



EPISODE NO. 368

Loving Your Quirks

Do you have any quirks? Those things that are maybe considered to be a little weird, a little eccentric, but they make you uniquely you, but maybe you try to hide them, maybe you try to change them. Well, before you do, listen to this episode, because we're diving into the power of loving your quirks.

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. Are you all ready for the holidays? I don't know about you, but I am ready for 2024. I am so excited for a brand new year, a fresh start, new beginnings, a whole new next level. This year has been a really emotional one where I am reexamining everything, from what I want, to the people in my life, to where I want to go. I'm having an identity crisis in the best of ways. They say it happens around this age. I'm almost 50, and so I'm like, I knew it was coming. And so, it has arrived. But with the work that I've been doing this year, I've also come to some realizations, and one of them is this. I believe the secret to the most amazing and magical and extraordinary life is, drum roll, accepting and hopefully loving every part of yourself.

When I think about the ideal self-image, she's not perfect. I don't think that's ideal. That's not the human experience. I don't think of some perfect version of me who never gets it wrong or has her ducks always in a row. What I envision as my ideal self is just what I explained, the version of me who accepts all of her. And over the years, there have been parts of me that I have wanted to reject. And not that there was anything wrong with these parts of me, but I had been told that there was something

wrong with them. I'll never forget someone telling me I was too feminine, and then it turned in she's too sweet, she's too superficial, she's too corny. I have been called too much of a lot of things, and I realize now those things are actually my superpower.

Yeah, I'm a little corny sometimes. Am I superficial? It may seem so on the surface, but when you hang out with me, when you get to know me, you realize there's a lot of depth there. There's a lot of experience, there's a lot of trauma. Am I too feminine? I don't even know what that means, but I'll take it. These little personality traits, or maybe it's a weird habit or obsession, or maybe you like to collect certain things. All of these things that make you unique, that make you an original, are the things that we often struggle to share about. Maybe we have some embarrassment about our stamp collection. Maybe we feel like we shouldn't be too loud. Maybe we think we shouldn't be so quiet. Because society will always try to shape you into what it wants you to be.

If you hang around certain types of people and you're in certain environments, there is a standard of behavior and sometimes your quirks don't fit in to that environment.

They are judged, they are ridiculed. You may feel like you're going to be rejected. And so this episode is all about you having the courage to not only embrace your quirks, what makes you a little weird, but to love them, to celebrate them, and as a result, discovering the people who truly, truly appreciate your unique quirks.

So, what is a quirk? Well, it is an unusual behavior or habit or part of a personality that makes you unique or eccentric, and they're usually the little things that set you apart from everybody else and reveal your identity. So some common quirks are maybe collections, as I mentioned. Some people love collecting quirky things like rocks and figurines or maybe shoes, and those types of collections really reveal what you're interested in, what you love. And I always say, you are what you love. If you looked at my life, you would see a collection of beautiful books. I love gorgeous coffee table books with travel and fashion and design. If you looked into my closet, you would see a collection of accessories. I am obsessed with accessories, belts, scarves, jewelry, all of the little details that I think really make an outfit. These are things that I love to collect that are quirky. Not everybody collects those things, but they are a reflection of what I love.

There are food quirks. How many of you are picky eaters? Or I have a friend who doesn't like for anything on her plate to touch. Everything has to be separated, have its own perimeter, and it's so fun to eat with her and just watch how she's so just repulsed if the green bean touches the mashed potatoes. It's one of her little quirks. Maybe you love something intensely. Maybe you have this all-consuming interest in Paris or maybe cat videos, but you just cannot get enough. That, my friend, is a quirk. Maybe you have certain habits and routines. Everything has to be very specific of how

you do things. Maybe you always put on your left shoe first, for example, and these quirks give you a little structure to your life.

And then my favorite kind of quirk is the personality quirk or maybe a certain mannerism that you're known for. Maybe you are easily excitable, you have high energy and you get really animated when you're talking. Maybe you use your hands a lot, like I do, and your enthusiasm is infectious. Maybe you get this cute little nervous laughter when you are uncomfortable and it can come out in the most inappropriate times. I was just watching, what is the show? Oh my goodness, it just slipped my brain. Special Forces. So, this is a show about celebrities who do this 10-day special force bootcamp, and it's a really cool show just to watch the mental toughness that's required, even over physical strength, to overcome really challenging situations.

And so these celebrities go Season One I think is out in the desert. Season Two is in New Zealand in the Cold. It's just really, I think it's a really cool show just to understand psychology, but I can't remember what season it was, but it was Hannah Brown. If you watch The Bachelor, you remember, I think she was a bachelorette, and she's this cute young woman from, I think, Alabama. She's from the South, and she has this quirk of smiling when she's really nervous. And so you can imagine they're screaming in her face, "What are you smiling at?" And the more they scream, the bigger she smiles. And it's her personality quirk. It's something that she does to release tension and to deal with really uncomfortable situations.

Maybe your personality quirk is like my man, where you're brutally honest. And while honesty is good, those with this quirk lack a social filter and they offer blunt opinions without sugarcoating anything. Now, he embraces and loves his quirk. He sees it as being real and being trustworthy, and you're always going to know where you stand with him. Now, some people don't appreciate it. And that's the thing, some people will not appreciate your personality quirks. But do you want to be liked or respected? Such a good question. And what's more important, other people liking you or you loving you, you embracing you?

So much of our dis-ease with ourselves is because we haven't accepted ourselves. We're trying to change into these versions that we think will be socially acceptable. And while I'm all about change, it's all the work that we do within the School of Self-image. What we're all trying to get to is self-acceptance. And that's why I teach my members, "We're going to do this work upfront and we're going to change from a place of self-acceptance. Because if you don't accept yourself now, the way your brain's wired, no matter what you create outside of you, you're still going to be rejecting some part of yourself." So learning to love what makes you you is the work.

I have several quirks that I have struggled with because I was told I was too much. One of them is being told I'm too emotional. Now, the way you would most likely experience this is if you were with me while we are watching a movie. If it is a movie about a deep human experience, I am for sure going to cry. And a lot of times these are the movies about overcoming obstacles, like an underdog doing the impossible in spite of all of the odds. Those kinds of movies, I don't know what it is, it just tears me up. I'm so happy for them. My brother used to make fun of me and say, "You would cry over Wheel of fortune." And guess what? I have cried over Wheel of Fortune. When I see someone on there that I want to win that jackpot so bad, and then they win. I'm so happy for them. I'm like, "Get it." I'm so overjoyed.

And then it's that deep human experience kind of stuff that just gets to me. My daughter just sent me a video yesterday, and you have to understand the context. I had gotten a call from my mom yesterday right before my daughter had sent me this video, and she was FaceTiming me with my dad, and I could just tell my dad wasn't right. He was confused, he couldn't remember my name, and it was heartbreaking. So I was already in a really vulnerable space. But even if none of that had happened, this commercial that my daughter sent me would have just thrown me over the edge. I was in the car, Fonz was like, "Are you okay?" I couldn't catch my breath. I was crying so hard.

And if you want to see this commercial, first of all, I'm warning you get your tissues out. But it's so beautiful. If you just look up Chevy Christmas commercial, it is a five-minute-long commercial and it will tug at your heartstrings. If you don't cry over this commercial, I'm a little bit concerned for you. But those kinds of things, I feel at a deep, deep level and I'll just start crying. I don't care where I am. I can be in the middle of Target and will just bawl with no shame. Now, I used to think there was something wrong with this. In fact, as I said, people have told me, "You're too emotional. Stop being so soft. Stop being so weak." Listen, being emotional is not weakness. The willingness to fill your emotions, I think is a superpower. And so, once I embraced this quirk, I didn't try to stop the flow of life and the flow of who I am.

Years ago, I taught a course called Modern Day Icon. Some of you may have taught that, but we talked about this type of thing. And in fact, in the membership, we talk about personal branding. And your brand, what makes you iconic, what makes you representative of something is going to be a collection of all these little unique quirks and things that make you you. It saddens me to know that you may be tempted to dilute those things because other people don't appreciate them. Please don't ever do that, for your own sake. It's like you trying to be vanilla when your soul is like a sea salt caramel. Right? Why would we ever do that to ourselves? But I get it.

I'll never forget a woman calling me out in a group of people, saying, "Oh, you're way too feminine." And I had so much embarrassment and so much shame. Because of the way I had been taught and the associations that we make in our own brains, I heard, "You're too soft, you're too weak." And I've always, on one hand, seen myself as super strong, but the way that is displayed is not through brute force or not being overpowering and dominant. For me, it's just been my ability to handle life and to do it hopefully in a graceful way. So when I heard her say, "You're being too feminine." I took that as, "You are being weak." And that was not what I wanted to be, and so I was tempted to get rid of this thing that just came so naturally to me.

And I realized that would be the weakest thing ever to do, to conform to what one person said I was too much of. Because usually our quirks are found in our too muchness, our too muchness in terms of what we love, what we are obsessed with, how we show up in the world. That's what makes us unique and causes us to stand out. And standing out can be uncomfortable. It can cause a lot of attention. It can create a lot of judgments coming at you. Some people may reject you for your quirks. But you know what? It beats you rejecting yourself. Another personality quirk that I have is I am silly and I giggle a lot. My family is like, "You're always so giggly and happy and fun." And I'm not always happy, let me just clarify. But I do look for silver linings. And I find that on the worst of days, I need this the most.

Now, you can imagine when people don't take me seriously or they tell me that I am too silly or too corny or whatever it is. At first, when I would hear these things, I would be like, "Ugh, is that the way I want to come across?" But then I realized the beauty that those qualities bring into my everyday life. When those people aren't around, when it's just me with me, I love giggling, I love having fun, I love being a little silly, because life is serious enough. And so the work that I've done over the many years is just embracing those quirks, because that's what really gives me power. That's what really makes me strong. To reject myself, weakens me. It takes my power away.

I watched the Pamela Anderson documentary. If you haven't watched it, it's really good. And she was just talking about her own experience with this, how the world perceived her and told her she was too this and too that. And now, fast-forward, her being true to herself and the results that she is living in now because she didn't reject herself. She embraced what made her her. The same goes for Dolly Parton. Think about her. Think about people and the things that they've said about her in the past. She's had too much surgery, she's too blonde, her boobs are too big, all of the too muchness. But Dolly just kept on being Dolly, and now she's like a national treasure. You don't mess with Dolly Parton. And I think what we admire about her the most is that she stayed true to herself. She embraced her quirks, what made her so Dolly.

There are so many benefits to loving your quirks. Number one, it boosts your self-confidence. Because in your mind, if you're always telling yourself, "I shouldn't be that way, or there's something wrong with me," that's just chipping away at your confidence. When you walk through this world with the energy of, "This is who I am, and if you don't appreciate it, then you just don't understand goodness or I'm just not for you." When that's your energy, there's so much confidence that comes from that. And the way I see it is that I came into this life alone and I'm going to leave alone. I'm going to be with me every single day. Me with me, that is the most important relationship. So if I can't accept the one person that I'm with every single day, how is that going to be a beautiful life? If I'm always thinking I should be different and rejecting the things that make me so me, it's not going to be a good life, my friends. Trust me, I've tried.

And it's so interesting when we come back to self-image work, because you may be thinking, "But Tonya, isn't that what you do? Don't you encourage reinvention and transformation?" And the answer is yes, and the way to do that is by accepting yourself as you are. In fact, one of my favorite quotes is by Carl Rogers, and he says, "The curious paradox is that when I accept myself as I am, then I can change." And so, self-acceptance is so key, and that is a result of deciding that you're going to love your quirks. You're going to embrace them instead of trying to fit in and be like everybody else.

The other cool thing about loving your quirks is that when you accept them and you embrace them, you're going to attract other people that appreciate them. Maybe you meet fellow stamp lovers. Maybe you meet people who really love being around giggly fun-loving people. Maybe you attract people who appreciate your quiet nature. But trying to be like everybody wants you to be, you're going to attract a lot of people you don't really want to hang out with. They'll be draining. You'll have anxiety around them. And that's no fun.

And then finally, loving your quirks just adds color and joy to your life. I mean, we all love different types of art. Can you imagine if the only art that existed in the world was black and white photography? That was all that was available. Now, if you love black and white photography, that would be an amazing world to live in. But eventually you would even get bored. There would be no contrast. You'd be like, "God, I can't even appreciate my black and white photography because I don't have anything to contrast it against." And so, by embracing your own quirks and appreciating the quirks of others, you'll realize it's what makes the world so quirky and whimsical and interesting and joyful and fun. It adds color and diversity to the world.

Now, if you have certain quirks about you that you've had a hard time embracing, and maybe you've even wanted to change because you've been told you're too much or

you've been told it's weird, I'm going to encourage you to ask yourself if you really want to change it, or is it something that you're trying to change because of what other people think? Because if you put 100 people in a room, they are going to have 100 different suggestions about who you should be. Really think about that. Some people will tell you you should be more ambitious. Some people will tell you you need to be less ambitious. Some people may say you need to speak up more. Some people may say that you need to be quiet more. Because everybody's living through their own filter. And so if you're trying to please everyone, you're going to end up pleasing no one, especially yourself.

And so this work is really about you learning to not care so much about what people think. And I say, not so much, because I think when you're a kind and good person, you do have some level of caring what people think. You don't want to go out there and just be a jerk under the name of, "I don't care what people think." You don't want to go out there and take advantage of people and just be like, "I don't care what people think. Tonya told me not to care." No, there are ethics and things involved, but with quirks, no one's hurt with a quirk, it's just you. It's a representation and an extension of you. And so because of that, you need to care less about what people think. And I know it sounds easy in theory, but practicing that, not so much.

We spend a lot of time changing and adapting our behaviors to please others. I know this from my own experience. Have you ever noticed when you're around certain people, you act totally different. You're like, "God, who is that?" You may find that you let go of your too muchness because you don't want to offend people, but you walk away from those experiences feeling so empty and disappointed and maybe even anxious. Why? Because you abandoned you. It's like you telling that little girl within you, "You shouldn't be that. You should tone it down." And that is hurtful. Chances are you would never do that to another human, but we're doing it to ourselves all of the time.

So, learning to not care so much about what people think is the secret. Care more about what you think. What do you need to believe about your quirks that give you the courage to not only embrace them, but to love them? For me, I believe that me being too emotional is a beautiful thing. It means that I am living a full human experience. I get to feel the sadness and the joy. I get to feel all of that, and I don't try to cut off the flow of life. When I think about my quirks that come along with my so-called too much feminine, I really believe that it's my superpower. Because the world can be hard, and we're taught to be very hard, especially as women. And these days, we've had to be to overcome so many of the obstacles that were put in our way that kept us from getting raises and being part of the workforce and voting.

You think about what all of our ancestors had to do to allow us the experiences that we have now. And I do see, and I hear it from clients, we've over-corrected. And so many of the women that come to me, they'll say, "I am drawn to your work because it does have a softness to it. It is feminine, and it's what I'm missing." And so I think about all of the women that would not be introduced to this work if I had not embraced my too much feminine energy that I was accused of having. But the best part is the more that I've embraced it and loved it, the more I've attracted the people into my life that either A, enjoy being in that energy, or B, who want more of that energy in their own lives.

Now, with that comes the opposite. There have been people who don't appreciate it. They think I am superficial. They think I am too girly. They think all I do is sit around, talk about lipstick and earrings and high heels and pearls, which is so far from the truth, but they get to think what they want to think. I'm just not their girl, and that's okay. Nothing wrong with them and nothing wrong with me. We're not meant to be a match for everyone. We're just looking for the people that we are meant to be a match for. That's it. And if you want to attract the right people into your life, embrace your uniqueness, embrace your little oddities, the weird parts of you, the things that make you so beautifully you. Love your quirks, my friends.

So, I want you to think about what makes you you. What are your little quirks? What makes you different from everybody else? I think those are your superpowers. Love them, celebrate them. And hey, listen, come share them with me on Instagram, @tonyaleigh. I'll be looking for you in my DMs. Have a beautiful week, everybody, and I will see you on next week's episode. Cheers.

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