



EPISODE NO. 329

What Your Home Reveals About You

If you're at home while you're listening to this, I want you to take a pause and look around. Everything there is what it is because of something you did. It is there because of something you thought that created a choice that you made. And so our homes reveal this inner landscape that displays to the world and to ourselves who we think we are, our history, our experience, our behaviors, our identity, and our dreams. Our homes are more than just four walls. They reveal so much about who we are and they can be a major catalyst in completely transforming our identity. So let's dive in to today's episode.

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

Hello, my gorgeous friends. How are you doing? I'm sitting here. It's 8:15 in the morning. I'm having a cup of coffee, listening to the bird's chirp and getting ready for a very full day.

I am leaving tomorrow for a two-week trip, so, actually a little over two weeks, and I'm going to be gone. And even though this is not a completely unplug trip, I'm going to be working the entire time, I am trying to get ahead with anything that requires equipment, so any videos and podcasts I'm batching and getting done so that I don't have to do those while I'm traveling. And so, that feels really good. I love that feeling of just head down and getting things done. I always feel so accomplished.

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I'm also building a house, in case you haven't heard. I've never owned my own home, and so this will be the first house that I own and I happen to be building it. But even in not owning my own home, I've lived in many places that I've called home. And what I've come to understand is that our homes are literally just a 3D expression of our inner home.

I often say your inner world creates your outer world. So, how you think and feel impacts the choices that you make, and those choices create the results. Equally, your outer world, everything that's around you, your environment, your home, the people you hang out with, impact your inner world. And so it's this system that's constantly feeding itself. And that's why, within the School of Self-Image, one of our core pillars is our environment. I'm a big advocate of changing your environment. I'm a big advocate of changing your outer world to help you change your inner one.

One of the ways that we can do that is to focus on elevating, transforming, and possibly even changing our home, the place that we live, because our home reveals so much about us.

I was thinking about some of my family members, and they have lived in the same house for the last 60 or 70 years, and the house literally has not aged, meaning everything is still exactly the same, brown paneling walls. It literally feels like you're walking into the fifties or forties, except they have updated their TVs and they've changed the carpet, but everything is still the same. And guess what? They're still the same. They haven't changed at all. They still wear the same clothes, they wear the same hair styles. They still go to the same places, which isn't more than 15 minutes from the house. They haven't changed, and so their home simply reflects that. And because they're in a home that isn't changing, everything they're looking at is always the same. It doesn't inspire change on the inside.

On the other hand, I think about some of my entrepreneurial friends, and it seems like they're always changing their home. They're living in new places. Maybe they're renting, they are maybe buying new homes, but they are often constantly changing their environment. And you could say, "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" Is it because they're changing so much on the inside that they're changing up their environment, or is placing themselves in new environments causing this exponential growth on the inside? I think it's both.

I've talked often on this podcast about the changes that I made in 2020, one of them being moving into a new apartment. It was a penthouse in Denver. And if you would have walked into that space, I imagine what you would have read about me without ever having met me is that I was a woman who was successful, I was a woman who had her life together, I was a woman who had good taste, I was a woman who was well

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traveled, you could tell that by the books on my shelf, I was a woman who liked things neat and tidy.

Now, a few of those things at the time were very true for me. They were very much a part of my identity, having good taste, well traveled. But there was a time where that wasn't the case. I've lived into that identity, but there were a couple of things that I was living into.

For example, I was a woman who was successful, that was an identity that I was living into. I had not called up to my own success. Has that ever happened to you? It's like you create this result and your identity hasn't caught up to it yet. And that's why a lot of people often sabotage themselves, because instead of doing the work of aligning their identity with the new result, they just go back to the old identity and recreate an old result.

And so a lot of the work that I did over that year was living into this new level of success that I had, and my home was one of the ways that I did that. It reflected back to me what I wanted to believe about myself.

The other thing was that I was a woman who had it all together. Clearly not true, and I still don't, so I don't want to put that out there that I have it all together because I don't. I'm human. And during that particular time in my life, I was falling apart emotionally. It felt like a return of Saturn. It felt like what I imagined a midlife crisis feels like. But instead of going out and partying and dancing on tables, it was during COVID and I was just at home crying, and I was entering into a new phase, and my home that I created for myself was a reminder that you're not going to always be here. Like this is just the part of the story where you fall apart a little bit, and that's okay. But my home was a way that I healed myself, because it was reflecting back to me that one day, I will never have it all together, but you won't be in this place.

And so our homes can be healing and they can be ways for us to shift our identity. By strategically creating our homes, we can strategically construct an entirely new self-image. And that's been interesting with building this house because, instead of me just picking out faucets and colors, I'm really thinking about it. And I love that I'm doing this during the Style Experience because we're going deep into questions around, who do we want to be and how do we best express that? And so I'm thinking about the next version of me and how I want this home to symbolize who she is.

And so it's not just a house. Instead, it feels like a novel that I'm writing and stepping into, but I'm not in that house right now. I'm in this house, the house that I'm renting until I move into my new house. And so I've been thinking about, what does this house say about me? What does this ... This is where I'm creating a home for probably over a year. And often what I see people do is they wait to create a home. They're always

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waiting. I'm going to wait until I meet the man. I'm going to wait until I move to the new city. I'm going to wait until I buy my first house.

And so even doing that is reflecting something back to you that I don't think serves you, and that is, "Over there is always better than here." And it also perpetuates this identity of a woman who's always waiting. So, I want to invite everybody listening, like don't wait to make a home. Make the most of where you are with what you have right now. I call that blooming where you're planted. Right now, you're here, and unless you plan to plant yourself somewhere else in the next week, let's make the best of here.

And so in looking at my current house, I was thinking about, what does this say about me? And when we're looking at our homes, it tells a big meta story about us. It can tell us our fears. It can tell us about our darkest secrets. It can tell us about our personality, our dreams. Our house can reveal so much.

It also offers us a snapshot of what's going on within us in this moment. For example, what my home is saying about me right now is that I'm a woman in transition. I don't have all of my belongings with me. We put a lot of it in storage. And I haven't quite gotten my clothes organized yet, which I will be doing in the Style Experience, and I'll be bringing you all along with me as I do that who are in this Style Experience. But it's really saying, "She is in between places."

And when I think about what that means about what's going on within me, in so many ways I'm in between emotionally too. I'm letting go of an old life, leaving Denver. I'm stepping into a new one, getting married, starting a new family. And so it really is indicative of so much of what's going on inside of me.

But then I look around at the things that I've chosen to have over the next year as we live here, and it's actually really telling. That's the beauty of a home. It will reveal to you what's important. It will reveal to you what your values are. It will reveal to you maybe even your dreams and your fears.

I think about people who often don't decorate their homes. If you go into their houses, they're very black and white. They don't have any artwork on the walls. And those are people that are often afraid of making decisions. They're perfectionists, they're afraid of getting it wrong, and so they just make no decisions. So, stay fascinated with what your home is revealing about you.

I remember reading a book by Amy Morin called 13 Things Mentally Strong People Do, and she says in that book you can tell what you build your self-esteem around based on the things you hold onto. And I was like, "What?" And the examples that she gave is like if you have diplomas and your awards framed, you probably value accomplishment. You probably value your intellect. If you have your sports trophies on display, maybe it's

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your athleticism that you value. Think about the things that you hold onto in your home, and what does that say about you?

For me, I don't even know where my diplomas are. My nursing degree, my BU degree, I don't know where they are, but I do know where my coffee table books on fashion are. I have them with me. I actually put them in the car to be driven cross country because I didn't want them to be damaged in the move. Those and my handbags went in the car. And that reveals a lot about what my values are, what's important to me. Beauty, inspiration, and connection are my top three values, and those have been my values for a long time that I have practiced building my life on.

But more recently, I don't know, in the last couple years, maybe a few years, I added wealth to my core values. And the reason why I added it is because I was afraid to, which is why I needed to. I needed to be honest that wealth is important to me. Being wealthy financially, being wealthy spiritually, being wealthy emotionally, like it's really important that I have an abundant feeling in my life. And for years, I was ashamed of saying I wanted that.

And I know some of y'all can relate. Those of us who grew up with screwed up money stories often have a hard time admitting that it's important, and so we deny that desire, and we end up having split energy around it.

And so being honest about wealth being a core value, as well as beauty, inspiration, and connection, now I feel like I can live in alignment and I can build my life in such a way that reflects those things, starting with my home.

Now, here's the interesting thing. Having a wealthy home does not mean that you go into debt and get a home that you can't afford. Sometimes a wealthy home is having a smaller home because you're honoring that value. So I just want to be very clear about that. You will know it's a wealthy choice for you based on the energy that's driving that choice, but your home will reveal all of this.

I have a dear friend who is overly obsessed with what people think of her. It's unhealthy, and she's been working on it, and she's made a lot of strides. Congrats to her, because I know what that's like. I've been there. But what was interesting is seeing her home, because the parts of her home that people would see were always immaculate, but other parts of her home, such as her closet, were a mess. And think about what that says. "What's most important is what other people think, not what I think."

One of the things that I'm always fascinated by when I travel and I stay in apartments, other people's apartments, maybe I've rented it off Airbnb or whatever, is the story that their place tells. You can tell so much about a person without even meeting them just by walking into their home.

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Recently, my best friend Brooke came to visit me so we could play pickleball for a week, and she rented a home that's about five minutes from where I live. And we went over there, and as soon as we got there, the home was gorgeous. It was very a modern home with this beautiful backyard and a pool, it was so pretty. And Brooke was like, "You've got to be friends with these people." And I was like, "Why?" She was like, "They're just our people." And she went on to explain their bookshelf were all the books that we love, and they had a map on their wall with pins of all of the places that they've been, and then we saw pictures of them and their travels and surfing.

And so just by experiencing their home, it's like we had an experience with them, and we understood just based on the choices that they had made for their home and the things that are in it that we probably had aligned values, and now I have to go meet these people because I do think they're cool and I can't wait to be their friend. So, stay tuned about that soon-to-be-friendship. But isn't that fascinating?

Would the people that you want to be friends with want to be friends with you simply by them looking at your home? Let's say that you are wanting girlfriends that you can go to fancy dinners with, and they walk into your home. Do you think they would realize that you all are a connection? What kind of woman who loves fancy dinners, what does her home look like? It's an interesting question. Think about you wanting to be friends with people you can travel with. Would they walk into your home and be like, "Yes, this is someone that loves to travel and I'd love to travel with."

Now of course, we can't know the details of someone. We don't know the nuances of their personality, but we can have an understanding of their values, of their experiences, of their personality, even, based on walking into their home.

You can look at what colors they choose to paint the exterior and interior part of their home. Someone that chooses an all white palette probably has a very different personality than someone that chooses a bright pink. And yes, there are people that paint rooms pink.

You can look at the cleanliness of someone's home, and it begins to tell a story. Is this someone who has a self-image of being organized and orderly and clean, or is this someone who has a self-image of being a mess?

You can look at the photos, or the lack thereof, which is very telling, and see, is this a person who has a lot of friends, has a family, who travels, who goes to weddings and bar mitzvahs and parties, or is this a person who doesn't have a lot of people in their lives?

You can look at the paintings and the art choices, and that's very telling. And one of the big ways that you can tell a lot about a person is the books on their bookshelf. And I've talked about this a lot, but if someone had walked into my home years ago and looked

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at my bookshelf, I would've had so much shame and embarrassment. I think about me putting my home back then up on Airbnb, but I was renting it, so I really couldn't do that, but had I been able to put it on Airbnb and someone walks into my house and just looks at my bookshelf, the story that it told, and it told a story of a woman who was broken, who hated her body, was trying to fix herself. That's what my bookshelf told. It didn't tell the story of a woman who was worldly and traveled and loved art and design. Oh, no, no, no. Those are things that had to wait until I fixed myself.

So I had this epiphany, and it was, "You need to begin to be the woman that you think you're going to be over there now." And that woman did not sit around reading *How to Get Skinny in 10 Days*. She was living a full life. And so I got rid of all of those books and I replaced them, and it began to tell a very different story.

What was revealed to me then was I was a woman that was no longer going to wait. I was a woman who was going to start being her future now. And that seemingly small act of changing my bookshelf created this tsunami effect that literally transformed my self-image.

And so take a look at your bookshelf and ask yourself, "Do I like the story that this is telling? Would I be proud for someone to come in and see this bookshelf? Would I like what it reveals about me?" What I've noticed is anytime that there's shame, there's something that you can look at. And if you are ashamed of any part of your house, I want you to heal it. What needs to happen so you're not ashamed for people to come over? What needs to happen so you're not ashamed for people to look into your closet? What needs to happen so that you're not ashamed for people to open your refrigerator?

And here's what I want you to know deeply: no matter the state of your home right now, you are an amazing, beautiful woman. And what your home is revealing about you is simply your thoughts about your environment. Because at the end of the day, that's our whole experience, what we think about everything, so we can guess what we think other people will think, still our thoughts, and we can guess what we would think, always our thoughts.

So, you have two choices, the way I see it. You can either change your thinking and leave your home the way it is. That's always an option. Or you can address those things that you don't like, that you don't feel like are aligned with who you truly are, and that alone will begin to shift your thinking.

You can't do it wrong, but I do want you to get curious about what your home reveals about you. And if you don't like what it's revealing, change it. You have the power to do so. That's why I'm focused on my closet right now, my friends, because I don't like it. I'm out of sorts, I'm getting settled, and so I don't like what it's revealing about me, so

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I am going to declutter, organize, and address this part of my life right now, this part of my home.

And this is an ongoing process. And the process really is about just staying aware, just paying attention, and it's about elevating what you see every day to reflect back to you what you want to believe about yourself. Have a beautiful, beautiful week, my friends, and I will see you on the next 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.