



EPISODE NO. 354

# Getting Back to My Roots

## Swell AI Transcript: SOSI354.mp3

Be forewarned, my friends, that the episode that you're about to listen to is my most unscripted episode ever. I go off on what people call Tonya tangents. I don't stay on script because I don't have one. And I talk about many different things. However, it's really symbolic of what the episode is about, getting back to my roots, because that's what my life has felt like. It's been very unscripted, and I have gone off on different paths to find my way back to where it all started. So I hope you enjoy this episode. 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 dear friends. I have been putting this episode off for almost three days now. And that's so unusual for me. I usually don't procrastinate, but this has been one of those episodes that I've had a lot of resistance around doing.

Number one, I've had this annoying dry cough. And so every time I go to talk, it's been an issue. But I think it's been deeper than that. This is a very personal kind of podcast

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where I'm not really teaching anything, but I'm sharing an experience that I'm going through right now. And the reason why I'm doing this podcast is when I sat down with my creative manager who helps me put together the content plan for the year, we were having this conversation around me moving back home and what that is about and what I'm experiencing. She was like, I think it'd be really fun for you to do a podcast about getting back to your roots. And so at the time, I was like, oh, that's a great idea. Let's do that. And now that it's time for me to actually sit down and record it, I find myself wanting to put it off. And so usually, when there's something like that that you want to put off, you need to look at it.

You need to really examine what's going on. And I think for me, it's because this is such a personal, personal topic. And sometimes it's hard to articulate things that are very personal. And I like to be articulate, I love to explain things well. And so I just took all of the pressure off of me. And I said, you know what, for this episode, I'm just gonna talk. I'm just going to share from the heart and talk about getting back to my roots, which I never thought I would be talking about. I never thought I would be doing a podcast about getting back to my roots because for a long time I wanted to get as far away from my roots as possible. I know some of you all can relate to this. Maybe you've left your roots and you're like, there's no way I'm going back there. I get it. And maybe some of you are listening to this and you're thinking, I want to get away from this place as far as I can. And I understand that.

I know that feeling more than anyone because I spent probably first 25 years of my life thinking that almost daily. Do you ever feel like maybe you ended up in the wrong family or the wrong place? Like something went wrong up in the heavens. I remember my brother joking. He was like, I'm pretty sure my mom brought home the wrong baby. You do not belong to this family. Because I was always so different. And first of all, I just have to say this before I continue. I told you all this is going to be me just talking, but I think this is an important point. I could not have landed in a better family than the family that I was given. My parents, my brother, they're all just extraordinary people. Like I love them madly and I'm very, very blessed to have the family that I have.

But I'm talking about the culture, the place, the mindset. how people eat and live, that I just always felt uncomfortable in. I was like, I dreamt of a very different kind of life. And so I spent most of my early adulthood just wishing and hoping and praying I could get out. And then I did. I moved to Myrtle Beach, which wasn't that far away, but it was a little bit more expansive. It felt more expansive to me. And that was when I was able to

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really start to do some incredible and deep work on my own self-image. Because what I realized is that as long as I was in that familiar environment that didn't feel like a good fit, I was just re-triggering thoughts and beliefs that I had about myself that kept me stuck in the self-image. And so therefore, when you're stuck in a certain self-image, it's very difficult to create the results that you want in your life. And so when I moved to Myrtle Beach, again, it wasn't that far away.

It was literally like an hour away from my parents' house. And I mean, they call it the Redneck Riviera. So it wasn't like I moved to a different country. But I did have access to people from different areas. I did have access to different foods. I had access to different things to look at on a daily basis. And so being in that new container, allowed me to begin to practice thinking new thoughts and stepping into literally a new identity. Now, during this time, I was also traveling to different countries and I was just immersing myself in all of the things that I was curious about. Everything from fashion to wine, to cuisine, to languages, to art. It was just a wild time in my life. where I was just hungry. Do you all remember times in your life like that where you're just hungry and you can't get enough of life? You want to know everything. You want to learn everything. You want to do everything. You want to go everywhere. Well, that was me. I literally could not get enough of life. Hence why I started a company called French Kids Life. I was just thirsty for life. And I was looking everywhere as to where I could drink it up. And then from Myrtle Beach, I moved to Colorado.

So there again, I was in a completely different surrounding. And there I learned some really, really incredible lessons. And what's really fascinating is now being where I am, and I'll get to that in a second, because I know some of you may have just stumbled on my podcast. You're like, who is this chick and what's she talking about? But now I can look back and I can see where on my path, I started to somewhat stray a little bit. And I think that's normal. I think it's a beautiful thing. I think we are always hopefully being curious and giving ourselves permission to go out there and experiment and to try new things and to allow ourselves to get off the path. But we need to be able to get back on it. I call it hot and cold. I'm sure you all played this game when you were a kid, like someone hides something. And when you're close to it, they're like, oh, my God, you're getting warmer. You're hot. You're hot. You're, oh, my God, you're burning up. And then when you're moving further away from it, they're like, oh, you're getting cold. Oh, my God, you're freezing. Well, I never got to the freezing point.

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But looking back now, when I moved to Durango, Colorado, that was a moment where I started to get a little bit cold on my path. And then I moved to Denver and I started to move back to more warm, but it still wasn't hot. Right? And while I was in Denver, I was like, OK, what is next? And my heart said, maybe it's time to go home. And I was like, no, we're not doing that. But she kept insisting that maybe it was time to go home. And that's when we came out to Charlotte. And I spent a weekend there. And it felt like I was getting back to hot alignment to who I really am. And when I think about life, and I think about all of our journeys, it really is that it's our search for meaning, our search for our identity, our search for purpose. And so we set off And we try on different things and we go on this great adventure, all trying to figure it out. And listen, if anybody tells you they haven't figured out, they're lying. No one does.

There's no one concept. There's no one way. There's no one truth. I teach self-image because it is the one concept that has had the biggest impact on my life, but I don't by any means think it's the only thing that works. I think there are many ways and we're all trying to find out like, what is the way that will work for me? And so you go off on these adventures. to look for the answers. And then you find out that the answer was in you all along. You know, when I think about my search for my identity, and I talked about this recently in the membership, I'm like, really, it's within us. And yes, you do get to decide who you are. But the answer, I think, is already in you. And it's you figuring out who did you come here to be. And that's why I think getting in touch with our desires are so important. Getting in touch with what turns us on, what lights us up, because those are the signs that will reveal to you who you came here to be. And that's what I did when I left home. I was trying to find out what do I love beyond this 30 mile radius? What else is there out there for me to explore? and to experience.

I think it's so important that we collect experiences. I think it's so important that we expose ourselves to many things because if not, you may never find out who you truly came here to be because you haven't given yourself the opportunity to explore all of the different possibilities for you and therefore you limit yourself. And so when I left home years ago, I was in that search. And I realized around Colorado, especially Durango, I was like, oh, this is feeling a little bit off course. And so I made a new decision, and I went to Denver. And again, that felt better. And then, as I said, my heart told me, maybe it's time to go home. And when we came to Charlotte and we were driving around, it was like, yes. I just felt my body go, girl, you are getting warmer.

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Now, is it completely hot? I think I got a lot of hotspots left. I think for now it is the perfect place for me. I'll never forget when we were there, I was driving down Queens Road. And for those of you in Charlotte, you know, Queens Road. If you know, you know, Queens Road is gorgeous. Big canopy of trees over the road, beautiful, like mansions with these beautiful lawns, very Southern, very old world. And I realized that is at the core of who I am. I appreciate elegance and style.

I appreciate the attention to detail. And as it relates to the South, I definitely appreciate the hospitality, the sense of community, the sense of slowing down. and having time to have a conversation with a neighbor, connecting with people, taking care of each other. I just missed that. I really did miss it. And so coming home, I felt like, wow, this is really a full circle moment. But what was really interesting is that I came home a different person. You know what I mean? I think about T.S. Eliot's quote, and he says, the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. Now, I have definitely not stopped exploring. And I don't know that this will be where I settle forever. But it is interesting getting back to my roots. and how it's feeling in my body. Because listen, you all, my brain is telling me, girl, what are you doing? You're going back, you're regressing. Everybody else is going fast, and you're slowing down. And then I question it. I'm like, No, I don't think that's true.

I think when you are being true to yourself, when you're being honest about what you desire, when you are not trying to follow everybody else, but you're listening to your own internal wisdom, I think that is always, always progression. And years ago I wrote an article called, I think the title of it was Your Petite, no, it was Your my goodness, what was it? I think it was your petite, maybe your grand, meaning what may be looked at from the outside, from other people's perspective, based on what they've been conditioned to believe a success, right? You, what you really want may seem small, but for you, it's huge for you. It's, it's going to require change. It's going to require that you grow. The example I love to give is, I've worked with women who have been workaholics their whole life. And they have crushed it, in their words. And they have created the successful careers. And they want to go back to a simple life. They want to give that up. And people will look at them and say, what are you talking about? You've got it made. You are where everybody wants to be. But for them, they ended up there because they got off their path.

They didn't stay in touch with their intuition and their body. And they started following what society told them was success. And they're exhausted. They're frustrated. They're

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unfulfilled. And they're ready to get back on their path. They're ready to follow what feels hot. And so people will say to them, are you crazy? You're going to give up this career? And so for them, it is a big thing to make that decision. It's going to require that they grow in massive ways, that they completely transform their self-image. And I personally am experiencing some of that now. I've even had a couple of people say to me, like, I can't believe you're moving back. I thought you'd never come back. I'm like, yeah, I didn't either. Life surprises you sometimes.

But what's crazy is I'm coming back as a new version of myself. I'm coming back with so much more understanding, so much more compassion, so much more wisdom. And so even the place that I'm coming back to feels different to me. It's like I'm experiencing it for the first time, as T.S. Eliot said. And that's exciting. But I'm also excited to get back to the roots of Southern culture. There are some things about the South that I missed, such as the hospitality. Southerners pride themselves on being gracious hosts. They try to make others feel warm and welcome. They invite people into their homes, come sit on the porch, bring a friend. It's like everybody's welcome. And it's a beautiful thing. And I'm excited to experience that again. You know, the other thing about the Southern culture that I really appreciate is the focus on family and community. It's very important. And I do feel like in our society now, with technology and with everybody's thirst to go fast, that we have forgotten to really connect with each other. And that was one of the big reasons why I wanted to come back home is I wanted to be close to my, my family. In fact, my, my dad fell last weekend when I was there and broke his hip and was in the hospital. He still is actually.

I was so grateful that I was able to be close to him and not have to try to support him and my mother from, you know, thousands of miles away. And being there for family and having each other's back and having a sense of community, I think it's so important. I was watching the documentary about Blue Zones. It's really good. I highly recommend it. It's on Netflix. And it's where they go into different cultures and study centenarians, those that typically live 100 years or older. And there are, I think, seven different pockets of the world where they notoriously exceed 100 years old. And one of the attributes that every single one of them had is that they had a strong sense of community. They weren't lonely. They weren't feeling like they were alone and having to do life on their own. And I think that is so, so important. And so that's been a really beautiful part of getting back to our roots. And love it or hate it, I do appreciate the politeness and the charm of the South.

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Southern manners are a real thing. As children, we were taught to treat our elders respectfully. I remember as a child, I would get in trouble if I ever forgot to say, yes ma'am, or no ma'am, or yes sir, or no sir. And I think that's one of the things that I also appreciate about the French culture. If you walk up to someone and just start asking a question or you walk into a business and you don't say bonjour or give some kind of salutation, you're considered rude. It's a sign of respect to acknowledge other people and to show that we are respectful humans interacting with each other. I love the Ritz-Carlton.

They say their motto is, ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen. And that is one of the things that I do appreciate about my roots, about the Southern culture, being respectful, being polite, and also, again, the slow pace of life. tend to go fast. And listen, going fast is a beautiful thing if you're going in the right direction. But what happens in life for so many people is that they go so fast and they're not checking in with themselves. And then they wake up one day and they're like, Whoa, where am I? And how did I end up here? And so when you go slower, you are more deliberate, you are more attentive, you tend to appreciate the journey more. You know, one of the things that I decided a long time ago, very intentionally, is that I didn't want to grow my business too fast.

You know, I've seen people that have grown businesses really fast and from the outside looking in, people are like, Oh my God, it's amazing. Oh, how they do that. But then you talk to some of these people and they're like, Oh, I have built a monster. I'm not happy. I want to burn it down." And for 15 years, I could have grown my business so much more fast. I could have made a lot more money, but I've always realized that I don't know how, but I just always known that going slow would allow me to create really deep roots like an oak tree. that's solid, and that has stability. And, and that's for life in general. And there are areas in my life where listen, y'all, I've gone so fast. And I'm like, Oh, geez, where how'd I end up here? And listen, just as a little side note, if you find yourself feeling that way, it just takes one decision, one action, one thought to get you back in alignment, to get you back in the direction of your path. So don't feel like, oh my God, I'm a lost cause. No one ever is.

I have been way off course in my life. And you know, sometimes that's what we need. I don't ever beat myself up over that. I'm like, yep. I needed to go off course like that. There was a lesson to be learned over here in the weeds. And now I'm ready to get back to the path that I was supposed to be on. But the Southern culture, back to the topic.

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This is what happens when I just freestyle a podcast. That's what I'm doing right now. But back to the Southern culture, I do appreciate the slow pace, the home cooked meals, the conversations that can happen, the meeting up with neighbors, the, you know, just appreciating this moment. And that is something that, quite honestly, I was starting to get out of the habit of when I was in Denver. When I was in Colorado, I was starting to go fast. And again, sometimes you want to go fast. And it feels good and exciting. But you have to decide and figure out why you're going so fast. What's driving that? What's the energy? And for me, I was like, you know what?

I'm ready to slow it down again, and really maximize this moment. Appreciate this moment. Take this moment in. I am all for having big, extraordinary goals. I love it. And I feel like those goals, when you choose an extraordinary goal, and we do this within the School of Self-Image, and it's based on a deep burning desire, it is trying to lead you back to yourself because that desire is there for a reason. But I tell everybody in the membership, I'm like, listen, if y'all are in a hurry to get to that goal, you are thinking that life is better over there than it is here. And you are abandoning this moment. And the more you can appreciate and enjoy today, this moment, the more you are going to be aligned with that goal. The more you're going to be aligned with the future that you want. And so the Southern culture, the getting back to my roots, I feel is me getting back in alignment with my future self. Because when I think about her. She very much loves so many things about the Southern culture.

The charm, the delight. Southerners delight in their days. They really do. They know how to delight in food. They know how to delight in a beautiful day. They know how to delight in each other's company. They are really good at delighting in life. So many Southerners that I know are like the American equivalent of bon vivants. Just people that understand how to live well. They work hard, they play hard, they rest hard, they enjoy life hard. And they live for this day. And that's how I see my future self. And so coming back to my roots, it's really interesting. As I'm doing this podcast, a lot of it is about me living more in alignment with the future that I deeply, deeply desire and bringing that future into my life today. As I'm sitting here talking, I'm realizing that I talk a lot about our future. And I love talking about the future.

I don't spend a lot of time talking about the past. Because number one, in the way that I used to talk about the past, it just wasn't positive. It didn't feel good. I was using the past as an excuse as to why I couldn't move forward. I was using the past as a reason to have excuses. I was using the past as a reason to feel sorry for myself. And so my talk



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of the past was never in a positive way. However, I do believe that there is a power in the ability to look at your past and pull from it the roots that serve you, that will help you to actually create your future. And I'm realizing now there's so many things for my roots, my work ethic, my kindness, my love of people, my sense of adventure, my tenacity, my resilience, my grit that my mother taught me.

All of that is a part of my root system. that was established a long time ago in my past. I believe that our roots will always help us grow. Our roots will nourish us. If it doesn't, it is not a root for you. It is something you need to let go of. And when I think about getting back to our roots, it's getting back to that, that nourishment, that part of us that maybe we haven't known for a long time, but, but has been there for a long time. But maybe it hasn't been watered. It hasn't been cared for. It hasn't been respected. It hasn't been acknowledged. And so getting back to our roots is about going back and finding and acknowledging those parts of ourselves from our past that have gotten us here, that has made us stronger, that is an attribute. And every single one of us, we have something from our past. qualities, maybe from the culture we grew up in, lessons that we learned early on, that will help you create an extraordinary life.

I am personally so happy to be getting back to my roots. It's like I've been off on this grand adventure and I'm coming back home as a new woman, as a new person. And I know there are many more grand adventures awaiting, but it's always nice to know that you can come back home and that home is going to look different for all of us. But figuring out where that is for you, I think is so, so powerful. And for me, it just happens to be in the South. The South is a very charming place. In fact, I'm going to be hosting our SOSI South live in November in New Orleans. And I'm going to be spending two and a half days with the most incredible room full of women. And I'm going to be teaching a topic that I am so excited about, which is about how to live a charmed life. I am so excited about this two and a half day experience.

I am currently deep in planning mode. And so I've been spending a lot of time thinking about the women that I've been having conversations with lately, as well as the conversations that I've been having with myself. And there's this general consensus of feeling like life has lost its magic. and feeling like you've lost your way and wanting to get that spark back, that mojo, that excitement, that passion for life again. And that's what I want women to walk away with. Not only this deep understanding of their own magic, but the tools to get back in alignment with it. The tools to show up and delight in their lives. You know, when I think about Southern Charm, I think about taking the time to

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appreciate the little moments, the morning coffee, the smile from a stranger. You train your mind to focus on what's going well and right. And then that gratitude and that optimism, it gives you this magnetic energy. That some may call *je ne sais quoi*, but what I know is that that energy begins to attract things into your life. And it also gives you a force for you to like overcome challenges and to keep showing up for your dreams. And when I think about the Southern charm, there's also a grace to it. So even when you get frustrated, it reminds you of your power.

You don't let external events control your inner peace. You ground yourself, and you respond thoughtfully. And that inner poise, it allows you to handle obstacles with flexibility. And you can overcome anything with that kind of energy. A charmed life is a magical life because you start to delight in the little things. And then those little things often turn into big things. It's like whatever energy you throw out comes back to you. And I do believe that if you can appreciate the little things, then you are trusted with the bigger things. And so I cannot wait for SOSI South. I have so many amazing things planned for you all. You know if you've been to my events. These are not just show up and let's sit in a room all day. We have parties. We have experiences. It's so much fun. And we do have a few tickets left. And so if you are wanting to live a charmed life, if you want to get excited about life again, if you want to meet some extraordinary women who will probably become some of your greatest friends, and you want to do it in New Orleans, come and join us.

I would love, love, love to see you there. You can head to [schoolofselfimage.com](http://schoolofselfimage.com) forward slash south and read all about it. Have a gorgeous, gorgeous week, my friends, and I will see you on next week's episode. Cheers. Are you ready to discover the ingredients to living a truly charmed life? Then get ready, my friend, for the event of the year, your charmed life coming to the enchanting city of New Orleans this November 2nd through 5th. Join me in the vibrant streets of the Big Easy as we dive into the eight ingredients of a charmed life that will show you how to live with more joy, vitality, and abundance.

From epic parties, extraordinary friendships, and life-changing conversations, this event has it all. Your charmed life is not just an event. It's a luxe experience that will leave you feeling inspired, empowered, and ready to make the world your playground. Over the course of two and a half days, you will discover the eight essential ingredients to living a truly charmed life. One, that your nine-year-old self will raise a flute to one day and say, well done, darling. All you need to do is go to [schoolofselfimage.com](http://schoolofselfimage.com) forward slash live

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to get your ticket. Your charmed life awaits in New Orleans. I cannot wait to see you there.