

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020



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**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

You are listening to the *Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 93.

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, welcome to 2020. Yes, 2020 the year and also hopefully 2020 vision for us over the next 12 months. This is the perfect year to get complete and total clarity on what you want for your life and how exactly to get there. Today we're talking about a way that I love to get clarity and then guide myself through the next 12 months, staying focused on what I really want for the year. And the way I do that is by choosing a word of the year.

Now, if you want to hear exactly how I go through this process, all the steps, then head back and listen to episode 41 where I give you my exact process for selecting my word of the year. That was an episode from last year. And I'll tell you about my word for 2019 and all of the things of exactly how I pick it. And there is a process.

But on today's episode, I'm going to reflect a bit on last year's word and what didn't work about it, because I think it's so important to be transparent and not just pretend like these exercises are magical and that they're really responsible for miraculous changes. We have to work the process you all. I want to tell you what didn't work for me in 2019, and I'm going to look at my 2020 word and what it could mean, not just for me, but if you like that word or something similar to it, what it could mean for you too. Okay.

First, last year's word of the year for me was freedom. Now you all, I've been picking a word of the year for a long time. Probably, gosh, I don't know, five, eight, 10 years, a long time. And even I think in the episode 41 go back and tell you all the previous words I had selected. So if you're curious about them, I tell you all the words. But last year it was freedom. And reflecting back on last year a bit, I'm not sure that I really hit freedom.

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

How do I know? Well, if I'm being perfectly honest with myself about 2019, I had to go back and look up what my 2019 word was to make this podcast. If I can't even remember the word at the end of 2019, what does that say about the word?

Now, of course when I saw it, I was like, "Oh yeah, it's been a crazy six weeks around here." But that really says more than just that. It kind of speaks volumes that I had to look up my word. So what does it mean? Well, I think it means a couple of things. Either it wasn't the right word for me for the year, which I'm not exactly convinced that is true. But number two, it might mean, and this is more likely that I didn't keep that word top of mind. I didn't keep it posted somewhere. I didn't have it as part of my monthly journaling practice. I didn't meditate on it regularly. I wasn't in touch with that word near enough.

Now, I did think about it through the years some and after I looked the word back up and I was like, "Oh yeah, I remember thinking about it around April when I was really stressed out. And again in June or July when I was really stressed out, and again in September, and again in December. Now, when I looked it back up I'm like, "Oh yeah, I kept wanting freedom but I was doing things, thinking things, choosing things that weren't exactly getting me freedom." Now, it didn't mean that I wasn't putting things in place. Because I was, and I'm going to tell you about that in a second. But it's really, really interesting to me to look back on a year like the one I just described, because we're not going to be perfect all the time.

Even when we start something, even when we start a journaling practice, or a meditation practice, or something with our food or our wellness, or our businesses, every year is not going to look like this beautiful straight line that goes directly in the direction of our goals and our wants and our dreams. Some years it's going to be way more bumpy, and this year it was kind of bumpy at times. Not that it wasn't a great year, it was. A lot of things happened, but when I compare that to my word of the year for 2018 which was thrive, I literally thought about the word thrive every month and possibly every week. I was so in touch with that word, which is so funny to

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

me because for years I've been saying the only thing I want is freedom, time freedom, and financial freedom, which makes me think I need to dig into that some more because maybe I say I want that, but I somehow don't really believe I want it or don't believe it's possible.

But nevertheless, the year before I was really connected to the word thrive. And I did a ton of stuff around the word thrive and I had a lot of people mentioning it to me. I wrote some blog posts at the beginning of the year around it. I remember in particular my friend Barry Dickson, who's an amazing designer, had reached out to me even in April Market like three or four months later and said, "I know I commented on your post about thrive at the new year, but it's just been on my mind a lot. And that blog posts you wrote really moved me and I felt the same." And so I feel like I really did embody the idea of thriving the entire year of 2018.

2019 didn't totally embody this whole idea of freedom. And maybe it's because I had more work to do than I thought around this whole idea of freedom and my mindset about it. Last year in 2019, I had one key goal. This is what I do. I pick one key goal at a time. Sometimes it takes the whole year, sometimes it doesn't. And I have a word of the year and I want to make sure every year that they go together. And so my one key goal for 2019 was optimal health and wellness, which I told you on last week's episode, went really well in the grand scheme of things.

And that one key goal, optimal health and wellness, I had attached to this word freedom, because the reason I picked freedom in one part, was I wanted freedom from some of the health and wellness goals that I had been trying to tackle year after year, after year and I just kept not completing them. And I would come to January and I'd have the same goal all over again. I wanted freedom for those, and I wanted the freedom that optimal health and wellness would bring me in a lot of areas of my life mindset and around food and some other things.

It made a lot of sense to me when I picked the words. And really I was able to achieve some freedom, both financial freedom and time freedom, and health and wellness freedom in 2019, so I did make progress. In fact, I

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

made a lot of progress, but I didn't fully hit what I would define as freedom this year, especially time freedom. That's the one I struggled with the most. I did really well financially this year. But with time I kept finding myself back on the treadmill multiple times.

I would say that in 2019 I absolutely laid the groundwork for freedom in a lot of ways. I got my team really dialed in, in almost all areas, we're still going to make a few tweaks and a few additions in quarter one of this year, which means basically right now, so by March 1st I should have the rest of my tweaks to my team really where I want them to be. And that goes a long way towards freedom. Because I had to get all of this stuff in place first.

When I think about that process, it may not even be that freedom was the wrong word, it might mean that 12 months was the wrong timeline. And as I told you last week, we often overestimate what we can do in a year and underestimate what we can do in 10 years. My word of the year concept is based on 12 months, but what if freedom is a 15-month job for me or an 18-month job for me? And so it's really great that I can start to see that. But I definitely did do a lot of things that can lead me to freedom in the coming months and years.

Something else I did in 2019, was I read this great book called Clockwork. And guess what? I'm about to read it all over again or probably actually listen to it this time. Because now that my team is in place in a much better way than they've ever been before, what I really want to dig into is how to create a business that runs itself. Because one of my biggest obstacles to freedom from this past 12 months was, guess what? Of course it was me. It was me and my mindset. And I want to dig back into the concepts and the work and the genius in the book Clockwork, which is a Mike Michalowicz book, and really see now what else I need to do about my own thinking to get out of the way.

Because what I noticed about myself and in the times that I didn't feel free in 2019, it was me falling back into old habits. It was me saying yes to a lot of things I wanted us to achieve as a company. And really I'm in a place right now with all these new team members that I'm having to learn for the

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

first time ever to really get out of my own way like never before and get out of the team's way. And a lot of this content and this concept really is written about in Clockwork. I want to go back and dig in now that I've tried it, and I failed at it a lot of times and I've learned a whole lot about how much I stay in the way and bottleneck things in my company, and now I'm ready to go to a whole other level. And this is a huge job.

It is seriously really hard to stop our old habits and our old beliefs. It doesn't happen by itself. It takes very specific focus to do this stuff. For me to stop swooping in and feeling like I'm the only person who can save the day and handle certain things in my company. That's just my own mindset you all. It's really called a bottleneck. It's not Wonderwoman or Superwoman like I've thought that I was for a long time or like I had an "it factor." It's not like I was arrogant, but we just kind of tend to think we're the only ones who can do things. And what I started to realize is that's not true at all. But to let other people help me, to let other people help me create the freedom I'm looking for, I've got to get the heck out of the way. And I wasn't doing that in so many ways. Okay.

Making that huge effort, reading the stuff in Clockwork again, reminding myself that I'm not the queen bee as Mike talks about, but it is more of the queen bee role that we're trying to fill on the company, and that can be a lot of other people besides me, will allow me to get out of the way. And thankfully, yeah, the logistics, the framework, all the stuff I put in place last year in 2019 for time freedom is there, and now all I have to do is follow through, which sounds great, but is actually the hardest part. Okay.

If I were going to give myself a grade like I was in school or a score for how close I got to hitting my word of the year and freedom in 2019, I think I'd give myself about an 80%, maybe a little better. Definitely a B, probably not a C, even though there were definitely some moments that felt very much like a C or worse. But I'd say a B, a good solid B, better than nothing. But yeah, there were three or four periods of a month or six weeks that felt like the opposite of freedom. They felt like stress. They felt like over-scheduled, overworked, burned out, including the last six weeks or so of 2019.

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

And so, yeah, sometimes things get worse before they get better, right? I can see so many ways I made progress towards freedom. But I wasn't really sitting here this week at the end of 2019, the beginning of 2020, feeling like I had hit a home run with freedom over the last 12 months. It felt a little bit like I had been through a battle. I felt a little bruised. I felt a little beaten up. Maybe it was even a war, the war for freedom. And right, sometimes you win the war, but you still have all the scars to show for it. And that's how I feel a little bit about my chase or my goal of freedom for 2019. But it was progress.

Here's what I want you to know. This is the biggest thing to me. I learned this a few years ago. You've heard me talk about it here on the podcast if you've listened before, the idea of the thought model that I teach for managing your thoughts and your feelings. But here's the good news that's going to kind of blow your mind a little bit, and when I remind myself of it, it blows mine too. And guess what? It is the fact that freedom, which is a feeling, or I'm calling this one a feeling, a feeling I'm looking for, feelings and the feeling of freedom comes from my thoughts. It only takes me thinking the right thoughts to feel free. And a lot of 2019 I fell into the trap of believing I had to do something, or accomplish something, or get to a certain level to feel free, and literally the whole year, including at the very end of it, all I had to do was practice thinking the right thoughts to feel the feeling of freedom. Mind blown, right?

That might put a whole new spin on this idea of the word of the year. If we think of it more as the feeling of the year, we can embody it anytime we want to literally, just by practicing thoughts that we've determined create that feeling for us. I figured out thoughts that create the feeling of freedom for me, and here's what they sound like. They're thoughts like, "I run my days, my days don't run me." Or the thought, "I am in complete control of my schedule." Another great one that gives me freedom is, "I create money on demand." And there's two more that I really love, "I can say no to anyone and anything for any reason, without having to explain myself." And the last one, which is the biggest one for me is, "I always have a choice no matter what."

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

Now, the way I got to those thoughts, especially that last one, is noticing what thoughts I think that give me the opposite of freedom. And when I feel the most trapped, I'm usually thinking the thought, but I don't have a choice. And it could be followed by any number of things, but I don't have a choice to go ahead and record this podcast today. I've already committed to the guest, or I don't have a choice but to finish this proposal because I've already committed to the client, or I don't have a choice. I mean literally, it could be anything that I've committed to and here's what I have to remember, I always have a choice.

That doesn't mean there's no consequences if I make a different choice, but I can always, if I feel like it, back out, say no, change my mind. I can literally do the things that create freedom at any time. And thankfully after doing that thought work and looking back at 2019, I now know that I did win the freedom race or battle just with my thoughts. And as I wrapped up that last little moment of the year, I chose to think the thoughts that literally created freedom for me in that moment, and can continue to create it for me anytime as I move forward.

As I was working on this freedom mindset, I was realizing that I do have some deep-seated beliefs about what is enough. Those beliefs were part of the thinking that kept me feeling trapped, that kept me feeling overworked and that kept me on the work treadmill. After digging in, not just on my own but with one of my life coaches, because I have a few, I'm going through master coach training right now. I've got lots of life coaches all around me. And one of them helped me realize that I had some undefined vision of financial freedom being equal to what we ultimately ended up calling Oprah level rich.

But the problem was I wasn't currently working on an Oprah level rich strategy in my life. I was working on an eight-figure strategy. All that's \$10 million and yeah, that's a whole, whole lot of money. But it's a whole lot different than \$1 billion, and I am absolutely not saying I need \$1 billion to be happy. I just was noticing there were some sneaky beliefs lurking around under the surface for me that I didn't really see them there. And I

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

didn't really notice that in some way I was believing for me to really be able to rest, and also have enough to do the work I wanted to do and take care of my family and help other people. I really had some level of thinking that the life that I "really wanted" was only possible when I hit that undefined amount of money that was far, far, far beyond the 10 million strategy that I was working towards in 2019, and this year, and the next few.

With that sort of sneaky belief lurking unnoticed under the surface, no matter what I was accomplishing, no matter how much money I was making, no matter how much time I was freeing up, I didn't have a belief that it was enough of anything and that I could rest. When I noticed that, I'm like, "Dang, that sneaky money belief was keeping me trapped, not free." What it really proved to me is that there was still a whole bunch of scarcity hanging around, and scarcity creates the opposite of freedom. Until I did the work on that scarcity mindset that was still lurking like crazy under the surface, there was no way I was going to be practicing the thoughts that created the feeling of freedom.

Thankfully, I noticed, and now I've been doing a whole bunch of work on abundance thinking, and wanting from abundance instead of wanting from scarcity. And that's a practice that I will absolutely continue into 2020, because when you want from abundance, you can lay the work down anytime. You can step off the treadmill anytime you feel like it because you truly believe that you already have enough no matter what, and it doesn't matter if you have \$100 or \$100 million. If you believe it's enough and you're working from abundance, then you can step off the treadmill. And when you are working, work can be fun and it can feel like a choice that you're making to show up and show yourself and others what are possible. But when the day is over, that work day, whether that means six hours or eight hours or whatever you planned, then you just leave it there and go on with the rest of your day because you have a belief, a real belief in your heart and in your mind that you already have plenty right now exactly where you are.

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

Okay. Wanting from abundance is freedom. And I will continue to dial into this and hopefully even master this idea of wanting from abundance in 2020, because it feels so good and it stops the feelings of not enough money and not enough time, the two things that keep me trapped and feeling the opposite of freedom all the time. Because again, abundance means there's more than enough of everything. Okay. That's where I stand on freedom and everything for 2019. And I hope if you chose the word for 2019, you'll do the same really deep mindful assessment of how it worked for you, what worked, what didn't, where you're sitting here at the end of that whole year of 2019, and whether you could just shift some mindsets, some thoughts which you can, to create the feeling that you actually wanted. So it's that simple.

I could have created feelings of freedom on January 1st, of 2019 and the second, and February, and March, and April, and May, and the whole year if I had noticed that I was stuck in thoughts that weren't allowing me to feel that way. It's all about our thinking.

Now, let's talk about my word for 2020. I've known this word for a few months. It came to me back in the fall when I was coming out of one of those overworking periods and feeling really frustrated and it hit me. I didn't just want freedom, which freedom has always been the main thing that I felt like I wanted and that was evading me. But I wanted more than freedom. The feeling or the thought of freedom just wasn't enough for me at that point. I wanted to feel what I called, flourishing. I wanted to flourish. Yep, my 2020 word friends is, flourish. Because somehow in that moment I had a perception, a perspective that I really was free if I wanted to admit it.

I could lay down all of this stuff I was carrying, but even though I could be free, I didn't really feel that way. And what I wanted to feel was something more vibrant, more connected, more full of love and health, than just the word freedom. And for me that meant to flourish. Okay. The definition of flourish, because I always look up the definition of my word of the year, and it's a verb, and it means for a living thing to grow or develop in a healthy or

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

vigorous way, especially as the result of a particularly favorable environment.

This is my word. It involves growing and developing in a vigorously healthy way, and it's all about the environment. I feel like this word should be the mantra of Tobi forever more. Personal growth, health, and environment. I mean seriously, my favorite, favorite, favorite things. And this feels like it's even a step beyond thrive from 2018, and freedom from 2019, my last two words. In fact, it feels like flourish is where thriving and freedom really meet so that I'm at a completely different level. The energy feels different. I feel like I'm vibrating on a whole other level energetically when I'm saying this word flourish and I just know, like I knew about thrive in 2018, I have this deep, deep connection and feeling kind of in my gut, in my soul, in my body that flourish is my word.

The reason it's the perfect word for 2020, is I'm seeing 2020 as the year of clarity, the year of perfect vision, right? 2020 vision. I am now working on journaling and scheduling all around whether or not I'm setting myself up to flourish in this new year. I'm digging deep in how I will flourish with respect to my daily life and my relationships, my team, me as the visionary of the company, in my health with food, with self-care, with self-love, all the things, all the sort of departments of my life. I'm looking at each one and I'm painting a picture on paper of what I would look like and my life would be like if I was flourishing in each one of those parts.

I wanted to know exactly what that looks like. That's that whole idea of clarity in 2020 vision for me. Where I'm taking this whole process of the word of the year a step further, or really two steps further in 2020 than I ever have before, stems from what I learned in 2019. Even though 2019 may not have felt like it was perfect and that I didn't land right where I wanted to in freedom, maybe the whole point of it was to teach me these things. So here's the two additional things I'm going to do this year. I'm writing out what it looks like when I'm not flourishing. What my schedule looks like if I'm not flourishing, what my mindset looks like when I'm not flourishing, what my health looks like in those moments that I'm not

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

flourishing. And it's not to be negative, but sometimes it's easier to recognize what we don't want even more than what we do, right?

When I would get into those moments last year of feeling burned out or overwhelmed, I knew exactly that, that was what I didn't want. I'm doing that and painting the picture ahead of time of what those things feel like when I'm not flourishing, so I can create a strategy to not get there fully, or the moment it starts feeling that way I can notice and I can check back in and self correct a lot faster than I did last year.

The other thing I'm doing to ensure that I flourish this year, is instead of waiting until I hit those rough patches over a 12 month period or accidentally get myself overbooked and overwhelmed, I'm adding in the practice of a monthly and weekly plan, an assessment for flourishing. Now, I learned this process with my diet in 2019 from Corinne Crabtree, and the P and P program. I do that now and I have been doing it. I actually heard it first from Brooke Castillo because she teaches this in her weight loss and health and wellness teachings. And then Corinne has it as part of her program. And I really put it into practice last year that I plan ahead at least 24 hours for what I'm going to eat in advance. I really try to plan for a whole week ahead and what I want that week to look like.

But at the absolute least I'm planning 24 hours in advance. And then at the end of that 24 hours I assess what went right, what went wrong, did I hit my water? Did I hit my exercise? Did I eat the way I wanted to do? I feel good. And then at the end of the week, end of the month, both of those times, I'm assessing again. And yeah, it's a lot of assessing. It's a good bit of work. But I met my food and health goals last year because of this and it was an absolute game changer. It's a habit I put in place.

Now, for my word of the year, for the next 12 months, I'm not just looking from the 40,000 foot view and then hoping that I'll land where I want to at the end of the year. I have already mapped out each month for 2020, I have identified the big things I want to happen each month, how much rest I want, how much time off I want, how much time with my family and

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

friends, and how much me time I want. And I've blocked off those hours including hours that I will not work.

I've blocked off a small number of hours or a much smaller than ever before that I'll will work. And it's requiring me to really get creative and get really good at delegating or constraining to be able to do everything I want to in those number of hours, which is six work hours a day. I've tried to hit that before. I've talked about hitting it before. I've talked about how that's my ideal amount of work for a day, but I haven't ever gone to this level and actually mapped it out in advance.

And now as each month rolls around, when I get to that month, I'm going to pull out that month's plan that I did ahead of time, make sure nothing's changed, that I still want everything that's on there, that I don't want to remove anything or add anything. And I can't just add without removing, because we have a certain amount of time every single day. And then I can be very mindful as I go through each month. And whether or not I'm flourishing and if I need to make any changes so that I can.

Now, it's too late to flourish when I find myself at a breaking point, right? I've already gone past that point, when I'm feeling super stressed out and I've got back to back, to back meetings crammed in my schedule all while I'm telling myself I don't have a choice but to do them all right, that's not flourishing. But when I'm planning ahead and making decisions ahead of time, then I'm working from a part of my brain called the prefrontal cortex that is so good at making decisions ahead of time. It's a completely different part than we use when we make decisions in the moment. Your prefrontal cortex has your back. It's the part that's going to help you make good decisions, productive decisions ahead of time.

And when we wait and we're in the moment, guess what? Those decisions are almost always to our detriment. Rarely will we flourish, whether it's around food or work or anything else when we're operating in that moment to moment way. So for me to flourish in 2020, means to plan more than I've ever planned before. And to flourish for me means to be intentional. And make being intentional a part of a framework that I will use just like I used

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

with my diet last year, because just saying I'll be intentional every day isn't enough. It has to be an actual framework for me that I make a habit of. I can't just wish to be flourishing or try to flourish in 2020. I'm going to engineer both the mindset and the environment so that I will flourish. And part of that also includes engineering my schedule.

And a lot of things in my life, and I mean a lot, are going to look different than they've ever looked before. But guess what? To get a different result, you have to do things that you've never done. And I have never ever, ever planned out each month, known in advance what I wanted that month to look like, and then check to make sure I was on track as I went. I have never done that, and I'm doing it this year, and I am so excited, and I can't wait to report back to you about how it goes. And for those of you who are thinking, "Tobi, no way. Not doing it. That seems like way too much work. It seems like it defeats the purpose of freedom and flourishing." Well, let me ask you this, how free and how much are you flourishing right now?

How are those two things freedom and flourishing working for you? Because if you're overworked and overwhelmed and underpaid and flying by the seat of your pants, neither freedom or flourishing are happening in your life. I want you to consider if you also want any of these things that I've wanted in the last few years, thriving, freedom, flourishing. If you want anything in that realm, you've got to be open to trying something, not just trying, sticking to something, committing to something that you've never committed to before and really following through.

Because what I found is that whether it's with my schedule or my food choices, or my workouts, or my family time, or anything else that I want to improve no matter what it is, the more structure I put in place, the more I achieve it, and the more freedom I actually have.

Also here's to a 2020 of flourishing. I am thrilled and slightly terrified about the things that I am venturing into in 2020, the ways I'm going to challenge myself to do things differently than ever. Because guess what? It's way, way, way harder to work on yourself and your own beliefs than it is to work on things outside of you, like your team, or clients, or other things. So I'm

[The Design You Podcast](#) with Tobi Fairley

## Ep #93: How to Flourish in 2020

doing the hard work. I'm going all in completely 100% in for 2020 so that I can come out flourishing, not just in December of 2020, but every single month of this year.

It's exhilarating and it's going to be amazing, and I hope you will grab your perfect word of the year and go on a journey with me. So cheers to 2020 friends. Cheers to finding that perfect word. I hope it guides you straight to the life that you dream of. I'll see you back here next week and really all year long in 2020 with lots of amazing guests and episodes that are designed to help you flourish in 2020 too.

Thank you for being here. I'm so grateful to each and every one of you and I wish you a very, very, very happy new year. Bye for now.

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](http://tobifairley.com).