EPISODE NO. 330

Self Image Vs. Public Image

A lot of people are focused on their public image, how other people perceive them, but in this episode, I'm hoping to convince you that what's more important is your self-image and how you can begin to align the two. So without further ado, 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. Welcome to another episode. Guess where I'm recording this episode from. Now if you follow me on Instagram, you have an unfair advantage because I've been posting, however, if not, here's a hint. I have dreamt of coming to this place for over 15 years. It's an island and it's a long way from home. Actually, it's many islands, but it's all under one name. I remember about 15 years ago, I met someone in Paris who told me that they came here with their family every single year. And I remember looking it up and thinking, "Oh my gosh, I want to go there one day." But it seemed like such a long trek. It seemed almost impossible. It seemed like something that someone like me didn't do.

Fast-forward 15 years later, I am sitting in the most gorgeous resort in the Maldives, in the middle of the Indian Ocean, and it is breathtaking and I love it because I've been able to get a lot of work done. And if you are in the School of Self-Image membership, I did a behind the scenes talking about how I manage working and traveling at the same time, but it's also something that my soul needed. I needed to unplug and get off

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technology and just spend time in nature. I've been snorkeling every day and it's like snorkeling in an aquarium. I've never seen so many fish in my life. It's so beautiful. And the water is like this gorgeous crystal clear pale blue. If you've seen pictures of the Maldives, it looks just like the pictures. And we've been playing pickleball. It's been fun, me and my friend Brooke and Fonz and her friend, and eating really good food and just being.

My very first company was called Just Be Living. And I feel like that's what I'm doing right now. I'm just being for a moment. And while I am working every single day, it's very focused work and I'm getting a lot done, but I'm also treating myself like a queen. I'm giving myself the royal treatment. And I don't know if you saw, but I am going to be hosting a five-day workshop called The Royal Treatment. I did it last year and it was by far our most successful workshop that I've ever done. It spoke to so many women and we had so many testimonials come in after just five days of that workshop saying how it changed their perspective, how it gave them permission to take care of themselves in ways like they've never done before. And listen, there's all kinds of wildlife. Did you just hear that? But the show must go on. And so I would love for you to join us. You can go to schoolofselfimage.com/royal and find all about the five-day workshop that I'm going to be hosting really, really soon.

Today I want to talk about a topic that's been on my mind for about a year, actually. And the reason why it came up is that I noticed early on when I started the School of Self-Image and I would tell people the name of my company and what I do, they would immediately go to your public image. And that's what I'm going to talk about today, the difference between your self-image and your public image and how to align the two. Because when they're both aligned in a positive way, that's when you can create extraordinary results. But early on, I would tell people that I have the School of Self-image and they would immediately think, "Oh, so you teach people how to shake hands and how to dress and how to create an image for the external world." And I spent a lot of time explaining, no, that is someone's public image. The work that we do is around your self-image, which does affect your public image and your public image impacts your self-image.

So the way I see the difference is that your self-image refers to how you perceive yourself. How you see yourself. Is the thoughts in your head that you have about who you are, your appearance, your personality, your capabilities. It is the mental picture that you have of yourself. And this includes your strengths, your weaknesses, your personal characteristics, all of it. And it's a very internal experience that is shaped by your experiences, your beliefs, and your values.

Your public image on the other hand, refers to how other people perceive you as an individual. It's the external representation that you want to present to others, and it's

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the story that other people have about you. And it is shaped by your behaviors, your actions, and the way you interact with other people. And it can be influenced by your appearance, your reputation, and even your social status.

Now, which one is more important? And I'm going to vote that your self-image is the most important thing because you will always work to prove yourself true. You will always take actions that are in alignment with your perceived identity, how you see yourself. And so it's hard to create what you want unless you're willing to change your self-image to allow for that result. So I will always vote self-image as being more important than public image. With that said, your public image is also important. It can influence how other people perceive you, and in turn, it affects your opportunities, your relationships, and your success. You think about it, a positive public image can help you build trust, credibility, and respect, and all of those things can benefit you in a very positive way. You can have career advancement in networking, and even in your personal relationships.

People with a positive public image can go on to do extraordinary things. I think about Lady Gaga. Her public image is that of a creative and powerful artist. She is unique, she's eccentric, and she is so talented and the way she is perceived has allowed her to create this immense success. However, she has openly talked about how she struggles with her self-image, how she sees herself. She's struggled with body dysmorphia, she has struggled with anxiety, she's struggled with depression, and she's talked about this openly. And that's the thing. When you have a positive public image, you might have what the world would consider to be success, but you won't have a state of wellbeing. You won't feel whole. You'll constantly feel like something is missing. And that's where so many of us have it wrong.

We are focused on our public image. We're focused on having the perfect Instagram feed. We're focused on having the curated perfect closet. We're focused on how we carry ourselves, our poise are communication. And others may perceive us as having it all together, but we know what that's like to put on a smiley face and show up and pretend that everything's okay when we're falling apart inside. This used to be me y'all. I know what it's like to have this public image that feels like a facade, and it feels like you can barely keep it up, and it feels like it's shaky and built on sand. And it's so funny, I'm in the Maldives where literally it's built on sand, but it's true. And to me it's unsustainable. It's so hard to keep up a positive public image when your self-image is so negative.

That's why I love the work that we do within the School of Self-Image. What's really interesting is you end up creating a positive public image from doing this work, but the way you go about it is so different because yes, we focus on how we carry ourselves, we focus on how we show up, what we wear. We focus on our communication. We

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focus on what surrounds us, but what makes it different? The approach that we use within the school. Is that we are doing those things not for a positive public image, but we're doing those things to provide evidence for a new self-image. And that is very different.

We're not doing it to impress other people. We're doing it to impress ourselves. We're doing it to prove to ourselves and to show ourselves evidence of this is who we are becoming. It's very similar to working out to just get a fit body versus working out to be a fit person. When you start doing this work for your self-image and in service of who you're becoming, it's a very different energy versus doing this work to simply create a public image. But the work you're doing is going to have an impact on your public image as well.

When I think about my desire to be a worldly woman, it wasn't so that I could impress people with my travels or how much I know about this or that. I simply wanted to do it because it's who I wanted to be. And so I went to sommelier school, I studied fashion design, I did all of these things to create a self-image of this is who I'm becoming. And as a result, it started to have an impact on how I was perceived as well.

I'll never forget being handed a wine list at a big table full of people and thinking, "How in the world did this happen?" How did I create this public image of someone who was entrusted with the wine list? I mean, I grew up, my only experience with wine was Boone's Farm Strawberry Hill, and I know some of y'all know what I'm talking about. I was this country bumpkin who didn't have exposure to the world of wine until I decided to learn about it. But I did it because I wanted to see myself as a worldly woman, but it had a positive impact on my public image because it's how the world started to see me as well. And that's the thing, the world will mirror back to you how you see yourself.

I think about all of these people that we look at in a positive way, but because their self-image is so negative, they don't see that. They filter everything that the world is presenting to them through their own filter. And so they're probably looking for the negative. I think about some of these celebrities who have so many fans, but because their self-image is so negative, they tune out all of the positive reviews, all of the positive feedback, and they tend to hyper focus on the negative because that fits their image of themselves. And that's why without a positive self-image, you are going to suffer. It doesn't matter how great your public image is. If how you see yourself isn't compassionate and loving and kind and positive, it is going to impact your sense of wellbeing, which is why we always have to bring it back to how we see ourselves.

When you begin to focus on that and taking action to provide evidence for a positive self-image, it's going to have a positive impact on your public image as well. And the two will become aligned. But when your self-image is positive, you don't want a

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negative public image, of course, but you're not so consumed by it. You don't sit around and watch the likes roll in. You don't sit around and obsess about the reviews, the positive or the negative. You just focus on taking care of yourself and deciding on purpose how you want to see yourself and taking action again to provide evidence for the image that you want to have of yourself. And when you do that, you will begin to align your self-image with your public image.

But at the end of the day, what really matters is how you think about yourself and how you see yourself. So dress to impress yourself. Take that action to prove to yourself that you can do it. Go to those places to provide evidence that you belong there, to use the environment around you to elevate how you see yourself. And again, your public image will be impacted in a positive way if you are being deliberate about cultivating your self-image.

Have a beautiful week everyone, and I will see you in the next episode. And don't forget to join us for The Royal Treatment, my five-day workshop that's coming up really, really soon. You can go to schoolofselfimage.com/royal and I'll see you there. 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.