



EPISODE NO. 328

# Overcoming Superwoman Syndrome

I'm dedicating this episode to the woman who is trying to do it all and be it all. I'm dedicating this issue to all of my superwomen out there. So 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. Happy day, whatever day you're listening to this. I just had a moment that I feel like all of you can relate to. Tell me if this sounds familiar. You have your schedule for the day, you have work that you are going to focus on, and all of a sudden you start to get calls from your parents or your children, or maybe it's your boss, or maybe it's a coworker, or maybe it's a best friend and they're all needing something from you and you're in this predicament trying to figure out what you should do. And there's a part of you that knows that you don't need to be doing all the things, and yet you find yourself trying to do it all. You find yourself saying yes to all the things and then wondering, what in the world did I just do and how am I going to accomplish it all? Can you relate to that? I know you probably can because it's a phenomenon and it actually has a name. It's called the superwoman syndrome.

This phrase was coined in the 1980s by Dr. Marjorie Hansen Shaevitz, and she wrote a book on the topic called the superwoman syndrome. And basically, it refers to when women feel the need to excel in multiple roles, such as being a career woman, a mother, a wife, a friend, a daughter, and more, and doing that while also maintaining high standards in each role. It's women who feel like they have to do everything and be

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everything to everyone, and they feel guilty or ashamed if they cannot meet those expectations.

And for those of you who have experienced the syndrome, you know it leads to burnout, it leads to stress. It can lead to other negative health outcomes because when you are in the superwoman role, you're not prioritizing your self-care and you're not prioritizing what's really important to you. You're actually living a life that goes against your values. You're living, living a life that goes against your natural instincts. Our natural instincts are to work, but also to rest and to play. And when you are in the superwoman's role, when you have been afflicted with the syndrome, you're not doing the latter too. You're not playing and you're not resting because there's no time. All you have time for is working and being who everybody else wants you to be. So if you suffer from superwoman syndrome and you know you can't keep it up and you know that you don't want to be this way and you don't operate this way, it's important that you understand why so that you can get out of this toxic cycle.

And when I was preparing for this podcast, I was thinking about the hears that I tried to be superwoman and trying to understand why was I playing this role even though it was making me miserable. And it really came down to one word, and that word is fear. That's what leads to superwoman syndrome. We are afraid of what people will think. We are afraid that we don't measure up. We are afraid that we're going to be left behind. And let me tell you all something, a life built on fear will crumble eventually because what we do is we try to outrun and outperform our fear, but we're not looking at what needs to be dealt with. And that is the fear itself. And you cannot outrun fear. Have you noticed that? It seems to always be with you.

And so, overcoming superwoman syndrome requires that you face this fear and it's really the fear of not being good enough. And in coaching women for over a decade, all roads lead to that one thing. I'm not going to measure up. I'm not good enough. It's the not enoughness that keeps us in patterns that cause us to be miserable. Not enough money, not enough time, not enough love. I'm not enough. Listen, here's what you need to know, that is just a thought in your head. But when that thought runs your life, it has you doing some crazy things. It has you up at 5:00 AM doing things that you don't want to be doing. It has you showing up in ways that you don't want to show up. It has you saying things and being things that you don't want to say and be, all in an effort to try to prove to everybody else that you're good enough and that there's enough.

But here's what you need to know, right now, in this moment, you can decide that you're enough. And when you are in that state of enoughness, the most amazing things start to happen. You start to create evidence for more enoughness. You start to create evidence for what you want to see and what you want to believe. Have you

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noticed when you're in a state of fear, you just create more of it? Well, the opposite's also true. When you are in a state of worthiness and abundance and joy, you just attract and see and create more of those things.

Let me give you an example of how this works. When I suffered from superwoman syndrome, and trust me, those of you who have it, you know, you suffer. I had this one friend who was always asking me for things. It was one of those relationships where I was doing all of the giving and she was doing all of the taking. And I could not bring myself to say no to her, and so, I would say yes and then be resentful. And let me tell you all, resent is a telltale sign that you may be suffering from superwoman syndrome. So pay attention if you're feeling resentful or angry or frustrated on a daily basis. Those are three emotions that often indicate that you have this syndrome.

And I definitely, with her, I deep down felt this resentment. But listen, it was on me. I was the one that was constantly saying yes. She wasn't holding me hostage. And I realized that I was so afraid of her leaving me. I was so afraid of her not being my friend. She was one of the cool girls in the neighborhood. And so, I was bending over backwards to get her friendship. I was bending over backwards to please her.

And this was right around the time that I discovered coaching. And I started to do some work on myself. And I was realizing what was creating this. And I thought to myself, if I respected myself, if I felt enough, if I felt worthy, would I be saying yes to her demands? And the answer was no. I would not be saying yes. I would be saying no a lot. And so, I started to practice that. And guess what? She did leave. And thank God. All of a sudden I felt so free. I felt so much better. I felt this weight off my shoulders because every time I was around her was full of anxiety.

And I know some of y'all can relate to this. You have friends in your life right now who you have a very similar pattern with. But here's where it gets wild and here's what I want you all to know, being in that state of enoughness and just hanging out there and trusting that the universe will deliver as she always does, I started to attract a different kind of friend. A friend who wanted to give, and to support, and to celebrate. And I continue to attract those kinds of people into my life. I don't have to be superwoman with these new friends.

And that's what I'm talking about. When you get into a state of loving yourself, respecting yourself, knowing you're worthy, you will not have this tendency to perform for the world, which is what you're doing when you're suffering from superwoman syndrome. It's like you're on a stage performing, trying to keep everybody happy. And here's the thing, not everybody likes the performance, but you're over here trying to be one character whenever you're trying to be another one. And it's exhausting. And I'm just inviting you to consider that that's not the stage you're meant to be on. I want you

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to be on the stage where you can dance and do and be who you want to be and trust that the right audience will appreciate that.

When it comes to overcoming superwoman syndrome, there are a few things that you must practice. And the first one is you must prioritize. And prioritizing is deciding what is most important, one thing. I know it's hard for a superwoman, one priority, but that's what the word means. It derives from the Latin word *prioritas*, which means first in rank. There can only be one thing, one priority.

Now, I do know that there are other things that are important to us, but what is the most important thing to you during this season in your life? Is it family? Is it work? Is it your health? Is it relationships? What is the most important thing? And allow yourself to be honest. I feel like when we suffer from superwoman syndrome, we look around at the world and we want the world to tell us what's most important. And the world has got some crazy ideas. Have you noticed? And everybody's going to have a different opinion.

Some people will tell you that during this season of your life, being a mother should be the number one priority. Some people will tell you, "Oh, no, no, no, no, you should make work a priority." Other people be like, "No, no, no, no, no. You should make your health a priority." And so, you are going to have to look within yourself and be honest with yourself about what is most important to you right now. And this can bring up a lot of guilt because what if you're a mom but that's not your number one priority right now. Maybe your number one priority is growing your business. You've got to own that for yourself. Now, that does not make you a bad mother. That just makes you a decisive woman who knows what she wants. Doesn't mean you're going to neglect and abandon your child. It just means that you might get creative in how you parent. But what if you gave yourself permission to be honest about what you want and stop looking to the world to tell you what you should make a priority right now?

And then, beyond that first priority, I do believe that we need to give ourselves permission to have maybe two more that we want to focus on. So I always think about the top three focuses in my life during this season and putting them in rank and making sure that my calendar and my actions are supporting what I say is a priority, which means, and this leads to number two, to overcome superwoman syndrome, you must be willing to say no to the things that are not important to you right now. And that means you're going to disappoint some people. You're going to have some people that are upset. You're going to have some people who think you are selfish. You're going to have some people that think you are the devil because you said no, and you must be okay with that.

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The next thing you are going to have to do if you want to overcome superwoman syndrome is you must, you must put self-care on your calendar before anything else. And you all who are in the membership, you know that this is how we schedule. We put self-care, which means health stuff, fun stuff, leisure, vacations, all of that goes on our calendar first, and then we fit everything else around that. And that too means you're going to have to say no to some things.

When Susie across the street calls you up to see if you can bake cookies for the church bake sale and you realize that that is going to interfere with your plans to go to the spa, you're going to have to be willing to tell Susie, "No, it's not going to work." And Susie may be disappointed and that's okay, but Susie has an oven. She can bake those cookies if it's that important to her.

This is where you all get a little freaked out. You're like, "But isn't that so selfish?" Do you know what's worse than selfish? Is you lying to Susie and doing something even though you don't want to do it. I would much rather someone be honest with me and say, "You know what? No, thank you. I appreciate you asking me, but it just doesn't feel good" versus me doing it for Susie, and then every time I see Suzie's face, I'm full of resent. Susie doesn't deserve that. So you must put you on your schedule first and be willing to say no to the things that interfere with that.

The other thing that you must do is be willing to be imperfect. I know, this one's tough, but oftentimes perfectionism leads us to trying to over-perform and outperform our own lack of worth, which is what perfectionism is. I'm not good enough and I'm afraid of being found out, so let me put on this facade and pretend that I am perfect. This is what superwomen do. And in order to overcome the syndrome, you must be willing to be imperfect. You're going to have to let some things fall through the cracks and realizing you're okay.

This is especially true for us entrepreneurs. We tend to have very perfectionist tendencies. I know for me, I want to please all of my clients. I want things to be perfect. And I know if I stay in that energy, it's coming from fear. And I also know what I teach to my clients is you are amazing just as you are. That's how I want them to see themselves. Even when you make mistakes, even when you fell, even when it's not all buttoned up and tidy, you're still extraordinary. You're still amazing. And when you're in that state of knowing that, people recognize. Life really is about energy. It's not about being perfect. It's about your energetic state. And people who are perfectionists are often vibing at a low level because it's being driven by fear and insecurity.

And so, to overcome superwoman syndrome, you're going to have to be willing to be imperfect and to realize that it's a beautiful thing because that means you've accepted yourself as you are and you're showing up in your most expansive self. And expansive

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does not mean perfect. Expansive means true, what's true for you and showing up in that way.

The final thing that you must do to overcome Superwoman syndrome is get help. Delegate things to your family, to your loved ones who want to help, hire people. Listen, you all, there's this thing called TaskRabbit, where you can go on and hire someone to do a simple task that you just don't want to do. There's also this thing called Fiverr, where you can put up a random task in your business, and someone who's probably way better at doing it than you will raise their hand and be like, "Yes, I would love to take over. This is my fee." There's this thing called Indeed, where you can post an application for help, an assistant, someone to help you with customer service, and there's someone there to help you. There's this thing called care.com, where you can find someone to watch your loved ones. There's a thing where you can get a dog sitter. There are all these amazing apps with help at your fingertips, and yet a lot of you refuse to take advantage of it. Why? Why aren't you getting the help that you need? And I know that my Superwomen, we're out here probably raising families, working, growing companies, and we're trying to do it without any help. And it's because our ego, it's because of pride. Didn't society tell me that I should be able to do this on my own if I'm good? If society told us that, society is lying. And society lies a lot to us, have you noticed? Society tells us that we have to be six feet tall and 120 pounds to be beautiful. That's the biggest lie ever sold.

So if they're telling us that, why would we believe that also, to be a good human, you must not ask for help. You must do it on your own. Come on. You get to make up your own rules in life. And I've decided that hiring help, delegating, getting help is one of the most strong things I could ever do because it's coming from a place of strength, not weakness. It's coming from a place of I have my genius. I deserve to have support. I'm not afraid of what people are going to think if I get help. It's coming from this place of strength and abundance to ask for help. And when you build your life on strength, abundance, joy, enoughness, you're just going to create more of it.

And what I can tell you is that the more help I get, the better my life gets, the better my business becomes, the better my health gets, the better my overall wellbeing is. And yet, for years, I would not allow myself to do it. I was raised to be a strong southern girl. And those girls, we know we can do it on our own, or at least that's what we're taught. And where has that gotten us? Burnt out, resentful, anxious, pressured, aging quickly, tired, cranky. No, thank you. I don't want to be superwoman any longer. I want to be happy, loving, abundant, and healthy woman. And turns out you can't be both.

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Have a beautiful, beautiful week, my friends, and I will see you on next week's episode. Cheers.

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