



EPISODE NO. 332

The Courage to Be Seen

Do you let people see you? Really see you? Hear your unique opinions, show up in a way that feels truly in alignment with who you are, to express yourself in your unique way. Or do you hide because you're afraid? This episode is all about the courage to be seen. 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, and good morning, my gorgeous friends. I'm recording this at 7:00 in the morning, having my cup of coffee, and I'm excited to talk about today's topic. I love recording podcasts in the morning. It's very strange because I often say I dislike working in the morning, but podcasting is different. I don't know if it's because my brain is fresh or I have a space to enjoy, think, and share, but mornings are when I like to podcast jam. So here we are. I am getting ready for our upcoming Royal Treatment workshop. This is a five-day workshop where I'm going to be sharing five specific things that you can do to step into your queen energy and to treat yourself like a queen. And here's why this is so important, the world really does treat you the way you treat yourself because it's what you will allow, it's what you will look for, it's what you will create.

This is why self-image work is so important. When you see yourself as worthy, when you see yourself as a queen, when you see yourself as deserving, and then you back that up with action, crazy miracles start to happen in your life. So we are going to be

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starting that workshop next week, five days. And even if you cannot attend live, you will have access to the replays for life and you're going to learn some super valuable things. And I'm going to be teaching it in a way I've never taught it before. So come and join us. Bring your friends, bring your mama, bring your sisters, bring your friends, do it together. We actually have a lot of women who do that. They recruit their closest friends and they'll go through this experience together. But I would love to see you in the workshop. So you can head to schoolofselfimage.com/royal.

Okay, so let's dive into today's episode. And I want to start by you visualizing yourself standing in your life as a queen. And I want you to notice the energy that you are embodying as you visualize this. I'm going to guess that you do not see yourself hiding, shrinking, and running. Instead, you are standing in the fullness of who you are unapologetically and allowing others to see you in that fullness of who you are. And that's what I want to talk about in today's episode, the courage to be seen. There's a really great quote about courage by Ambrose Redmoon, where he says, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear." And I want you to hang on to this quote as I talk about overcoming the fear of being seen if this is something that you struggle with.

And it's a very common fear for a lot of the women that I work with. In fact, right now, I'm running the Style Experience, which is for women who are ready to step into their most stylish lives. And it's a lot of deep work. It's not just us putting outfits together. It's a lot of self-discovery and awareness and overcoming fear. And one of the common fears that I see when women start to dress differently is that they're so afraid of getting attention because their entire lives they've dressed to avoid that attention because attention is scary, or at least that's what their brain tells them. And rightfully so. I was thinking about why we are so afraid to be seen. And when I talk about being seen, it's not just being on stage or recording a podcast and publishing it or putting your blog into the world or going live on Facebook.

I'm talking about being seen for who you are. Have you ever had that person in your life who just sees you? You know that they see who you really are, and there's so much love and celebration and acceptance of that. It's a beautiful thing, which is why if you ever find someone who sees you, there's such a connection. I'll never forget when I was in college, I had a professor, Mr. Mize, Dr. Mize. He was an English professor, and he was one of the first people that I felt saw me. He could see my potential, he could see my gifts, he could see my strengths. He could also see my weaknesses, and he didn't hold them against me. And it was such a beautiful bond because he was really looking at the real me, the me without the mask, the me of not trying to please or be a good girl.

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He just saw Tonya for who she really was. And that is scary for a lot of people, which is why a lot of people wear a mask. They don't want to be seen. They're afraid. And why is that? Well, obviously, the first one is that people are afraid of judgment. If you are seen, you are going to be judged. People are going to criticize you and maybe think less of you. And listen, this is going to happen and it's happening no matter what. So you can either judge for being seen or you can be judged for hiding, but people are going to see you eventually in the world unless you are literally a hermit and you never leave your house. So, what I tell myself is, "Why not be judged for living my fullest, boldest, and most unapologetic life?" If I'm going to be judged anyway, I would rather be judged for that. The other fear that we have is the fear of being rejected. So if people see me, they may reject me, and that too can happen.

Are you willing to be rejected to live a full, authentic, and big life? The fear of failure, we're so afraid that people might see us fail, but have you ever noticed that the stories we love the most, the people that we connect with are the heroes and the heroines, the ones who have failed and failed and failed and then they finally succeed and we're like, "Yes." Those are the people we're rooting for. Can you imagine going to a movie and the entire movie is just about how a guy woke up one day and he was so successful and he just kept being more successful and he never had any obstacles and his life was perfect? We would be bored out of our minds. We would not relate to the character. We wouldn't want to probably hang out with that character. And yet, that's who a lot of us are trying to be, even though deep down, we don't want to be like that. It's so crazy to me.

The other reason why you may be afraid of being seen is because of cultural norms. There are cultures where you are raised to not be seen. There are cultures where you are told to be quiet, "Don't make a fuss, don't make noise. Just sit there and be pretty, or sit there and obey." So it becomes ingrained in us. So as adults, we're afraid to be seen because as children, the way we survived was to not be seen. So it makes complete sense. And then there's the trauma. Maybe you experienced trauma when you put yourself out into the world. I'll never forget after a pageant that I was in, I got beat up by a group of girls and I never got onto a stage again until as an adult. That was so traumatic to me. I was like, "I don't want to expose myself to this anymore. If this is what happens when you're seen and you put yourself out there, then I want no part of this."

So I had to overcome a lot of fear. Literally, I was like, "People are going to come and beat me up." I can see it now at SOSI LIVE. I get off-stage and all y'all come backstage and give me a good beating. But the truth is, deep down, and I want you all to really hear me on this, the majority of the world is rooting for you. This is a belief that has been backed up by studies, and it's also a belief that has helped me overcome my fear.

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The majority of the world is rooting for me. Now, I don't tell myself the whole world is rooting for me because I know that's not true and I don't want to set myself up for a lot of cognitive dissonance.

Now, I could say that and I could choose to believe it, but my experience has been, and the way the world is set up, is that's not true. There are people out there who don't want to see you win. There are people out there who will judge you, who will reject you, who will gossip about you, but the majority of people, the ones who really matter, want to see you, they want to hear from you, they want to learn from you, they want to be in your presence, they want to see you win, they want to see you, which means you must stop hiding, which means you must stop shrinking into the background of your own life. This means you must express your opinion. You must put on the dress or wear the lipstick. It means you must get up on stage, grab the mic, publish the book, ask for what you want, take up space, let people's gaze fixate upon you because you deserve to be seen 100%, period. I'm not arguing with you about this.

So now what? How do we actually do this? This is tough work because it brings up a lot of our fears. It's so much easier to sit at home and judge ourselves than to get out into the world and be judged by others, which is going to lead to your most incredible life. A big life requires that you feel big emotions. So, this means that the courage to be seen is not about not fearing it because let's face it, if you've been fearing being seen for years, maybe even decades, it's not going to go away overnight and it may be something that you carry with you for a long time. However, as the quote said, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than the fear." Is what you want, what you desire more important than the fear?

And this is why knowing your why is so important. Why you want what you want is your fuel to creating it, and it has to be more important and bigger than the fear. If not, you will give into the fear every single time. Every time I get up on stage to speak, I am nervous. Literally, I'm like, "Why are we doing this?" My body especially is screaming, "Why are we doing this? This is so dumb." We are uncomfortable. Every cell in this body is vibrating at a very fast pace. I do not like this feeling, but my why is big enough because I look out and I realize I want to be an example that we can do amazing things even if we're afraid. I want to share this work with as many people as possible. And when it comes to my life events, I love getting everyone together. And that requires that I get up on stage and talk and share and teach.

So it's worth it to me. I'm willing to feel that fear and that discomfort, and I'm willing to be seen because my why is bigger than my fear. But then I think about it, what I'm really fearing is my own judgment, which is crazy. And that's why we are often afraid to be seen is that we are projecting our thoughts onto other people. How many times

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have you done something and then after the fact you're like, "That was awful"? And then you have people come up to you telling you, "Oh my God, that was the best thing. I loved that talk. I loved that class." That has happened to me so many times where I will hang up from a call, a class I've taught and I'm like, "Ugh, that was terrible." And I assume that the whole world thinks it's terrible when, in fact, it's just my little scared brain trying to convince me that it's not safe to do that again.

Now, I'm very stubborn and my stubbornness has gotten me to where I am because I just ignore my brain, I'm like, "We're going to do this over and over again." But then after the fact, people will come up to me and they'll tell me, "That class changed my life. That was so good, thank you." So I've realized through the courage to be seen that what we are most afraid of is our own judgment of ourselves. And here's the good news with that, you have control over that. You may not be able to manage everybody else's judgments, but you can certainly manage your own. So when I have the courage to be seen, I am always so proud of myself. Even when my little brain chirps in and was like, "Oh, that wasn't good," I'm like, "Listen, you go. I am so impressed by you. I am so proud of you. You keep showing up. You keep sharing. What you have to say is important. You're important, you matter."

And that kind of self-talk has given me the courage to show up time and time again, even when I fail, even when I'm openly criticized, even when I'm scared, I just keep showing up. Now, one thing that I want to speak to specifically is the fear of people judging you openly online. I've been coaching quite a few of my friends who are entrepreneurs, and this has been coming up a lot. And what I told them, I'm like, "Listen, I want you to think about this, you have the courage to put yourself out there and they're hiding behind their computer." Because have you noticed it's very rare for someone to give you their real name and berate you? A lot of them have accounts where you can't find out who they are. They have fake names. They're hiding and then judging you for being seen. The irony in that.

So who would you rather be like? Would you rather be like the person who's on stage giving it their all or the person up in the stands criticizing? I'll be on the stage, on the field, in the game anytime because those are the people who are living life to the fullest. Those are the people who are reaching extraordinary goals and failing along the way. Those are the people who are experiencing the amazingness of life, even in the fear. So I'm going to challenge each of you this week, do something to be seen with the fear because it's not going away, so bring it along with you. But have your own back because that's what queens do. We're not going to put ourselves out there and be seen and then judge ourselves and beat ourselves up.

No, we're going to put ourselves out there and be seen and have our own back and be proud of ourselves and continue to show up so that we can offer our value to the

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world. Because every single one of you listening to this, you have something to offer your family, your community, and the world at large. So stop hiding. Have the courage to be seen, my friends. Have a beautiful week, and once again, I'd love to see you in the Royal Treatment workshop. We start next week, so head over to schoolofselfimage.com/royal and I will see you, hopefully, on Monday. And if not, I'll 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.