



EPISODE NO. 345

How to Change Your Past

Do you ever wish that you could change your past? Well, I've got some good news, you can, and I'm going to show you how in today's episode. 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, my gorgeous friends. As I am recording this I am staring at the Golden Gate Bridge. It is so majestic with the fog over the top. But I'm a little upset with y'all, because no one told me how cold it is in the Bay Area in July. When I think of July anywhere in the world, I am thinking bathing suits, I am thinking piña colodas, I am thinking sundresses, and that is how I packed for this trip. And so I get here and realize I need a whole different wardrobe. So yesterday I was running around Mill Valley trying to find something warm to wear, and I found a sweatshirt for my friends, a hoodie, and that's what I've been wearing.

It's so great being here in the Bay Area with Fonz, who is my fiance, and meeting his family, meeting people that he grew up with, and we've been talking a lot about his past. One of the things that I deeply admire about Fonz is how he thinks about his past. To anyone who would hear his story, growing up going from one foster home to another, growing up in the projects of Oakland, growing up during the crack epidemic and all that he saw, you would think, oh, poor kid, poor adult, that must have been awful. But when Fonz tells this story of his childhood, it feels like this grand adventure that he takes to you on. He talks about how at five years old, how he would just go

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around the city by himself on the bus, and all of the interesting characters that he would meet, and how he learned to hustle from a very young age, and all of the amazing lessons that he learned on the streets, and how that experience shaped him in a positive way.

Now, I talked to someone yesterday who grew up with him, and in fact grew up in a better living situation than Fonz, but their story of their childhood is completely different from Fonz. They told the story of how terrible it was and how traumatic the experience was. And I 100% don't deny any of that, I cannot imagine growing up in those circumstances, and I am sure that there is a lot of trauma that comes from being exposed to so much at a young age, having a lot of instability as a child, that's tough, that's hard. And yet I see grown adults who are in their 50s and 60s still repeating the same stories, even though now they are in much better places.

And so I've been thinking a lot about our past. In fact, me and my brother grew up in the exact same home, exact same parents, exact same religion, and for the longest time, very much like Fonz, my brother would tell a story about our childhood that seemed idyllic. Me, on the other hand, I told a very different story for a very long time. Poor me, I hated the church I grew up in. I mean, there was just a lot of negative stories around my past. Same house, same parents, same church, two very different stories.

And the thing is, my story was no longer serving me. I was being chained to the past because of the story that I was telling and I was unable to move forward into my future because I allowed my story of the past to hold me back and to hold me down. And this is a lot of the work that we do around self-image, because our self-image is a collection of thoughts and beliefs that we have about ourselves, and almost always those thoughts and beliefs are based on the stories that we have told ourselves from our past, and so we keep staying in the past in the present.

So I looked up the definition of the past, because I was just curious what the dictionary would say, and it is defined as gone by in time and no longer existing. So if it no longer exists, then is it real? What is it? And what I've concluded is the past is just a story that you have in your head, and that means you can change the past by changing the story. Now, the way I teach this is there's fact and there's fiction, and most people are reacting to, responding to, and allowing their fiction to depict their lives. We cannot change the facts of our past. What is a fact? It is something that we can all agree upon. It is defined as a thing that is known or proved to be true, the truth about events as opposed to interpretation.

And so when you think about your past, in fact, think about something from your past that really weighs heavy on your heart, that maybe has been holding you back for a long time. I was coaching a woman, this was probably three or four years ago, and she had posed nude when she was in her early 20s, and she had so much shame around

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this. And the reason why she was not going after one of her big dreams is because she was so afraid of these pictures coming out. She was letting the fear of the past, something she had done in the past, and the shame from that, hold her back from creating the future that she wanted.

And so we did a lot of this work, I was like, "Okay, let's look at the facts. The facts are there are some pictures in the world that exist right now with you with no clothes on. That's a fact. What are you making that mean, right now in the present? What is the story that you're telling about that?" And her story, as you can imagine, was not a favorable one. She was afraid that people wouldn't respect her. She was afraid that people would make fun of her. She had a story that she had made dumb decisions, her list just went on and on. So that was her fiction around the fact. And so I said to her, I'm like, "Okay, listen, we can't change the fact there is a picture out there of you somewhere with you with no clothes on, that's a fact. But we can change the story, and the story is where you are giving away your power."

Because everybody can agree that she's going to be disrespected, everybody can't agree that that was a dumb choice. Some people would be like, "That was a great choice, you were young, you were figuring life out, good for you for having the courage to do that." Can you see how everybody would have a different story about that? And so I asked her, I'm like, "If you could tell yourself any story around this fact, what would you want to tell?" Because what happens is we want to go and change the facts of our past, but we can't do that, but we don't need to.

Two people, same circumstance, can have two very different stories and therefore have two very different lives because of those stories. Really think about that. You don't have to change the facts, there are women out there who had nude pictures taken in their 20s who are rocking out their lives. In fact, some of them have gone on to create amazing careers because of that. Why? Because they had a different story, they didn't have shame around it.

And so I want you to think about what is something from your past that you've been struggling with that has held you back? Maybe you're not going after your dreams out of fear, like my client. Maybe you're not going after your dreams because of maybe a lack of confidence because of something that happened in the past. What is that thing that's holding you back from your past? Because here's the secret, my friends, that's not holding you back. What's holding you back is the story that you have around events from your past, and you can change the story, which means that you can change the past.

A lot of the work that we do within the School of self-image is around our future selves. I love to do after stories of who you've become in order to reach your extraordinary goals. And so when it comes to thinking about changing your past, one

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of the exercises that I love to do is to tell a story of your past from your future self. So instead of telling the story from who you are today, because maybe that version of you is holding you back, go to the future. Go to the future you who has achieved your goals, who is living the life that you want to live, who is being the kind of woman that you want to be, and think about how she tells the story of her past.

Now, it's important to remember that when we are in our most empowered state, we don't suppress, we don't deny, we don't ignore, which is sometimes what we do. We're like, I'm not even going to look at the past, I'm going to try to pretend that that didn't happen. But deep down, energetically, it's still something that's very active within our bodies. And so we don't do that. What I imagine our most empowered versions think about our past are stories that make us stronger, that make us unstoppable, that build our confidence.

And so get into that character and imagine how she would tell the story around something that maybe you have a negative story around that right now. Because remember, she's the version of you who's gotten beyond even where you are today. She has made the million dollars, she is madly in love, she's raising a beautiful family, she's in her dream home, whatever it is for you, and remembering she didn't get there by letting her past hold her back. So she had to start changing her past by changing her story. How does she tell the story of your past? Get to know her. Let your future self guide you. Let her tell you about your past, because I can promise you the story that she has around her past is one that makes her unstoppable. Have a beautiful, beautiful week my friends, and I will see you in the next episode, cheers.

Hey there, got a question for you. Have you subscribed to the weekly Edit? If not, what in the world? This is your ultimate guide to transforming your self-image. You're going to learn how to upgrade your mindset, banish self-doubt, and embrace self-love. You'll cultivate a positive outlook that radiates from within. But that's not all, at the School of Self-Image we also believe in the power of style and surroundings to change how you see yourself. So expect weekly tips on how to upgrade, how you're showing up in the world, and your style, as well as what surrounds you, and making intentional choices about both. The Edit is your go-to resource for a total self-image makeover. It's like having a personal cheerleader, a stylist, and a best friend all rolled into one. So what are you waiting for? Say goodbye to the self that's holding you back and hello to the new you. Sign up for the Edit today by going to schoolofselfimage.com/edit, and I will see you in your inbox.