



EPISODE NO. 336

# Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

Tonya Leigh:

When people ask me what has had the biggest impact on my self-image, it's hard to choose just one thing, but I will tell you, in the top three things is travel. Travel has definitely changed how I see myself. And because of this, I'm so excited for today's episode where I am talking with our first ever guest on the School of Self-Image podcast about travel and self-image. 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.

Tonya Leigh:

Hello, my friends, and welcome to this episode of the podcast. I am super excited about today because I'm doing something for the very first time. I have my very first guest for the School of Self-Image podcast, and I could not think of a better person to introduce you to than Alessia Tenebruso. I have known Alessia ... I don't know. How many years have we known each other?

Alessia Tenebruso:

Almost 10 years.

Tonya Leigh:

10 years.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Almost coming on 10 years. So it's like nine.

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

Tonya Leigh:

How crazy is that? So, Alessia has been a client. She is a School of Self-Image member. She's been with me on my Paris retreats and I've watched her just talk about self-image. I've watched you completely transform, start your own company, and you're just crushing it. And so I'm excited to bring you on to talk about your area of expertise, which is solo travel, and specifically how solo travel or even travel in general can change our self-image. So, welcome to the podcast.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Thank you. I'm honored to be here with you.

Tonya Leigh:

So fun. So, tell us more about you. Tell us about what you do and why you do it.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Sure. So, I'm Alessia and I am the owner of One Girl Travel. One Girl Travel is a solo travel focused life coaching company where I help empower women to realize how capable they are of doing anything they desire in life, but specifically traveling. I provide them with all the information they need to go out and travel and to stop waiting on other people and to live the life that they desire. I've been solo traveling for 11 years now. Just came up 11 years yesterday, and it has changed my life. And I know the power that solo travel and life coaching has, and that's why I put the two together and created One Girl Travel.

Tonya Leigh:

Oh, I love it. It's so unique and so different. And like you, travel has been one of the main things that's changed me. Within the School of Self-Image, as you know, we talk about mindset, style, and environment. And when I think about environment and travel specifically, there's something powerful about taking yourself out of your usual environment and putting you in places that probably make you feel uncomfortable, but also provide you access to new ideas, new thoughts, new ways of seeing the world and yourself. And so when it comes to travel and you think about your self-image, how has travel impacted how you see yourself?

Alessia Tenebruso:

It has completely changed my life, to be honest. When I first started this journey, I was in a mentally abusive relationship where I was constantly told I wasn't good enough, wasn't pretty enough, I wasn't thin enough, all the things. And when the relationship ended, I was completely broken. I didn't know who I was anymore because I depended on him so much for my happiness or whatever I was experiencing during that time. And I realized that I needed to rediscover who I am. And back then, I was very shy. I was very timid, very quiet.

Tonya Leigh:

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

So crazy to think about. Look at you now.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Now I'm like the mayor whenever I see anybody. Yeah, and very self-conscious. I did not have a good relationship with myself at all back then. And so I knew I needed to do something completely different and step outside my comfort zone. I'm like, I need to go on a trip by myself. And that's what started it for me. I took a trip to Florida and it changed my life.

Tonya Leigh:

God, let's talk about that trip.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yeah. Okay.

Tonya Leigh:

How many days was it?

Alessia Tenebruso:

It was a week long trip-

Tonya Leigh:

Wow.

Alessia Tenebruso:

... and I chose Florida because I was familiar with it. I stayed at my grandparents' condo, which I've been to before, but they weren't there with me. So I was familiar with the area, but I wouldn't even go to a fast food restaurant by myself, let alone get on a plane and go and to a restaurant by myself, go meet people by myself. That was all completely new to me. And from the moment I stepped on that airplane, there was somebody sitting next to me around my age and he was a solo traveler. And I've never had a conversation with anybody on a flight before, and him and I talked the entire flight and he showed me photos of all of his travels. I'm getting the chills talking about it because I just felt so guided on that trip by the universe like, this is right. You're doing the right thing.

And so I talked to him the whole trip. And then during my trip, more people just gravitated to me and I met so many people and I just felt so sure that I was doing the right thing, that I was on the right path. And I'm like, I need to keep doing this because I did a lot of firsts on that trip. I did a fishing excursion by myself and I made friends on the boat. I went out for meals by myself because I didn't want to sit in the condo and just eat alone. And I really just forced myself outside of my comfort zone and I realized that I could do it. You know? Like, okay, I got this. I can do this. Now what else can I do? [inaudible 00:05:56].

Tonya Leigh:

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

Yeah, it's so crazy because I'm sure there's some women listening to this who have traveled very little, or if you're like me, you traveled, but you always depended on someone else to plan it, like the man. And so I remember booking my first trip and how amazing it was. I was like, oh, it's not as hard as I think it is to travel. Right? You just go online. You book an airline ticket, you book a hotel, and then you just go. You follow the plan that you created for yourself. And something that was so hard in my brain turned out to be something that was so simple. It's crazy how our brain tries to scare us into our comfort zone.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Exactly.

Tonya Leigh:

But once you get over that, it's like the world really does become your playground. Really does.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yeah, I agree. Our thoughts are what decides whether we're going to do it or not, and we have to manage those. And that's why I created One Girl Travel, to help with those thoughts.

Tonya Leigh:

Yeah. So what do you think the biggest obstacles to solo travel are for women?

Alessia Tenebruso:

There's many obstacles, I feel. Just as a solo traveler in general, there's the cost of solo traveling, which a lot of people don't realize that it's actually sometimes more expensive for a solo traveler because we have single supplement fees where we're paying for two people even though we're one person.

Tonya Leigh:

Oh, I didn't even think about that.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yeah. So that's actually why I started cruising. My first big trip was a cruise from New York to Bermuda, and I chose that because it felt safe to me, and it also had studio rooms for solo travelers and meetups. And I actually met a guy from Italy on that trip that I'm still friends with to this day who met me in Paris when I was with you. Yeah. So, you meet great people when you're traveling alone. So yeah, be mindful of single supplement fees and see if you can get it waived or if you can find something where they have accommodations for solo travelers. That's one obstacle. The other, of course, is safety. That's your main priority when you're traveling alone because you are completely reliant on yourself for everything, and especially your safety.

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

So, you just need to be aware of your surroundings. I personally like to share my itinerary with my family and my trusted friends so they know where I am. I actually share my GPS location as well, so they know exactly where I am at all times. And another tip I would have is when you're checking into your hotel, just make sure the doors lock, the windows lock, and just do a quick tour of the room, make sure there's nobody hiding in there. I know it's very rare for that to happen, but it's better to be safe than sorry when you're traveling by yourself. But there are so many safety tips that I have. I have a long list of safety tips I can share with you.

Tonya Leigh:

Awesome. I think one of the biggest fears, and I'm curious to see what your answer is, but women don't know how to be with themselves, a lot of women. Because growing up, I know for me, I was so busy taking care of other people, being around other people, being with myself actually scared me. And so I would avoid it because the few times that I was with myself, I was with my brain, and my brain at the time was not a pleasant place to be. And so I'm sure for women who are considering this, or maybe you've even gone on a solo trip and you're like, "It was awful. I hated it," that's not a reason I don't think not to do it. I think that's a reason to do it, as you said at the beginning, to get to know yourself.

Because at the end of the day, the most important relationship you have is the one with yourself, and solo travel is a way for you to create that intimacy with yourself, get to know what's going on in your brain and get to know what you like and what you don't like. Because when you travel by yourself, you're making all the decisions. You're deciding what restaurants to go to, you decide when to wake up, when to go to bed. It's actually ultimate freedom, but it also can be very scary. And so has that ever happened to you where you're like, "Ugh, I don't even want to be with myself and I'm stuck in this room in Mexico. What do I do here?" And how did you work through that?

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yeah, absolutely. I find that during the day it's easy because there's so many activities to keep your mind occupied. You do a lot of things, but it's when you're back in your hotel room for the night and then you're by yourself in this room and all the thoughts decide to come and join you and spend the night with you, and you have to pay attention to what thoughts you're telling yourself and manage those thoughts. That's the biggest part and the biggest thing that I have had to work on through the trips. So I'm not going to say my first trip, I was able to manage my thoughts and that's it. Those thoughts came, I felt them, and I still moved on. I still did the things even though I was scared, even though I was telling myself, "Hey, you're not good at this. You don't know what you're doing." You know? But over time, the more I did it, the more I was able to manage my thoughts. And the biggest thing is to pay attention to what you're

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

telling yourself and then try, as you've taught me honestly, is to how to navigate your thoughts and make them work for you to know what you're telling yourself and try to make them still believable, but in a better way to help you move forward.

Tonya Leigh:

Yeah. Have you ever been super lonely on a solo trip?

Alessia Tenebruso:

There have been times where I've been super lonely. When everyone's dancing, like the nightlife. I'll be like, oh, I miss my friends. I want to dance. But now I go and dance. So that was [inaudible 00:11:51].

Tonya Leigh:

I was like, I can't imagine you not dancing.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Now I dance. But in the beginning, it's intimidating when you see all these people together and they're all having fun. I'm like, oh, I miss my group of friends. They'd be here with me having fun. But then I'm like, I'm here for a reason. I chose to go on this trip by myself. I have to tell people, "No, you're not allowed to come with me," because I need this. It's not for the lack of not having people to travel with me. It's because I need to have that feeling of being uncomfortable, because I know I'm going to grow as a person every time I do this. And so I do feel lonely on occasion when there's activities like that. But honestly now at this point, I don't really feel lonely because I truly feel like I am my own best friend. And that's something I learned through solo travel, spending more time by myself.

Tonya Leigh:

Yeah. And I think the lesson there for all of you is not to avoid that time with yourself. Because I think sometimes, as I was saying earlier, when you're left alone with your own brain and it's so painful, and especially if you don't have the tools, you don't even know how to deal with all of that. The tendency is like, oh, I don't want to travel by myself. But what if you embrace that? I even watch women who when they come to the social live events, and they're so nervous. Some of them have never traveled without their spouse. Some of them have never traveled on their own. Some of them have traveled very little and they're so nervous. But I watch them say yes to that and how it changes their lives, just knowing I can do something on my own. And then they get all of this time with themselves, even though we have events or activities throughout the day, they have this time with themselves to really think about your life. How often do we get to think about our lives? Because we're so busy in them. And I'm sure for you, just because I know you, when you're out traveling, you're spending time thinking on your life, thinking about what you want, what your vision is, what you're going to do with your company. And that I find to be a lot more difficult when you're at

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

home and you're familiar environment. When I'm traveling, that's like when I get to dream and think of what I want, what I don't want. It's a very reflective time. So I'm just curious if you use your solo travel strategically for that visioning process. Yeah.

Alessia Tenebruso:

I feel like I have the best ideas when I'm traveling by myself because I'm not working. I have the time for myself. I get to focus my attention on myself. And that allows me to realize, okay, now when I come home, how am I going to do things differently? What have I learned from this trip that I can implement into my life? And that's what I like to call the solo travel lifestyle, because the trip is just a physical act of going and exploring and doing things by yourself, but it's when you pull those things that you learned into your daily life so every day feels like you're living a vacation, you're living your life the way that you want to live it. And I have implemented so many things that I've learned from solo traveling into my everyday life, and it's made my life so much better.

Tonya Leigh:

I have to say, in watching you and watching you not only solo travel, but build your company, and it's just been very inspiring. And the one thing that you do, and I think so many of us just watching all of how you do it is how you really do live your life like a vacation. Every time I see you, you're going to concerts, you're out with friends. It's like you really do embrace the moment. And I remember when we went to Paris, when you came to my retreat, you had a ... Because you're a big Jimmy Buffett fan, you had a Jimmy Buffett concert planned. You had a photo shoot planned. You just embraced that trip and maximized it instead of ... And I'm sure you felt uncomfortable and you probably had your fears, but instead of listening to those, it's almost like you ignore them. And not only do you ignore them, you go in the opposite direction and just live that experience so fully that the fear has no space, if that makes sense. I don't know how to say it other than you just grab it and just squeeze every ounce of juice out of the experience. And that's what I just appreciate so much about watching you.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yeah. I know that I want to enjoy my life and I want to experience as much fun as possible in my life, and that fun is worth me being uncomfortable for. I know what the outcome is. If I just get through that discomfort, I know that I'm going to grow. I know I'm going to have a great time, so I just do it anyway.

Tonya Leigh:

Yeah.

Alessia Tenebruso:

[inaudible 00:16:41].

Tonya Leigh:

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

There has to be something in your brain at this point that has linked fun and discomfort together. Let's think about that. Because I think all of us want to have fun, but when we think about being uncomfortable, we think that that's the opposite of fun, so we run away from it. But what if we saw discomfort as fun, like as a challenge that we get to embrace and work through and go beyond? Which is what I see you do with solo travel.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yeah. And honestly, I haven't really thought of it like that, but now that you say it, it just kind of clicked in my head. I think I've always kind of been that way where I would always find fun in challenging myself. As you know, I joined the boys wrestling team in high school. That was hard. That was so hard, one of the hardest things I ever did in my life. But it was one of the best things I ever did. That was the best decision I ever made in my life. And I think I learned from a young age, if you push yourself and see what you're capable of, that is so much fun because then it's like a challenge. What else am I capable of? What else can I do in my life that's going to make me proud of myself? And I really do feel like that's how I live my life every day.

Tonya Leigh:

Yeah. And again, it's such a fun honor to witness. It really is. So, what do you say to the woman who is listening to this and she's thinking to herself, "I really would love to go on a solo trip. I'd really love to have that experience, but I'm scared and I don't know where to start." Where would you encourage her to start?

Alessia Tenebruso:

I would encourage her to start somewhere locally. If you never have done anything by yourself, I would not recommend you go on a seven-day trip to Paris. That's a very big jump. So I recommend if you've never done anything by yourself, if you've never had a meal by yourself, start doing things alone. Start with a walk in your neighborhood and then go explore a new neighborhood. Gradually increase your discomfort levels. But let's you're used to going out for meals by yourself, and you travel for work, so you're kind of used to traveling. So then go somewhere you've never been before and spend a long weekend. You know, just work your way up. But I always recommend get a hotel room in a town nearby that you always wanted to try out and spend the night by yourself. Because even that act, you're going to be alone with your thoughts. You're going to be focusing only on you, especially if you have a family or a spouse or pets, whatever, where your focus is always on everybody else. You might not have the opportunity to focus on yourself until you're by yourself in that hotel room. And that is a huge accomplishment on its own to spend that time alone and just hear what you have to say to yourself and how do you get through it. And then keep pushing yourself and trying bigger travels.



## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

Tonya Leigh:

Yeah. And if you don't like what you're saying to yourself, change it.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yeah.

Tonya Leigh:

You want to like being with you, and I think that's what solo travel can offer. And the other thing, I was just thinking about this, and I'm curious if you've ever thought about this or played around with this idea, but I remember when I went on my first solo trip internationally, I went to France. And I had been to France before, so I had that comfort level, but I never traveled internationally on my own with no one, just me. And I remember getting off the plane and having this sense of creative energy because I realized ... So, you know when you're in your usual environments around the same people, they're always reminding you of who you've been. But this, no one knew who I had been. No one knew that I had struggled with my weight. No one knew that I was starting my company. No one knew. And I literally felt like I can try on all these different energies. I can practice being whoever I want to be, and no one knows that that's not who I am yet. Because eventually I did become that. And so do you find that when you're traveling solo, it's this opportunity for you to step into a new identity that you've been wanting to step into?

Alessia Tenebruso:

It is one of my favorite aspects of solo travel. Growing up and stuff, I've always been more of a tomboy. And when I first started solo traveling, especially with the cruises, I'd be like, nobody knows who I am. I can wear whatever I want. Because at home, when you're ... I've been friends with the same friends all my life since school, and they know me as one version of myself, and when I'm traveling, no one knows me. I can be my future self. I knew who my future self was, what she looked like, what she wore. And I'm like, I can be her. I can start acting like her now. And I would wear these gowns to dinner where people would be like, "Oh, are you having dinner with the captain?" I'm like, "No, I'm just having dinner by myself."

And I loved it. I loved that feeling. And I felt like it was almost like my ... you know how a superhero has their costume or their cape or whatever? That was mine. That gave me the confidence I needed to go and have a meal by myself and feel good about the experience and enjoy my own company. Just my future self was really like that armor for me that I got to just show up as who I wanted to be, and now I became her. And that's the craziest part. I'm like, wait, I am my future self from back then. I became her by being her. You know?

Tonya Leigh:

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

I know. When you talk about the version of you that's shy, I'm like, where did she go? Because that's not the Alessia I know now, which you think about it. You show up on these solo trips and you practice, like, what would an outgoing woman do? What would a wealthy woman do? What would a woman who's in love with her life, how would she walk into a room? And you get to practice that without having Billy who's known you for 20 years saying, "Ugh, who do you think you are, Alessia?" Right? You don't have that noise. Or usually it's the noise in her own head about what we think the people that know us is going to say. Right? So you don't have that. So it's like this beautiful canvas for you to play, which is another reason why y'all should be solo traveling, even if it's just a weekend away at a close by resort or hotel, just to give yourself that experience. I think it's super fun.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yeah, it truly is. It's so much fun. As you were saying it, I'm lighting up like, oh, I love this part. It's so much fun.

Tonya Leigh:

And I think that's how travel can impact your self-image. So, not only does it allow you ... It's like, for example, when I went to Paris for the first time. Sometimes I'll ask women, "Who do you want to be?" But sometimes women don't have the words yet. They know a feeling, but they don't know what that looks like because maybe they've never been exposed to it. At least that was me. And so when I went to Paris for the first time and I just saw how these women dressed and how they ate and just their je ne sais quoi, so to speak, I was like, "Oh, that's it." I was able to see what I had been feeling that I wanted. And I think travel exposes you to the potential of what your future could be. I just got back from Dubai and, girl, you got to put that on your list, by the way. It's amazing.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Major FOMO looking at all of your pictures.

Tonya Leigh:

But I got to access a new potential reality, new ideas that don't exist in my current reality. And so for all of you listening, putting yourself in these new environments, as you know, Alessia, you're going to have so much more exposure to what's possible. I think about you meeting all these people and probably the ideas that you've gotten and the shifts in thinking and perspective. I'm sure you have too many to even tell, but it's only because you've been solo traveling for so long.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Exactly.

Tonya Leigh:

So, what advice do you give to women who want to solo travel?

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

Alessia Tenebruso:

Just do it. I tell my members all the time, when you begin this journey, it's going to be uncomfortable. I'm telling you upfront, it will be uncomfortable. Know that going into it and do it anyway. Nobody starts anything as professional. We all start as beginners. You're going to figure it out as you go. You can't fail at solo traveling. The only way you're going to fail at it is if you don't learn anything from the experience. As long as you figure out something about yourself, or when you're traveling by yourself, you're going to learn what you like, what you dislike, what time you like to eat, the food you like to eat, when you want to go to bed, all the things you want to do. So just pay attention to those things and really implement them into your life to make your life feel good to you and create the life that you desire for yourself.

And so do it. Just go and do it. Know that it's going to be uncomfortable at first, but over time, you will get more and more comfortable and you're going to grow as a person, and eventually you're going to create this life for yourself that you've dreamed of. It's really that powerful. That's why I am just so adamant about everybody going out and traveling, especially women, because we're always told, "Oh, you should be careful going there.": Even I still hear it to this day. I'm like, okay, I'm still going no matter what.

Tonya Leigh:

Or you need a man to do it.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Oh, yeah, please. Yeah. That's what we're told all the time. Don't. You need yourself. And the biggest part of it is you have to have your own back. You have to be your best friend. To this day, I still will repeat affirmations in my head, like a mantra, like you got this, you can do this. You're strong, you're capable. I have to remind myself sometimes because I'm scared, but I do it anyway because I know I'll get through it. And as long as I'm supporting myself and I have my own back and I am just taking care of myself, I'm going to be fine. And you will be too. Just trust yourself.

Tonya Leigh:

Better than fine. You are thriving. The one last thing I'll say ... Probably not the last thing, because every time you talk, I'm like, oh, there's another nugget. But here's another advantage that I just realized as you were talking, because you were talking about you get to decide when you go to bed and where you eat and what you eat. One of the other benefits of solo travel is you have to be decisive. And I know some of y'all struggle with being decisive, but if you're not, you're just going to be sitting in your room all weekend eating nothing and being really sad because you're not going out. You have to decide. And I think that is another huge, huge benefit of solo travel because it's going to force you to figure out what you want to eat, where you want to

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

eat, what time you want to get up, what you want to do. And these are the little decisions that we sometimes abdicate to other people. Like, "I don't know, what do you want to do? Where do you want to eat? What should I do?" And that kind of energy keeps you stuck. We have to be more decisive as women, and solo travel is an opportunity to practice that skill, I think. Not I think. We know because-

Alessia Tenebruso:

Absolutely.

Tonya Leigh:

... you're not making decisions, you're not going anywhere.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yeah. It really taught me how to be bold and how to just be visible to people. My sister, she would always joke like, "Oh, you're such a shrinking violet." I don't know if you remember that phrase, or I think it was a show or something, but now after I come back from trips, they'll be like, "Whoa, you're not a shrinking violet anymore." Because now I'll take command of a room. Now I'll speak up for things. And I like to kind of challenge myself to speak up on certain occasions. Like in a restaurant, if they'd put me in the middle of the room and I don't feel comfortable there, I'll speak up and be like, "Oh, can I sit by the window over there? Can you move me?" And I used to be so embarrassed when my mom would do that, and now I'm like, I will always speak up because I have my own back. That's what solo travel taught me. Speak up for myself. If I want to have a good time, I need to do it on my terms, and I know what feels good to me now. And so you have to speak up for yourself to make sure that you're having the best time possible on your terms.

Tonya Leigh:

Yeah, I love that. So, tell everybody listening where they can find out more about the incredible Alessia Tenebruso and One Girl Travel.

Alessia Tenebruso:

Yes. So actually, if you sign up for my mailing list, you go to [onegirltravel.com](http://onegirltravel.com), you will receive my free guide. It's 10 tips on how to begin solo traveling, and it has everything you need to get started on this journey and start taking action on your dreams and go live the life that you desire through solo travel. So go to [onegirltravel.com](http://onegirltravel.com), you can sign up there, and yeah, I'll send it over to you in your inbox.

Tonya Leigh:

Fantastic. Last question. Where's your next trip?

Alessia Tenebruso:

## Travel & Self-Image with Alessia Tenebruso

I'm going to Bermuda actually next week. It's not a solo trip, though. It was supposed to be a solo trip, and then everyone wanted to come with me, so I'm like, "Sure, come with me."

Tonya Leigh:

Well, listen, you don't always have to travel solo.

Alessia Tenebruso:

I know. It's still fun traveling with other people. And the great thing is that I can still feel comfortable doing things by myself and keeping up for myself. Like, okay, I need time alone. Let me go do this. And you can still do solo activities even though you're with a group of people.

Tonya Leigh:

Aw. Well, have the best trip. Thank you so much-

Alessia Tenebruso:

Thank you.

Tonya Leigh:

... and thank you for being my first guest on the-

Alessia Tenebruso:

So honored.

Tonya Leigh:

... School of Self-Image podcast. Love you.

Thanks everybody. Take care. Bye-bye.

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.