



EPISODE NO. 378

Loving Your Age

Let me ask you a question. Do you love your age? Really love it. Do you appreciate it? Are you enjoying the age that you are? Because if not, today's episode is for you. And we're going to kick this one off with a George Burns quote where he says, "You can't help getting older, but you don't have to get old." So let's dive into loving your age.

Welcome to the School of Self-Image, where personal development meets style. Here's your hostess, Master Life Coach, Tonya Leigh.

Hello, gorgeous friends. Today we are talking about loving your age. I am so excited about this episode and let me tell you why. I often hear from women that their age is an issue, and I've heard both sides of the spectrum. So I've heard younger women tell me that because of their age, they can't do the things that they want to do. They're not experienced enough. They don't have enough on their resume. And then I've had a lot of women telling me because of their age, as an older woman, that it is an obstacle. It's holding them back. And I want to challenge both ends of the spectrum. My main goal for this episode is for you to begin to love your age. This is something that we have been talking about within the School of Self-Image membership for the entire month.

And I just had a woman reach out to me and tell me that for the first time in about 10 years, she is truly embracing her age.

And she listed all of the things that she's done this month. Because she had this story in her mind that because of her age, she couldn't wear certain things, she couldn't have certain goals. Basically, her story had been that her life was declining. And through changing her mindset around a number, she is getting her life force back. And that's what I want for all of us. I want us to learn to love our age no matter what. So whether you find yourself wishing that you were younger or worrying about getting older, nearly all of us have fallen into the trap of not appreciating where we are right now. And so I want this episode to be an inspiration for embracing your age with joy, purpose, and gratitude, because there is so much beauty to enjoy at every stage of life when you have the right attitude.

So when I think about my own journey with aging, I have to admit, I haven't always practiced what I currently preach. In fact, I remember when I was going through my teens and twenties, and even into my thirties, I seemed to always be focused on the next phase, where I wanted to get to. I was always focused on what I thought was missing. And so I thought that the joy, the fulfillment, was always going to be in the future. I would tell myself when I'm in college, I'm going to be happier. When I get married, I'm going to be happier. When I have kids, I'm going to be happier. When I have more success in my career, when I'm older, the happiness is there. There was always something missing until the next age, until the next stage, that I was so eager to reach. And then something started to shift in my mid to late thirties.

All of a sudden I found myself wishing for the opposite. I wanted to go back in time. I wanted to be 20 again, 30 again, I wanted to be somewhere other than where I was. And then perimenopause hit, and my body started to change, and it continues to change. My eyesight is not what it used to be. Things hang that used to didn't hang, and I'm getting wrinkles, and all of the things that happen when we have the blessed opportunity of aging. And so when I look back on my life, what I regret the most is that I didn't appreciate the age that I was. And I know that there is a future me, that if I'm

not mindful, will regret that I don't appreciate this age. And so years ago I just decided, "I am going to love my age. I'm going to love wherever I am in life. I'm not going to waste time wishing I was 20 again because I'll never be 20 again."

And realizing, wishing for anything that you will never have again, just creates suffering, unnecessary suffering. And if you think about it this way, the reason why you want anything, the reason why you want to be 20, 30, 40, 50, again, whatever that number is for you, is because you're after a feeling. And the feeling that I want in my life right now is joy and gratitude and awe and abundance and love. And that doesn't come from an age, because I didn't have those feelings when I was in my twenties. In fact, I remember feeling a lot of insecurity, a lot of lack, a lot of self-doubt. And so age isn't the solution. It's our attitude, our mindset that can give us exactly what we want. And so no matter where you find yourself, there are profound blessings to extract from each phase of your life.

In our youth, we typically enjoy great health, lots of energy, a passion for adventure and openness to new ideas. And then we become adults and we gain beautiful responsibilities. Maybe it's marriage, or a career, being a parent, stepping into leadership roles. And we start to come into our talents, our purpose. And this is an interesting stage because I remember when Sarah was little and I was starting my business, and the overwhelm and all of the things, and wishing that I could be where I am now. It's so crazy, now I look back and I'm like, "Ah, I wish I would've appreciated that time in my life. I wish I would've been more present. I wish I would have had the mindset tools that I have now that I didn't have back then." Because there was still so much joy to be found in that stage of my life, and yet I was just consumed with the responsibilities.

And so, as one does without awareness, I was wishing to be older. I was wishing to be in that next stage where hopefully the burden would be a little lighter. I would have more wisdom, I would have more experience under my belt. And then I entered into that stage, and then my body started to change. I hit perimenopause and I found myself, on occasion, thinking, "Ah. God, I wish I could go back to when I was my

thirties." And so you see how the game unfolds. If you're not mindful, if you don't make a conscious decision to love your age at every stage, you can spend a lifetime wishing to be somewhere other than where you are. And the way I see it now is you're lucky if you get to gain senior status, and you have such a depth of wisdom and stories and experience to share.

And yeah, our bodies change. You may not have the energy that you had when you were 20. But what do you have? What do you have in abundance that you didn't have when you were 20? So I want us to reframe aging from being a burden to being a blessing. Because let's be honest, the word aging often comes with a lot of baggage. Images of rocking chairs and declining health and lost youth, may be some of the things that pop into your head. But here's the thing, aging is not a disease. It is a privilege. A privilege truly of a lifetime. In preparing for this episode I came across a stat that a whopping 122,000 people turn 65 every single day worldwide. The way I see that is it's 122,000 more chances to experience life, to learn and to grow. When you look at it that way, aging is not something to complain about, it is something to celebrate.

Listen, I could speak for hours about the gifts of aging, but the key is learning to unlock the lessons, to not waste your time clinging to the past or dreading the future, but to embrace your age, whatever age you are. You may be listening to this and you're 25 or you may be 85. Whatever age you are, what if you just decided to embrace it, love it, and rock it out? So I want to give you some tips for loving your age. First, focus on the present. Appreciate the now for all of its glory, for all of its lessons, for all of its experiences. Whenever I'm feeling anxious, whenever I'm feeling regret, I know I'm either living in the past or I'm telling myself a scary story about the future. When I come back to the present moment, all is well.

When I'm just really focused and looking around, I'm okay. And not only am I okay, I'm so blessed. Are you looking for the blessings of this moment? The other thing I think it's really important to do, and this is more for us older folks, because I find that when you're young, you do have a lot of goals. You see your future, you have a longer runway,

and so you're more inspired to set goals. However, I've noticed that as we get older, we don't set exciting goals as much for ourselves. But with current technology, our life expectancy is increasing, which means you may have many, many more years ahead of you. Why not set exciting goals that light you up, that get you excited to wake up in the morning? Think about what you could create or contribute or learn or achieve. For example, if you're 50, you may want to train for a marathon.

If you're 65, you may want to learn a new language. If you're 75, maybe you want to teach your grandkids how to cook your signature dishes and pass down those traditions. When I worked as a critical care nurse, I took care of a man who was, I think he was 87, 88, because it happened three years prior. But he had told me he was like, I'd always wanted to be a published author. And so he ended up publishing his book at 85 years old. He checked it off of his bucket list. He kept having dreams and goals and desires. And that is a beautiful thing. I also encourage you to seek out mentors who maybe are a decade or two older, who are rocking life. Learn from them, let them inspire you. On a similar note, I think it's really important to build intergenerational friendships. I love hanging out with my daughter and her friends because they teach me so much.

They teach me all of the cool things, all the new cool music. And I also love hanging out with people who are older than me. We've become good friends with a couple who are in their seventies, and they are rocking it out in life. I love being around them and their energy. They sometimes act younger than my daughter's friends, just their energy, and they always have exciting trips, and they love taking care of themselves. I just love being around their energy. Plus it's so important to have community. If you have read anything about the blue zones, where they've studied, where there are a larger number of centenarians, those who've lived to be a hundred or older, and the commonalities between all of these different Blue zones, community is a big factor in longevity. In fact, there was a study by the University of California Berkeley that found that social connection is just as important to our health as avoiding smoking.

How crazy is that? And so when I'm looking at building community, I don't want to discriminate. I don't want to hold myself to this idea that I only can hang out with people my age. I want to have friends from all walks of life, all ages, because everybody brings something interesting to the table. So seek out friends that maybe are older than you or maybe younger than you, because you'll learn so much from these people who are in different stages of their life, and you'll have something unique to offer as well. The other thing is you have to challenge stereotypes about aging by you living boldly. Follow interests that light you up, not what you think you should be doing at your age, but what do you genuinely want to do. Push against what you've been told older folks can supposedly do or can't do.

Who decided that? Someone said it years ago and then just people started following it and they're like, "Oh, well I guess because I'm 50 or I'm 60 or I'm 70, I can't do that." Challenge it. What is a limitation that you have placed on your age that you can conquer? And it might be the opposite. Maybe you've been told because of your age, you can't go out there and start your own business. You can't do certain things. What if that is simply a limitation that others placed on you, that is not yours to live by? Another way to love your age is to create age loving environments. What do I mean by that? If your social media feed is filled with images that make you feel bad about yourself, that don't spark celebration of who you are, maybe you shouldn't have those images around you.

Maybe you don't need to trigger yourself to fight where you are in your life, and who you are. Now, for me, the way this looks is just the way my community looks. My social media feed is filled with younger people and older people because I know I can learn from everyone. But I'm very mindful of how I feel when I look at someone's feed. There are some older folks that I don't want to follow, just like there are some younger folks I don't want to follow. But there are also those that I love following. One that comes to mind is I love following Train with Joan. I find that her story is so inspiring. I don't even... Joan McDonald, I think, is her name. And I remember I started following her years ago when she was just getting started on her fitness journey at, I don't know, I think she was maybe 70.



I'm not sure. I'm like, her age, I can't remember. But it's her story of evolving. It's her story of overcoming obstacles. It's her story of getting fit and healthy at an older age, and I just find that so inspiring. And now she's at almost 2 million followers. But I can learn so much from her. And she has created this age loving environment that I love being in. So for you, look around, not only at your social media feeds, but look around at the people you're hanging out with, what you're reading, what surrounds you, and does it give you life? Does it make you excited about living and fill you with joy, or do you find it feels heavy and it's taking away your life force? This is why environment is so important. You have to be mindful of what you surround yourself with because it's impacting your self-image.

It's impacting how you see yourself. And so if you're hanging out with friends who are always complaining about getting older and how life is so hard. And you find that when you're with them, you just feel low energy. Pay attention to that. And it's not that you need to get rid of those friends. Maybe you do, maybe you don't. That's up to you. But you want to make sure you're mindful that you don't adopt their attitudes. And you may want to seek out some new people to hang out with, that when you're with them, it's just so easy to think fun and joyful thoughts because of their attitudes and their energy. The other thing that I must speak on, is dressing. I don't know how you all feel about the term, "Dress your age," but what does that even mean? Does it mean that when I'm 80 and 90, I need to wear moo moos and just look older?

I don't get that term. What I'm about is dressing for my desired energy, because clothes are an expression of your identity, one of the means by which we tell the world who and what we are. And so are you dressing in a way that tells the world that you're vibrant and full of life, or vice versa? I love what Iris Apfel says. She's like, "Style has no age. It's an attitude, not age." So play with trends, play with colors, play with patterns that uplift you, that tell, not only the world, but tells yourself, "I am a woman who loves herself, who is embracing herself, who loves her life." And I'm telling you, clothes impact how you feel. If you are feeling low energy, if you are feeling heavy, burdened,

notice your clothing. Notice how if you're not intentional, you're going to choose clothing to mirror the story you have about yourself.

This is where we can use clothing intentionally to give us energy, to express ourselves on purpose. So dress your energy, not your age. The other thing that's super important no matter what age we are, is to be active and to take care of our bodies. I love for you to imagine your body as a car. And when you have a new car, it runs really well, it's really shiny, it's brand new. Everything hopefully works. But if you don't take care of it won't work as well as it gets older. And so it's important to fuel your body with whole and healthy foods to move it regularly, and to treat it with love and respect and kindness. Get that yearly checkup. And you have to remember too, well cared for cars become, what we call, vintage. And they often have a lot of value. And so no matter where you are in your journey...

Now, you may be listening to this, and I've had this happen in my own brain before, and I've definitely coached a lot of women around this, but you may be thinking, "But Tonya, I'm 60 years old and I haven't taken care of my body, and it's too late for me." I want you to stop right there, and I want you to think about that one sentence. "It's too late for me." Is that something that a woman who's loving and embracing her age would say? Is it something that inspires you, that gets you excited about your life? No. And here's a fun fact, your body literally regenerates itself every seven years. And so no matter where you are on your journey, I don't care, I always say, no matter how far off track you think you are, you can always do what I call a you-turn, Y-O-U, back to you, back to what you want, back to your desires. And more than ever, in my own journey, I am realizing the importance of taking care of our health and our wellbeing.

What is the saying? "A rich man has a thousand wishes. A sick man only has one." I think sometimes we have to begin to lose something that we've taken for granted for us to wake up and be like, "Oh, I need to take care of myself." And that's definitely been the case for me. For years I had great health, and then all of a sudden perimenopause kicked in and I had some other issues, and I noticed that my energy was drained, and I noticed things starting to change. And I'm like, "Okay, sister, it's time." It's time to take

care of this blossoming vintage car that you were becoming. And so please don't allow your age to be an excuse for not taking care of yourself. I believe in the body's ability to heal. I believe in the body's desire to be in harmony, and that only requires that we show up to take care of it. You deserve your own self-care. And if you want to love your age and embrace your age, this is such an important part of it.

How can you begin to really take care of your body? And along these lines, I suggest that you find activities that you love, such as maybe tennis or pickle ball, or maybe you love walking or maybe you want to start dancing. Maybe you want to go to the gym and start lifting weights. But find something that you can do to stay active. I always say that living things move. Dead things don't move. They're stiff and they're rigid. So if you want to bring more life back into your energy, just start moving more, get up, stretch, go for a walk, you deserve that. The other way to love your age, and this is just in general in life, is to stop comparing yourself to other people. Now, I know it's easier said than done, but researchers have actually shown that comparing ourselves to others is a major predictor of unhappiness.

So what I did years ago, that has really helped me with this, is that I started making how I feel more important than what's happening outside of me. And so what happened is through creating that lens in which I filter the world, when I see something that maybe I used to compare myself to, now my perspective, I use it to feel good about whatever I'm seeing. I'm like, "Good for her. That's amazing." And I always just bring it back to me. What are my values? What are my goals? How do I want to feel? And just focusing my life and my thoughts and my actions in that direction, just gives me this intrinsic power, so that I'm not externally focused and using the external world as a predictor of whether I'm happy or not. And so direct your attention inward and break the trap of comparing yourself to other people because there's no upside to it.

Even if you look at someone and you compare in a way that's favorable to you, if that's how you see the world, inevitably you're going to see someone else that makes you feel bad about yourself. So what if you just stopped that game that you're never going to

win? The other way to love your age is to choose your narrative carefully. Watch the stories you tell yourself and others about aging. Words hold immense power. Be careful that you don't just start regurgitating what your grandmothers and mothers told you about aging, unless they had a beautiful narrative around it. And decide on purpose the words you speak. Saying things like, "I'm over the hill and I'm too old, or aging sucks. I hate getting older," those are things you'll just never hear me say.

Why? Because I don't like how I feel when I say them. And because I have made my focus feeling good on the inside, I'm very mindful about the words I speak. I'd rather say things like, "I am so blessed to be this age. There's so many beautiful things about being this age." And because of the way the brain works through the reticular activating system that sifts through all of the information that's out there and gives you and delivers to you what you ask, because that's how I'm speaking, that is where my focus, I'm always looking for things to provide evidence for what I believe. And so you need to choose your narrative carefully. Another way to love your age and embrace your age is to try new things. Do things outside of your comfort zone.

If you think about it, when you're young, you're always trying new things, everything's new. But as we get older and we've experienced more, it can seem as if there's not a lot of new things to explore because you've already explored a lot. But I want to challenge you. There's always something new to explore. What if you've only explored 5% of what's available to you? Isn't that crazy to think about? What if there's still 95% of things out there that you haven't explored, you haven't learned, you haven't experienced? The New England Journal of Medicine found engaging in mentally stimulating activities like learning new skills, reduces cognitive decline. And so, make yourself, force yourself to try something new. Maybe it's a new food, maybe it's learning a new language.

Maybe it's learning how to play an instrument or learning how to dance. But there's always something new to learn. So welcome unfamiliarity, because within that space, it will expand your horizons and you'll learn new things about yourself, and maybe just maybe you will discover a new goal that you're excited to pursue. The last point I want to make, as it relates to loving your age, has brought me so much freedom. And it's

something that I've personally worked on in depth, especially over the last few years. And this is for all of my people pleasers, all of those who seek external approval as a means to determine your self-worth. And as it relates to this topic, a lot of times we can outsource our worth to other people. And because we do live... I see it changing, which is exciting, but historically, it's been a youth obsessed culture.

And we can have this narrative that as we age, we lose value. And so if you have that narrative and you're always seeking external approval to prove your worth, to prove that you have value, you're setting yourself up for a lot of misery. It is time to stop seeking external approval. And when you do that, it just frees you up to live with so much joy, to have honest relationships, to live in integrity, to do things that you really want to do, and to say no when you really want to say no. It's the most liberating way to live, no matter if you're 20 or you're 80. Seeking external approval for your happiness is a game you will never, ever win. It's something you are always chasing. And I don't know about you all, but as I get older, I want to chase less and attract more.

I want to chase less and enjoy more. This last point is so big that I have actually dedicated an entire month within the School of Self-Image, next month, to this topic. All of March is going to be us going through an approval detox. Letting the need of approval go so that we can really live our boldest, most audacious life. Because if you are constantly seeking approval, you are dimming your light, a hundred percent. And this is something that I coach a lot around. A lot of times when I'm coaching women and we dig deep, we find that it's the fear of other people's opinions and judgment, the fear of rejection that holds us back. And it's because we are living an externally approval-driven life. And until you clean that up, you're going to hold yourself back.

You're not going to publish the blog. You're not going to go on the Instagram live. You're not going to go on the date. You're not going to go after the goal. You will continuously hold yourself back. And so for those of you in the membership, get ready, because we are going to do some deep work on this next month. and I'm doing something that I rarely do. We typically have all of our open and closed dates for enrollment planned out for the year. But I was talking to my team and I'm like, "Listen,

this is something that I want every woman who struggles with this to have access to." And this has been the work that has had the biggest impact on my life in the last several years. I am so proud of who I've become and who I continue to become around this issue of people pleasing, needing approval, all of it. And so we have decided to open the doors to the School of Self-Image for just two days.

And I think by the time you listen to this, it's going to be the last day, maybe. But if you're listening to this on the day it comes out, you can join us. All you have to do is go to schoolofselfimage.com/join. Get into the membership, and come join us for the month while we go through an approval detox. This work is going to rock your world in the best of ways. So hopefully I will see you in the membership, but if not, I hope to see you on the next episode of the podcast. Thank you so much for tuning in. Listen, I would love to hear your stories about how you are loving and embracing your age. So come find me on Instagram @tonyaleigh, share with me, and let's all decide right now that we're just going to love the age that we are, and we're going to rock it out. And again, I'd love to see you in the membership. You can go to schoolofselfimage.com/join and get in there before we close the doors. Have a beautiful week, my friends, and I will see you on the next episode. Cheers.

I used to think happiness was a fairytale forever, just out of reach. I felt stuck a lot of the times, helpless and like I was constantly failing at life. But then I discovered a simple shift, four, three that changed everything. Now I help women like you create their own Powerfully Ever After. In my free masterclass, you'll learn the secrets to unshakable, desire, fearless action, and finally believing in yourself. You deserve a life you love. So stop waiting and start creating. Watch the masterclass and unleash your inner powerhouse. You can go to schoolofselfimage.com/after and watch it now.