

Ep #16: Banishing Excuses



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With Your Host

Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 16.

Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*, a show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth, and joy. Here is your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey, friends, what's happening? It's summertime and my summer is amazing. I hope your summer is amazing. Mine is definitely amazing. So just in the last month – so in early June or so – I went to The Feel Good Summit out in Southern California with my momma and that was this cool conference put on by Dr. Mark Hyman. And he had a slew of fabulous speakers. I'm going to tell you about one of them in a bit.

Out in California, amazing, amazing time and I also, last month – so in the last four weeks – had my daughter's big 13th birthday party. And then we went to Aruba for a week and I totally detoxed from social media. I didn't even take my computer, y'all, which was huge for me, the workaholic – the recovering workaholic. So I had an awesome vacation.

And last week, I was at the lake with my parents for 4th of July, so definitely squeezing in a ton of value and fun and productivity and all kinds of goodness into this summer, and I hope you're doing that too. Now, if you're not and you're thinking summer is going too fast, well think about this; we officially hit the mid-2018 mark last week.

So you may feel like the whole year, not just the summer, but 2018 is flying by. Now, the crazy thing I've found is when I think a year is going really fast, it's going the fastest when I'm getting the least amount accomplished. There's just something about seeing those days and weeks and months fly by accompanied by my sense of panic that I'm not where I need to be yet this year that makes the time seem to go faster than ever; like it's slipping away.

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Now, this year for me is totally different. It feels great and it feels slower actually than my past, and that's intentional. I'm living slower but it's also because I'm using my days in such a productive way. So I'm using them in a productive way for work but also investing a lot of time in my family and myself, the things that I have made priorities in my life.

So somehow, that makes me look at the year and not see it as just rushing by, but rather I look at all I've accomplished in the last six months professionally and personally and with my family, and I think hooray, for once. Not the only time in my life, but one of the few times in my life that I hit mid-year where I'm thinking I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be halfway through 2018 and it feels so, so good. So you can do that too if you want to.

Now, today, we're going to talk about banishing excuses. And I don't know about you but I love these points in life that we're talking about right now that make me stop and check in with myself and my goals and my priorities, whether it's New Year's or starting a new school year with my daughter in August or, like right now, when we're at that six months into the year mark. Maybe for you it's when you hit the fourth quarter and you're like, ooh I'm in the home stretch; I've got one quarter to really squeeze what I can out of this year.

But those time markers are really exciting to me because they give me a reason to check in. and if I'm not on track, the reason I'm not is probably an excuse. And so with these kind of checkpoints in the year, it gives me a reason to check in with myself and give myself a kick in the pants if I'm not making things happen like I want to.

Okay, so this thought process of checking in is that perfect segue into our topic of banishing excuses because if you are doing a mid-year check-in right now and you're not where you want to be, it's likely an excuse, or several of them, that is holding you back. Now, I've been working on banishing excuses for years and I'm happy to say, I have far fewer of them than I had in my 20s and 30s, so hooray for progress, right, hallelujah!

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But that isn't to say that I've kicked them all to the curb. I personally have fewer excuses in the area of growing my business because I think that it's that area, business, is what comes naturally to me. And I have more excuses when it comes to my health or creating balance in my life because my thought about those areas is that they're hard.

Now, if you've been listening to my podcast for any time at all, you have probably already figured out, in what I just said, what my problem is, right. You know what it is don't you? Yep, I need to change my thoughts because thinking those two areas that are hard are actually hard guarantees that they're going to be hard, right.

So, I've come up with what it would look like if taking optimal care of my health and maintaining work-life balance were easy because they totally can be if I believe they can be. Okay, so I've mapped out a plan in my own life for both of these areas and I'm putting those steps into practice as we speak. Plus, every day I'm practicing thinking that neither of these areas are hard.

Now, if you need a refresher on this process I'm talking about of recognizing our thoughts then go back and listen to episode number four called "The Model and How to Solve Any Problem," because if you're lost right now and you're like, what the heck kind of woo-woo stuff is Tobi talking about, go over there and it will help you start to figure out how to look at what you're thinking and really kind of get underneath your thoughts, okay.

But if you're familiar with The Model that I teach that I learned at The Life Coach School then you'll understand what I mean when I say my bridge thought is I'm learning to believe that taking optimal care of my health and maintaining work-life balance is not hard. Now, it wasn't realistic at first for me to go straight to believing they were easy.

And if we go from it's super hard to oh no it's easy, it's not going to stick, right, because we don't really believe it. So I've been taking baby-steps to get underneath my thoughts that it was hard to do those two things and

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now I'm moving towards a thought that they're not hard. And what I'm realizing is the thought that they were hard was really just an excuse to not do what I needed to do.

So for the last two years or so, I have been hyper-committed to getting rid of my excuses in the trouble spots in my life, including these two areas. And it does take work, but mostly it's mind work more than anything to get the results I want. And you know, doesn't everything worth having or doing take work? Well yeah, at least it takes action; whether you think of it as work, I guess, is up to you.

And just as I'm proving in my own thinking, just because we have to do work doesn't mean we have to believe the work is hard. So this banishing excuses work of mine that I'm doing, it didn't just start in the last two or three years; that's when I really took a deep dive. But back in my late 30s, so seven to eight years ago, I listened to a book called *Excuses, Begone!* It's a fantastic book from the late Dr. Wayne Dyer, one of my all-time favorite teachers.

Okay, so this book really helped me move from my most difficult period in my life of overworking and overachieving, which was from age 27, when I opened my business, to about age 38. And this book really helped me break through all the stories and thoughts, or what I prefer to call lies, that I was telling myself for why I, quote, had to do all the things I was doing in my business, even to the detriment of my health and my family, okay.

So I was telling myself these lies, you have to do that, Tobi or you'll be irrelevant or you'll never be a success or people won't notice you or you won't get clients or my whole laundry list of have-tos, which were all what I call lies and excuses for not creating the life I want. So in this book, Wayne Dyer gives us a very simple but profound idea where he says, "Don't believe everything you think."

Whoa, wait, what? Don't believe everything you think; which is exactly right. And this idea opened the door for me to understand that our thoughts are just that, they're just thoughts. they aren't our circumstances and we can

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choose our thoughts, positive or negative. It's our choice, but we better choose wisely if we want the life we dream of, okay.

So Dr. Dyer and others since then have shown me that excuses are nothing but thoughts, or even if you want to call them this: beliefs. And beliefs, as you've heard me say, are just thoughts that we think over and over and over for years so they seem especially true, but they're not.

So it really showed me that we have a choice. So today, let's talk about how to build on these ideas that I learned from the amazing Dr. Wayne Dyer and other teachers and coaches and mentors that have taught me to make a plan to banish excuses so we can move beyond being stuck in our old less than ideal habits and behaviors and move towards the place we want to be in our life.

So step number one to banishing excuses is awareness. So we have to actually practice awareness of our thoughts, or what we're talking about today, let's call them our excuses. And I think it's especially helpful to name our excuses so we understand what they are and that they are, in fact, excuses and not the truth, okay.

So here's the thing about humans which is frustrating sometimes, but in this instance, it's also very helpful, and that is we are all very predictable and we're all pretty much the same. So that means our excuses are all very similar to everybody else's excuses. And while I was at The Feel Good Summit recently in Southern California, I heard Lauren Zander speak because she is Dr. Mark Hyman's personal life coach.

And so she noticed this same thing was true about her clients too, that pretty much all their excuses were the same. So she came up with what she calls the 8 Brands of Excuses, which you can find in her book called *Maybe It's You*, and I'll put a link to the book in our show notes. But let's look at her list of excuses because I love these. They totally call us out on what we're doing and we might not know it.

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So let's look at this list and see what excuses are most likely knocking you off your path to your goals and I'll tell you which ones I am falling prey to in my own life. So number one, there's the I don't care anymore excuse. So this is where you convince yourself, in the moment when you want to do something that's easier or more fun than your goal, you convince yourself you don't really care anymore. You know, I don't really care about that anymore, I never really did. So that's excuse number one.

Number two – the passive excuse. This is when you think life is just totally happening to you and you have no control. It's like completely out of your control that, say, that Netflix show just sucked me in for three solid days so I couldn't do anything about it and I can't help that I was completely lazy and unproductive for half of a week, right; the passive excuse.

Number three – the genetic excuse. This is the one where I was born this way or my mom or my dad has always been overweight or judgmental or lazy or whatever thing that you want to claim they've always been. So no wonder you are that too, it's just in your genes, right. There's nothing you can do about it.

Number four – the victim excuse. This is where nothing is your fault, like you must travel for work and you must entertain those important clients so, of course, you must eat very rich and fattening and sugary foods and consume multiple glasses of alcohol when you're with them because you don't have a choice because you couldn't possibly eat healthy and exercise while you're on these trips, right. There's no way. It's not allowed. So that's the victim excuse.

Number five – the everyone else excuse. So this is where it's okay because everyone else is doing it. So you're like, well my friends are workaholics or my friends have unhappy spouses and sexless marriages or my friend's children are out of control, so it's totally acceptable for me to settle for that too, right? Yep, can't help it and everyone else is doing it so I might as well be mediocre too.

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Okay, number six – the past precedent excuse. This is where you think, well I've never been able to do it before, say lose weight, keep a schedule, be a morning person, whatever you want to put in that blank. I've never been able to do it before so why would it work now?

Number seven – the how things are excuse. This is the I had a screwed up childhood and I got a divorce and my kid is on drugs and so my wife has no other option but to be horrible forever because that's just the way things are, right. Nothing I can do about it.

And number eight – the final excuse from Lauren Zander is the I've done enough excuse. So this is the nobody should ask me for one more thing because I've already done far more than my part at work or in my marriage or raising my kids or dieting or whatever and so nobody should possibly want anything or need anything or ask anything from me. I'm done. I've done enough.

So, for every area in your life or your business that isn't working for you, I want you to look at those eight excuse categories, or brands as Lauren calls them, and become aware of your own thoughts, or your own excuses – let's call them that – that are holding you back. So use this list to help you see which ones apply to you, because a lot of times, we don't even know we're doing it, right.

So let me tell you about me. In those two areas where I struggle most, my health and finding balance between work and family, I'm prone to several of these; like I practically use the whole list, okay. So here's some of mine; I don't care anymore about being thin, it's just too hard. I also say there's just far too much that has to be done in my job and I don't have a choice but to do it, even though it means I can't put my family first. Big lie right there, big excuse.

And a lot of these, because I can recognize them now, I've worked on them and I've made progress, but just know, these are things I've said for years, okay. This is one of my famous ones; my husband and my child are super-

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picky eaters and don't eat healthy so it's impossible for me to eat healthy unless I don't eat with them or maybe don't even live with them.

Okay, by the way, that's the victim excuse and it's a total lie. Here's another one of mine; my mom has struggled with her weight for years and I'm more like her genetically than my super-slim super-disciplined dad. So there's nothing I can do about my genes. Which, by the way, when I was getting my nutrition certification from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, I learned that our habits are more responsible for our health and wellness than our genes and we can even overwrite our genes if we create the right habits. So that pretty blows that excuse out of the water, right.

And if you'll notice, I also said my dad was super-disciplined, so it's likely his actions and not necessarily his genes that keep him fit anyway. So when you dig into these excuses we're making, we can see how ridiculous they are, but we just don't realize it when we're speaking these like they're the truth. And you know, I use several other ones.

Sometimes I also use the past precedent excuse, like I've tried for years to keep my weight off and I've failed so many times so I guess I just can't do it. And you know what, I bet if there were any that I didn't just name, I'd probably use those too. And you get the point that even if you think I'm super successful and you're not like me – that you're undisciplined or there's something wrong with you and Tobi has like some it-factor, not just me, anybody you're looking at, any celebrity or anybody that inspires you – you know, what, you're wrong.

I literally struggle with almost every one of these excuses. But because I've been working on them now for almost seven years since I first read *Excuses, Begone!* and at a very focused level for the last two, I have made so much progress. But don't get confused; progress is not perfection. So that doesn't mean these thoughts don't come up for me anymore. They still come up but now I recognize them as what they are; excuses. And I can then engage the strategies I've designed to overcome them and keep me on track more often than not, okay.

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So awareness is step number one, and likely the most important step. But what are the other steps for banishing excuses? Well, step number two is figure out why you're using this excuse. And I did some really deep work recently with my own coach in this area because I wanted to understand why I was continuing to make bad choices occasionally, like food that really didn't serve me well, that made me feel bad or that makes me gain weight or not taking action, like when I would skip exercise.

And I was like, why am I doing this even after I've become aware of what I'm doing? So I was not doing what I was supposed to, but now it was conscious, not unconscious. Previously it was like I had no idea. I really wasn't paying attention, but it was a huge step to realize and become aware and conscious of what I was doing, but I was still not doing what I was supposed to be doing sometimes and I wanted to know why. Why did I not follow through with my goal all the time?

And so we figured out two things. And first, I had attached meaning to the food in my life. And a lot of us do this, right. So some of my food I considered good and some of it I considered bad, but some of it was comfort and some of it was health. And the interesting thing was, the bad food was also the comfort food, or the yummy food, and the good food was the health food, okay.

So yeah, you might be recognizing that you do this too and I realize that I gave greater importance accidentally to the food that was not healthiest for me. And that makes it very clear now, there's no wonder why I was continuing to desire the food more that was not good for me than I did the healthy food because I was still believing that if I had what I really wanted, you know, if I didn't have to be on a diet and I had what I really wanted, it would be the comfort food or the yummy food.

So it was really a poisonous thought for me to think that the food that wasn't serving me was so desirable and I was able to recognize this and start to undo that thinking. Okay, our brain is so sneaky. Do you see how it was making me think what I really desired was the bad stuff? So in times of stress or business, when I probably didn't have groceries in the house, it

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was so easy to grab an excuse like I just don't care anymore when I really did care, but my thoughts about desiring that yummy slash bad food were really causing me to put garbage in because I was telling myself that that was the stuff that was so yummy.

The second thing we discovered when we really dug into why – why was I not staying on track – was that I had an incentive to make excuses for overeating because I had unknowingly attached two activities in my life, which are eating and resting. And this was a very dangerous combination for me.

So in other words, because I tend to overwork, and even though I've gotten way better at that than I used to be, I didn't realize that I was taking a break to eat and that was one of the only reasons that I would allow myself to stop working during the day if I was taking a break to eat. So even when I was feeling very fatigued or my brain was completely depleted, I would keep pushing myself longer than I should have, which was uncomfortable and hard on my body and the only reason I would let myself take a break is to eat.

So no wonder I made all kinds of excuses for eating because in my subconscious mind, if I don't get to eat, I don't get to rest. So god forbid I just take a break and rest and not eat, right. And again, as Dr. Dyer says, "Don't believe everything you think." So I was thinking, well to take a break and to rest, I've got to have a legit excuse, so it has to be for eating and nothing else, maybe to go to the bathroom.

So we want to believe our brain has our best intentions at heart, but really, it just wants us to do what's easy, whether that's good for us or not. So you have to figure out why you're using excuses and those were my two whys. I was making yummy food super desirable with my thoughts and I was believing that I could only rest if I took a break to eat, okay; super dangerous combos there.

Now, step number three is to rewrite a thought instead of your excuse that better serves you in reaching your goals and dreams. So this is the step

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where I'm practicing several things, including that bridge thought I mentioned where I'm learning to believe it's not hard to take care of my health and create balance. But as you can tell, I also need to recreate some thoughts around taking a break versus eating, right. So I'm learning to rewrite these negative or poisonous thoughts that are keeping me stuck in excuse-land.

And then the last step is to develop a strategy or a protocol that will help you take a healthier or more productive action after you think that new thought, okay. So for me, I mapped out a strategy for resting, including taking breaks during my workday that have nothing to do with eating. In fact, some of my breaks actually have to do with exercising; so much more positive.

And that kind of kills two birds with one stone because not only am I taking a break from work and overworking, but I'm also giving myself an incentive to exercise, which is one of the parts I was skipping. So that's a win-win; isn't that cool how you can just rewrite the way that you think?

So I'm doing that with my resting and I'm also – part of my new strategy or protocol is when I am eating, it's not just an emotional version of resting. I'm fully present with my food and focused on the eating itself so I can tell when I'm full and so I can also be focused on the foods that actually do make me feel my best and believing those are the foods that are yummiest, okay.

So, this strategy works perfectly. I'm getting huge results. And in the next podcast, because I've been talking about me personally and this has to do with food and exercise and emotional eating, I'm actually going to talk to you about one of my favorite teachers, Geneen Roth, because she works specifically in the area of food and emotional eating in case you want to go deeper in that area. But for now, that was just my example of what I'm working on around excuses.

So let's recap, no matter what your area is, whether it's that you don't work when you should be and you're watching Netflix instead or whatever you

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want to tackle. Let's recap how to banish excuses, which is really important for any of you, but especially those of you who are in my Design You coaching program because, for July, our content is on taking massive action. And we don't want any excuses stopping us from that really focused massive action to get to our dreams.

So here are the steps. Step number one – check out the eight brands of excuses from Lauren Zander and see which ones you're using. Or if yours isn't on that list, there's other ones I'm sure too. So whatever that excuse is on her list or that you've found that you're using to keep you from your goals, you want to know what it is. So practice becoming very aware every time one of these excuses comes up.

Okay, step number two – figure out why you're using the excuse. And let me give you a hint; it's always because the behavior that you're choosing instead is still serving you in some way. So just like for me, eating was helping me take breaks from overworking, so it was serving me in that area of being a workaholic. It was helping me take a break, but it was really at my own expense because I was using food to do that.

And then number three, rewrite a thought that you can use instead of the excuse that will serve you in a more productive and positive way than your excuse. And then the fourth step to banishing excuses is create a protocol, or if you want to call it a plan of action or a strategy, whatever makes more sense for you. Just create that plan that once you think that new thought in step number three, instead of the excuse, then you move into these new action steps instead of your old habits to get you a new result.

Okay, and then to help you go through this process, I actually created a downloadable worksheet for you because- I wanted you to have, on paper, Lauren's 8 Brands of Excuses. I'll also put the link to her book in that document. And then I want you to have these four steps of mine to banishing excuses from your life for good.

Okay, so to get that worksheet, go to tobifairly.com/16 and there you can get the banishing excuses worksheet, okay. So go get busy banishing your

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excuses and see what amazing things you can accomplish in your life once those are gone. It's so empowering to realize that if we just get out of our own way, we can reach any goal we put our mind to. Okay, I've done it and you can do it too, so good luck and I'll see you next week on *The Design You Podcast*. Goodbye for now, friends.

Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of *The Design You Podcast*. And if you'd like even more support for designing a business and a life that you love, then check out my exclusive monthly coaching program Design You at tobifairley.com.