeling and you can infuse it into your work days. You can infuse it into your business. You can infuse it into your home because it's an energy that you create and then you share it with the world.

Now when it comes to fun, the first step is to feel safe in having fun. And this one's big. A lot of people don't feel safe. They feel like if they have fun, their life is going to fall apart. And it's because we're ingrained with this belief system like you get to play after you work. Play is something that is reserved until later.

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If you want to be taken serious, then you shouldn't have fun. Like all of these subliminal messages that we hear as a kid, we end up carrying into our adulthood and it makes us pretty miserable.

And then you think about what is the result of not having fun in your life? What do you sacrifice when you don't have fun? I believe number one, you sacrifice your health. Yes, fun is good for your health. Studies have shown that fun gives you more energy. When you're laughing, when you are enjoying your life, it's releasing stress. And it also boosts serotonin levels. So serotonin is that feel good neurotransmitter. And when you don't have enough serotonin, you can have poor sleep patterns, a lot of stress and a lot of anxiety. And so by having fun, you're releasing and boosting your serotonin so you're sleeping better and you're more relaxed and you have a better outlook on life.

Fun also, believe it or not, makes you more productive. When we're having fun, we're lighter, we're not taking ourselves or life too seriously. And that kind of mentality, that kind of attitude will inspire you to show up and get your work done and not be such a perfectionist. And to enjoy the journey. I'm always asking myself, how can I have fun doing this? And the moment I switch into a fun affect, I'm in a fun mood, I'm more creative, I'm able to actually get more done. And the best part is I enjoy the process.

Fun also gives you youth. It makes you youthful. Kids love to play. They love to have fun. And that energy is what we associate with youth. So for those of you who are afraid of getting older and you're afraid of aging, I'm telling you, one of the best things you can do is commit to having more fun in your life. One of the biggest compliments that I get is from my daughter and her friends who say, "We can't even keep up with you. You are having way more fun than we are having."

And listen, I do it on purpose. It's not just because fun falls in my lap, I create it, I am it. I love to think thoughts that are fun and exciting, and then that leads me to show up in fun ways and infuse fun into everything that I do. And then I also love to do fun things. Me and my family, we love games. We play games all of the time. We play card games, we play board games. And most recently, I've started playing pickleball. And I am obsessed. I seriously can't stop playing. I'm like, when am I going to get some work done? But I am having so much fun. And what I notice is that when I am engaging in fun and then I show up to work, the quality of my work is better and everything is energy. And so even if I'm writing an email, but I'm in that state of fun because I'm infusing my life with fun, I'm thinking fun thoughts, that energy can be felt even through the words that I write.

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And that's the other benefit of fun is that you become magnetic because people love to be around fun people, especially when everybody's so serious and so dark. Someone walks into a room that's full of light and is having fun, people want to gravitate towards them because they want that in their lives. And so by being fun, you are going to be an example of how you can live a life and you're also going to attract more fun people into your life because the fun people are looking for other fun people. And then you will also attract people who just want to be inspired by you. They want to have what you are having. Having more fun improves your relationships. If you're not having fun, it tells them you're stressed. You're probably holding a lot of tension. Maybe you become snappy, maybe you're moody, and that is felt and experienced in your relationships.

I'm telling you, the more fun I have, the better my relationships get and I inspire the people around me to have more fun and to be okay with it, to feel safe with it. And what you're going to notice is that your life will get better the more fun you have. Having more fun actually helped me lose weight all those years ago. Because you see, I was turning to food for my source of pleasure and joy. I didn't have much in my life going on at the time. And so food was that one thing that gave me a hit of dopamine that made me feel good in a moment, temporarily. But then I had to deal with the guilt and the shame that followed binging on food. And so I realized I needed to have more diversity in my life in terms of pleasure and fun so that I didn't need food to fill that gap.

And so I started to look at how I could have more fun. What were the activities that I could enjoy? What are new hobbies I could learn? What are things that I could read and participate in that was interesting and fun? And over time, I had so much fun outside of food that food became something that I enjoyed when I was eating, but it wasn't something that I needed all of the time to fill this hole. And from that experience, I realize what Martha Beck has said before. Having fun is not a diversion from a successful life, it's the pathway to it. I literally have built this life by not only being the fun, but by also following the fun. Asking myself, what would be fun to learn? What would be fun to create? Who would it be fun to meet? How can I have more fun doing this? How can I be more fun?

Asking these types of questions have allowed me to access this deep inner joy that I remember having as a kid, but I lost it somewhere in my late teens, early adulthood. And I lost it through what I like to call life chipping. These little hurts, these little disappointments, these little setbacks, the little obligations that you don't really want to do. All of these things just chip away at your natural state of being.

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Because I feel like our natural state of being is fun and joy and light and love, but then life happens and all these little chips chip away at who we really are. And so the work is not finding that version of you again because you haven't lost her, she's still within you. It's just getting reacquainted with her, trusting her, and allowing her to have a little say in your life.

When I think about the life I'm living today, I, a hundred percent, believe that having more fun has led to this life. I remember thinking, wouldn't it be fun to learn about wine? And that led me to go to sommelier school. Then I thought, wouldn't it be fun to go to Paris and to really dive into the world of food and wine? And from that, I discovered a whole new way of life that impacted me on such a deep level and eventually turned into a program called Slim Chic and Savvy that I ran for years. I used to go to New York City a lot, so much fun. And being there in that energy and then watching movies like *Breakfast at Tiffany's* inspired me to create *Modern Day Icon*, another one of my popular programs.

I have so many examples of how fun has had a positive impact on my life. And I share that with you because I know that some of you have fear around having more fun. But do you know what else I have evidence for now? The negative impact on my life when I forget to have fun. About four or five years ago when my daughter was sick, I stopped having a lot of fun. And guess what happened? It impacted my health. And while I kept showing up for my business and my business was growing, it was hard. And I wasn't having a lot of fun doing it because I wasn't being fun, and understandably so. When your kid is sick, it's hard to be like woo-hoo, party on. I wasn't in that state. But that experience did show me that the more fun I have, the better my life gets. And when I forget to have fun, when I stop having fun, it has a negative impact on my life.

So in thinking about you and wanting to gift you the gift of fun, I was thinking about what I can offer you that will help you to get into a fun mindset. Now if you are in the School of Self-image membership, we have a whole module on this topic because it's a recurring story that I hear from women. I've just lost myself. I forgot how to have fun. I'm so serious. One woman told me, she was like, "I'm such a drag to be around now." And she took this class and it literally changed her life. In fact, I saw her recently at my event and she was like, "Last year was the most fun I've ever had." And so I teach this in the membership. So if you're in the membership, go check out the class called *A Fun Mindset*.

But for those of you who are listening, first of all, fun starts from within. You could be doing the most fun thing and be miserable because your thoughts aren't fun.

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And so you need to monitor your thinking. Are you thinking thoughts that are light and energizing and maybe humorous, joyful, fun? Or are you thinking thoughts that are heavy and feel like a burden and discouraging and maybe even dark? Start to shift your thinking even just a little bit. I always say change your thinking just a little bit every single day over time, you'll have a completely new mindset, completely new set of beliefs. One of the things that I find to be effective is to find the humor in my crazy brain. So sometimes I'll catch myself thinking something ridiculous, something so absurd, so limiting, so full of fear that I literally will turn it into a comedy. I'm like, look at this crazy mess in your brain. Like, you're definitely being a little dramatic here.

And just finding the humor in my crazy human brain lightens the load a little bit. So maybe if you're having a hard time accessing better feeling thoughts, can you find the humor and what you're currently thinking? Everything has a little bit of humor in it. Comedians will tell you that. And it's a way to make life more bearable is finding the humor in what life has handed you and finding the humor and what your brain is trying to hand you.

Beyond your mindset, it's time for you to discover what is fun for you. I want to encourage you to go on a fun scavenger hunt. In fact, what if you made next year just one big fun scavenger hunt? Everyone enjoys fun in a different way. For some people going out dancing is super fun. For other people that would be horrific, they would never want to do that. For some people, going shopping is fun. Then there are those people who would rather have their eyeballs gouged out than to go shopping.

And so don't think just because it's fun for someone else that it should be fun for you. You are such a unique, intricate, amazing human being. We need to figure out what is your flavor of fun. And you know what that's going to require? That you try a lot of things with the understanding you may not like them all. Chances are you won't.

I recently did a podcast about having more first in your life. And I think in order to have a fun life, you need to intentionally go out there and have more first. The first time experiencing something, knowing sometimes you're never going to want to experience that again. But now you know. You wouldn't know that until you went out there and did it for the first time.

And so figuring out what is fun for you requires that you do things that aren't fun. But in that doing, you're going to find more out about yourself and what you enjoy. And when you find something that you really, really love and enjoy, incorporate that into your life, make it a priority.

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When it comes to the topic of fun, I told the women in the membership, I was like, "Listen, we are women who don't wait for others to create our fun."

It's a big mistake that I see a lot of people making. They sit around and they watch other people having fun on Instagram. They hear about their friends having fun. And then they become bitter because they're not having fun. They're wanting someone else to create that for them. I never do that. When I want to experience something, I create it for myself.

I don't sit around and complain about how no one wants to travel, how no one wants to play pickleball. I go out there and I find people that want to travel or I go by myself. I remember one year wanting to go to Paris and I couldn't find anyone to go with me. Guess what I did? I booked a ticket and I went. Such an amazing trip. I love solo traveling. And if you feel like travel is fun and you're tired of waiting to have someone to travel with, go make that trip happen. Go enjoy your own company. Go check out Alessia at One Girl Travel. This is what she does. She supports women who want to solo travel and it will change your life. But don't wait for someone to create your fun. You be the fun. You know how they say be the change? Be the fun. And decide what is fun for you and create it for yourself.

And what you're going to discover is that other people are so inspired by you, they're going to want to join in on your party, but you're not going to depend on them in order to have fun. I don't sit around and wait for other people to be in a better mood either. If I'm around cranky people, guess what I do? I crank up the fun. But I didn't always do this. I used to be around cranky people and then I would become cranky and then I would be blaming them for why I was cranky. I would be blaming them as to why I wasn't having fun in my life. They weren't the reason why I wasn't having fun. I was the reason why I wasn't having fun. And when I really got that and I understood it, I never used other people as an excuse as to why I wasn't having fun. Never. And then I started having more fun than I could imagine. So again, if I find myself around cranky people, crank up the fun.

The other thing that I told the women in the membership, I'm like, "Listen, we are women who don't wait for things outside of us to change to have fun." Because I know that's what a lot of you all are doing. You're saying things like, "I'll have fun when some future date, some future goal is achieved." And so you keep delaying fun. But remember, fun is the path to success. If we're not having fun, what are we doing? A lot of you all think you can make yourself miserable to fun.

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You're like, one day when I've lost the weight, one day when I have more money, one day when I have the man of my dreams, one day when... Then I will have fun.

And so you make yourself miserable and you make yourself not an energetic match to what you want. I always go to the future. I always imagine the future version of me and however she's showing up, I need to practice showing up as her now. And guess what she is always doing? She is always having a good time. So I need to have a good time now.

We are also women who make fun a priority. That's right. A priority. It's not something that we wait until later to do. It is something that is a priority in our everyday lives. And we make it a priority by not only being the fun and infusing fun into our daily lives. Believe it or not, you all, you can have fun while you're washing the dishes. You can have fun while you're cleaning the laundry. It's all an attitude. As I was saying earlier, my family laughs at me how much fun I have. They think I'm crazy. They think I'm wild and I am a little bit. But I am in the kitchen cleaning the dishes and dancing and singing and just being so grateful I have these nasty dishes from these amazing humans who just left them there. When I'm paying the bills, I'm having fun. I'm like, I'm so grateful that I have electricity. I'm so grateful that I get to pay taxes in this country. Believe it or not, I'm grateful for it.

And I used to not be this way. I used to complain. I used to delay fun for later. I used to associate certain things with fun and certain things with misery. But then I was like, what if it could all could have an element of fun? What if we don't have to be miserable doing these things that people have told us we should be miserable doing? Like paying bills, cleaning the house. I'm grateful for all of it. And if I get to choose and I do, would I rather be miserable complaining and bitching about doing something? Or would I rather have fun? Which is going to give me the better result? Having more fun. And you get to have more fun just by changing your thoughts about it. I love the quote by Randy Pouch where he says, "I'm going to keep having fun every day I have left."

You just have to decide whether you're a Tigger or an Eeyore. Which do you want to be? Which one will allow you to not only create better results but live a better life? I always say the best way to improve your life is to enjoy the life you have right now. Really enjoy it, have fun, maximize it. Stop waiting until one day when to have more fun. I just finished planning my entire 2023. Literally, the entire year I've planned. And guess what the first thing was to go on my calendar? Fun. But that's not fair to say because I literally have fun in almost everything that I do. I said almost. Sometimes my brain wants to resist having fun.

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Sometimes it just is a grind. And I accept, okay, this is going to be a grind. I'm just going to get through it. But for the most part, I can say I laugh and have fun every single day of my life, every single day.

But when I was planning my 2023, I put my vacations, all of the fun things that I want to do on there first. And that's the opposite of how most people go about their lives. Most people wait to see where they can fit it in after they've put everything else on their calendar. And I believe in the Profit First model. Some of you may know of the book called Profit First. A lot of entrepreneurs are very familiar with the concept of you pay yourself first. And I like to see our time the same way. Instead of putting all these projects on your calendar, pay yourself first with your own time. How do you want to spend that leisure time, that fun time? Put that on your calendar first. Make it a priority. And then make everything else work around it. And what I can tell you is that everything that you put around that is going to work so much better because you are going to be energized. You are going to be working better. You are going to be living at a higher vibe, energy. And so everything benefits when you, the one person at the center of your world, at the center of your universe, is fulfilled and having fun. So we are women who make fun a priority.

And the last thing that I told them is that we are women who bring the fun. We know that the party lives within us. We know that no matter what room we decide to enter, we get to decide the energy in which we bring into that space. And we can bring a sense of fun and play and love and joy no matter how the people in that room are showing up. This is really good to know right before the holidays as you're going to be around the family and the in-laws and all the people that you may not want to be around, but you're choosing to be around them anyway. No, you get to dictate the energy that you bring into every single room. So why not you bring the fun? When they're cranky, we crank up the fun. The party lives within you, my friend, and it's time you join that celebration.

And so that is my gift to you this year. I want to give you the gift of fun. And what I can tell you is what I've planned for 2023 for this community is fun. I want to bring more fun into these conversations. I want to make personal development fun because I think it is. I think the ability to create yourself on purpose is such a fun idea. Now, it's hard. I'm saying it's not. Change is difficult. But even hard things can be fun when you change your mindset around them. And so what I can tell you is the fun that my family gets to experience all of the time, I want to bring more of that into this space. And so I am super excited about next year and I want us all to commit to making fun of priority in our lives and trusting that it is going to only make things better.

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Have a beautiful holiday, my friends, and I cannot wait to see you in the next episode. Take care. 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.