



EPISODE NO. 340

How to Use Style to Change Your Identity

Do you feel like you're in a rut, or maybe you're just having a hard time reaching your goals and you're just feeling stagnant, like something's got to change? Well, I have an idea and it has everything to do with what's hanging in your closet. So, let's dive into 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 beautiful friends. How's everybody doing? It is starting to get hot in Charlotte. I was warned that it gets super hot in the summers and I can already feel the truth of that statement, but I am looking forward to it. I love some vitamin D. I have been head down in my creative cave, working on something that members of the School of Self-Image have been asking for for quite a while. A lot of the members are wanting to use the self-image method and the work that we do within the membership to focus on losing weight. That is their extraordinary goal. And up until this point, I haven't had a weight loss centric program, and ironically, even during this whole time, so many women have been losing a lot of weight within the membership. But there has been this need and this request for a focus on this topic.

And so I have been creating something that I'm so excited to teach within the membership. It's called the Slim Self-Image. And I am taking all of my work over the past over a decade and focusing it on creating a Slim Self-Image. And when I look back over my journey, and you have to realize when I started this journey years ago, I didn't

How To Use Style to Change Your Identity

know about the world of personal development. I didn't know thoughts become things. I didn't know that our brain was this powerful creative tool. I just know that I was struggling and I kept trying the same methods and failing consistently. I tried dieting, I tried exercising, I tried following the plans. I went even as far to take crazy medications that made my heart flutter. And I would always come back to a certain weight and a certain state of being. Now, for those of you who've been with me for a while, you know my story.

I was at one point over 200 pounds, then I developed an eating disorder. I was just all over the place weight-wise, emotionally, and things began to shift for me when, well, two things happened. I went to Paris and it was there that I realized, wait, these people are eating delicious foods. They don't seem to be depriving themselves. They look so chic. I was just like mesmerized. I was like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, what's happening here?" But deep down, I knew I wanted the essence of that. There was something about that culture that really spoke to me and I realized I'm going to have to stop doing almost everything that I've been doing and being almost everything that I've been being in order to become that. And so that set me out on this adventure of figuring out the art of becoming, literally changing your identity.

I had to stop being a woman who needed to lose weight and become a slim woman who had simply gained a little weight. Notice the difference, y'all. Huge difference. The other thing that I realized is that I had to get out of the diet culture. I had to stop focusing on the problem and reconfirming an identity that was causing me to stay in this perpetual toxic cycle. And so that required that I figure out things like what brings me joy? What's pleasurable? If I weren't always focused on losing weight and dieting, where would all of that attention and energy be going? What do I keep putting on the back burner and waiting until I lose weight? And what if I started to do that now? And so these kinds of questions just set me out on this whole new adventure. And then I discovered life coaching and I started to understand neural pathways and I started to understand neuroplasticity and I started to understand how our thinking is forming our image and that image is determining our entire lives.

And so years ago I was doing this process of becoming, of changing my self-image. And since then I've learned even more. I've expanded my knowledge, I've expanded my body of work, and I'm going to be applying it to those of you within the membership who want to focus on losing weight. And not just losing weight, that's the ironic thing, I have to use that word for you to understand because a lot of you, that's where your brain has been. But our goal is to take you off of focusing on weight loss. Our goal is to help you change your identity so that then the results just become effortless. It's just who you are and what you do, and you don't have to white-knuckle your way to your

How To Use Style to Change Your Identity

happy weight, whatever that looks like for you. And just to be clear, when I use the word slim, I'm not talking about skinny.

I'm not talking about a certain size. It is going to look different for every single one of us. When I use the term slim, it is all about letting go of what's holding you back, letting go of the excess, letting go of what's weighing you down. And this work will always, always begin on the inside. And so even though the membership is closed right now, some of you have heard through the grapevine that I'm doing this course and you want to be a part of it. And so we are going to be accepting members who want to participate in the Slim Self-Image. In order to participate in it, you have to be an annual member. This is one of the perks of being an annual member. You get this course, you get the Wealthy Woman, you get Charm The Room. You get so many benefits to being an annual member.

And in addition to that, you get everything that's included in the membership. We are going to be teaching this live, me and my community manager and fabulous coach who has also lost a lot of weight using this process, Laura. Her and I are going to be co-teaching this course with live coaching. It's going to happen over eight weeks, and we are starting this month. And so if you want to be a part and you want to let go of the struggle and literally recreate yourself so that you can have lasting results so that it just becomes who you are, you don't have to struggle to eat well, you don't have to struggle to exercise it's just what you do. Then come join us. You can go to schoolofselfimage.com/slim and read all about it. Now, this is a great segue into today's topic, because I want to talk about how to use style to reinvent yourself.

And within the Slim Self-Image, we are going to be talking about three core pillars, a slim mindset, slim surroundings, and slim style. And what I mean by this is you showing up as the woman in your future now. And we're going to be talking a lot about how to do that when you are maybe 20 pounds, 30 pounds, 40 pounds overweight, and you're like, "But Tonya, I don't like anything that I wear." Listen, we've got to rise above that. We are creating a new identity. And what I can tell you from my own experience and now coaching thousands and thousands of women is that if you try to delay your actions until one day when, you are going to also be delaying your results until one day when. What that means is however you think you're showing up in your future, you've got to start practicing doing that now.

I'll never forget being in a rut. I was so depressed. I was extremely overweight. I was a single mom at the time, and I noticed that the rut was showing up, especially in my style. And so the way this looks, and you all can relate to this, is that you are feeling a low mood, whether it's sadness, whether it's loneliness, whether it's fear, whatever it is. And so you wake up and you let that emotion make the shots. You let that emotion depict your day. And so you reach for things to feed that state of being. And so for me,

How To Use Style to Change Your Identity

I was reaching for my scrubs at the time. I was working as a nurse, and scrubs were so easy. It's got that big drawstring. I always got them a size bigger. I got the big tops because I thought they hid me.

They don't. They just make you look even bigger. But they were also very comfortable. And so I was wearing my scrubs every single day of the week. I know that's shocking to people who know me now, because I dress up every single day, but literally every single day I was wearing my scrubs. And I remember looking at my daughter, she was like three at the time, and realizing if I kept living like this, the kind of example that I would be setting for her, and thank goodness she doesn't remember me back then, she was so little. She was a tiny little thing. But I knew the trajectory of where I was heading, and I knew that I had to shake things up. I had to wake myself up, because nobody was coming to save me. It was on me. It was on me to provide for her.

It was on me to create a life for us. It was on me. And one of the first things that I did was I changed my clothes. Now listen, I was not rocking a Dior dress. I was not even rocking anything probably remotely fashionable, but I put on something that said, "I matter and that I'm working on caring for myself." Because I couldn't quite believe that I was caring for myself at the time. But I remember putting on, it was a dress, and I remember putting it on and something shifted. It was ever so slightly, but it was like a little glimmer of hope, a little glimmer of possibility. And sometimes, folks, that is all you need to get the momentum moving in a different direction. Now you have to understand during this time it wasn't like all of a sudden I was dressing up every day. I still had days where I'd wear my scrubs, but more often than not, I was choosing to wear something that looked a little bit better. And so these little actions add up over time. Think about it. They've added up to me being who I am today, which I think I'm pretty stylish, who would've thought? But it started way back then when I decided that I wanted to get out of a rut, that I needed to become someone different. And here's the reason why style is such an amazing tool to reinvent yourself. I think it was Wayne Dyer who says, when you change how you look at things, what you look at changes. And I'm going to take that a step further to say, when you change what you see, what you see changes. Here's what I mean. When you show up and you look at a possible version of you in the mirror, it is telling your brain what to think of you.

Now what we often do is we keep looking at the same version of ourselves. And so we just keep reinforcing the same beliefs that we have about ourselves and therefore the same identity. Now one of the arguments that I've heard in my community and from colleagues is, "Shouldn't I change my thoughts first? My thoughts are going to be what determines how I show up." And on some level that is true, because here's what it looks like. The thought is I'm going to put on something new. That is the thought. I'm going to try something new. So, there is a thought preceding you dressing in a

How To Use Style to Change Your Identity

different way, but it doesn't change your identity yet. You see, I'm so different than a lot of people. I believe in changing your environment. I believe in changing the outside world. I believe in changing the circumstance, because sometimes that's what you need to do to give yourself a fighting chance of changing your beliefs.

And so what I've noticed when it comes to style, when you use it intentionally to help you access new thoughts about yourself, new beliefs about yourself, and therefore a new identity, it can be one of the most powerful tools on the planet to actually help you create the results that you want in your life. When I first started my business, which gosh, has been 15 years ago, listen, it was way before Zoom. It's when we were doing Tele-seminars on the phone, so no one could see you for the most part, unless you went to a networking event or you posted a picture. But guess who saw me every single day? Me. And I matter. So, I remember really thinking about the version of me who had made six figures in a coaching business. I remember thinking about the version of me who had a waiting list of clients because she's helping them get results.

I remember thinking about the version of me who is known in the coaching industry because her work and her coaching is so effective. And when I thought about that version of me, I was like, "That girl gets dressed." And so I would dress up and go into my office. I would work on my marketing. I would work on my e-zine that I sent out every single week. I would coach some clients. And again, no one saw me, but I was using style to tell myself a story about who I was becoming. I was using style to change my identity from being a full-time nurse to now being a business owner, and not just any business owner, a successful, thriving business owner. And I have continued to use style to help me achieve my dreams, to help me achieve my extraordinary goals. Style has allowed me to step into new identities over and over to expand what's possible.

Because as you've heard me say many times, you can only ever create to the edge of your self-image. So, if there's something that you want that you don't yet have, chances are you're going to have to change your identity to have it. It is the be, do, have model. You be someone long enough, you do what that person does long enough, and you will eventually have what that person has. So, if you want to be wealthy, you've got to show up and do wealthy things like dress like a woman who cares about herself. And eventually over time, the world will reflect that back to you. That is just how it works. When you believe in you, when you show up energetically in the energy of that future you, it can't help but to happen. It's the laws of the universe. And one of the tools that you can use to become is your style.

Style is not only sending a message out to the world, you telling the world what to think of you, but more importantly, it's telling you what to think of you. If you wake up and put on something beautiful, something risqué, something that's powerful, whatever it is that you're going for, that is going to send a very strong message to your

How To Use Style to Change Your Identity

brain as to how to think about you and to feel about you. And that creates a state of being. And that state of being will determine what you do and what you don't do and what you attract and what you repel. Right now, I'm in the middle of teaching the style experience, which is a five-month immersion into the world of style and cultivating your own personal style and understanding how to put together extraordinary outfits and colors and accessories. And it's so much fun, and we've received so much incredible feedback.

We just sent out a survey midway through asking, "What are your results and what do you want more of?" And just the feedback has been extraordinary. But I had one woman who reached out to me personally, and she said, "I cannot believe how focusing on this one thing is helping me to skyrocket my self-image." And she was sharing some of her victories that she's had during this experience just by focusing on changing her style, because it's helped her to see her herself differently. And I've even noticed, because I've been going through this process with everyone from our Closet Detox to revisiting my style personality and statement and how I want to show up in the world, and I got rid of so many clothes that are beautiful and have served me well, but they represent an old identity. That parts of that old identity are holding me back. And so I let those clothes go, and now I'm reaching for new clothes that will help me to create a new identity. And that is how this process works, my friends.

And so some things that you can ask yourself and think about when you're thinking about your identity as it relates to style and maybe how to think about changing up your style is, number one, how do you want to see yourself and how is that different than how you currently see yourself? Do you want to see yourself as bold? Do you want to see yourself as unstoppable? Do you want to see yourself as more feminine? Do you want to see yourself as more powerful, wealthy, relaxed, athletic? I have used style to help me get into shape just by upping my athleisure wear. It motivates me. And I look at, I'm like, "Oh, that's the outfit that my athlete would wear."

So, I put it on, I feel like an athlete, and it makes me want to go to the gym and work out. So, figure out how you want to see yourself, and then begin to be curious about how that version of you is showing up in the world differently than the version of you now in how she dresses, yes, but maybe in how she speaks and how she carries herself, because that too is a part of your style. Also, ask yourself what it is that you deeply, deeply want. Within the Dream Atelier, I encourage everyone, the Dream Atelier, by the way, is a program that you get as soon as you join the School of Self-Image. It's one of the most popular programs in there, but I have everybody do a dream download and to get really clear on what they truly, truly want, and then they choose an extraordinary goal based off of that.

How To Use Style to Change Your Identity

And that's what we get to work on. And so once you define your dreams and you have that focus of like, this is what I want to focus on creating right now, how can you style to birth the version of you who's created that? And again, it's going to be different for everyone because everybody wants different things. Everyone has different dreams and desires, which is such a beautiful thing. Maybe your dream and desire is to own a farm. Well, do you have some farm boots? Let's start rocking them. Let's start telling our brain what we are creating so it can get to work for us and not against us. And again, style is a beautiful tool to help you create that identity so that you can therefore create the results. So, I would love to hear from you. I would love, love, love to hear how you are going to apply this concept. And even better, snap a photo of an outfit that you feel like is embodying that future version of you or is in that direction that's helping you get closer there.

Because I will tell you all with my style, it's been like little baby steps and little tweaks that in the moment maybe didn't feel like a big deal, but over time I realized that was the exact step that I needed to take to get me to where I am now. And so celebrate all of those little style victories when you feel like, "Oh, I feel like this is getting closer, maybe it's not exactly the outfit or exactly the style, but it feels like I'm getting warmer." So, snap a picture and tag me on Instagram @tonyaleigh, because I would love to celebrate it with you. And don't forget, if you want to focus on creating a slim identity, come and join us within the School of Self-Image.

The doors are going to be open for a little bit, and then we're closing down for a while. And so we would love to have you as an annual member. You can go to schoolofselfimage.com/slim and I will see you inside the membership. Have a beautiful week everyone, and I will see you all in 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.