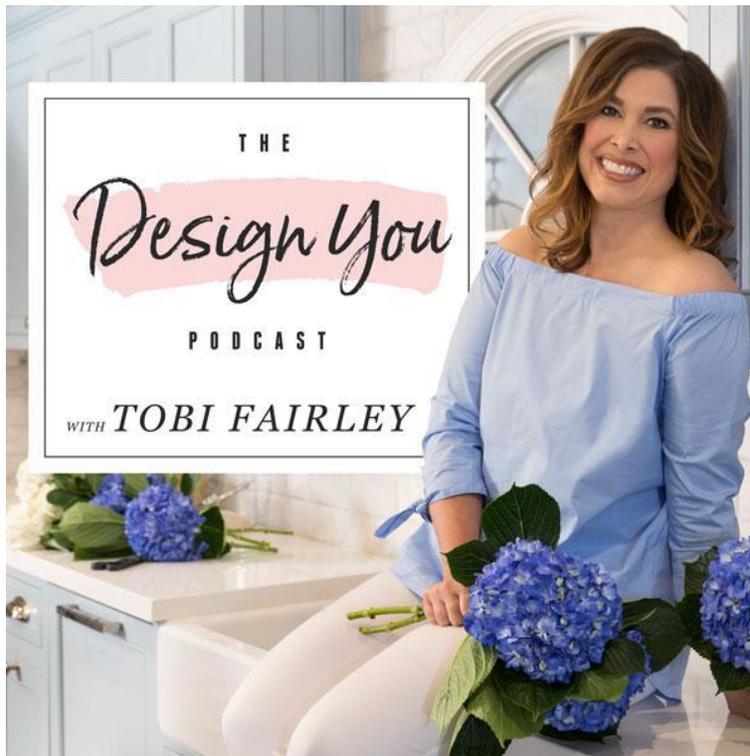


## Ep #186: Listening to Our Negative Emotions



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Tobi Fairley**

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

## Ep #186: Listening to Our Negative Emotions

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 186.

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's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey friends, it's episode 186. Dang, that's a lot of episodes. Thanks for being here for this one for sure and hopefully a lot of the other ones too. I hope they have served you well. So today, I hope you're having a great week, but I want to say before we get started that we're going to be talking about some pretty deep emotional stuff today. So be gentle with yourself. I know for me personally sometimes when I really dig in and face some of my negative emotions and feelings it can be a lot, it can be a lot for me to handle.

And so, if at any point in this episode you feel triggered, or you feel stressed out, or you feel upset, be gentle with yourself and take a break from listening maybe. It'll be right here when you're ready to come back. Okay, so let's get back to how is your week going? It's been an interesting one at my house. Lots of ups and downs emotionally this week which is kind of why I'm doing this episode. So, there were some highs and some lows. And that's most weeks. But some weeks it just seems more noticeable that we're emotional.

I'm sure my husband is like almost everyone in this house, including the pets or female, but yeah, there's some emotion happening here. So yeah, some weeks are like that, you know how it is. And sometimes it seems like everyone in the house is dealing with their highs and lows at the same time. And if it weren't already just the emotional sort of state of us as humans living together in a household, we have the fact that we've been in this state, the whole world really has been in this bumpy rollercoaster of emotions since the pandemic began.

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And I think the trauma that we've endured from COVID, from the election season, the racial injustice that's happened in the last two years, natural and climate disasters, I mean economic uncertainty, name it. There's so much stuff that we've been through. There have been also all kinds of obviously personal things, and community things, and global challenges. And we've felt and endured so much in the last two years. And I think it's left us feeling like we have PTSD. And in a sense a lot of us do.

And not to be dramatic there because I know that there is a real serious thing called PTSD. But trauma affects us really deeply each in our own way. Now, I don't know if you heard Amy Cuddy recently on Brené Brown's Dare to Lead podcast, it's a really good one. If you obviously are into podcasts, you're listening to mine, if you want to go listen. But she was there talking about a recent New York Times article she had written called Why This Stage of the Pandemic makes us so Anxious.

And she's talking about how at this stage of the pandemic the new has worn off, we thought we were coming out of it. And so, we're all feeling so anxious because of what she terms, pandemic flux syndrome. So that's really involving, relating to the stress that comes from uncertainty. And the pandemic, including now the new variants we've had since summer, and potentially more variants and all the things, just the fatigue of it even is more than we can handle a lot of days and a lot of weeks and especially because we thought we were seeing that light at the end of the tunnel.

It was going to be over. We were getting to summer this year and we're like, "Yay, we're going to go back to real normal life, and concerts, and being with friends." And then we were hit with some serious stuff from the Delta variant. And it really set us back a lot of us emotionally. So, when we're thinking about that, when we're even thinking about the uncertainty and whether this is our new normal, or if things ever go back to normal. Will things ever be pre pandemic? Probably not.

And when we're thinking about a lot of that stuff it's enough to bring on a lot of sadness, or depression, or fear for so many people. And especially it just

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brings on fatigue. I think our resilience in a lot of ways is just down. We've been in the house constantly a lot of us. We've carried those negative emotions and it takes more of a toll than we think. And if all that weren't enough, we're heading into fall which fall is my favorite season. I mean I love me some pumpkin and some sitting by the fire. But fall and winter also means less daylight.

And I've even noticed this already myself this week that it can bring on that seasonal depression for a lot of us. And I think because that is on top of COVID and having been isolated so much, and in our homes so much, and even those of us who have gotten back out and ventured out again, we're still not doing things the way we used to for most of us. We're not traveling as much. I still haven't stepped foot on an airplane yet, so it's been almost two years. That is not how I lived before the pandemic.

And so having that experience and then piling on winter or fall and winter on top of it is enough to really get us down. And so, I'm not trying to be negative Nelly in this whole episode. You're going to hear, I'm going to talk about some really serious stuff. But I just, I'm wanting us to admit, I guess, and be honest, and acknowledge what we've been through and that it's okay to feel sad, or overwhelmed, or depressed with it all. And that we don't have to move to positivity all the time.

So, while I was thinking about all of this, that's what was really coming up for me. I was really thinking about our thinking and thinking about our emotions and what we've been through as individuals and as a society. And it got me thinking about how we want and need ourselves and others to be happy all the time. And I've noticed this a lot lately with myself, with my family, my mom, my daughter, other people.

I think because we do feel sort of a little beaten up after what we've been through it feels like an extra amount of pressure when we're not happy or someone in our lives isn't happy. It's like one more thing we have to deal with, one more problem we have to deal with. And when we really stop and look at it, we do as a society and as individuals, whether we realize it or

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not, think that we're supposed to be happy all the time. We think our natural and normal state should be happiness.

And when we're not happy we automatically think something is wrong and sometimes something is wrong but not always. Negative emotions alone don't mean that something is wrong. And we're going to get into today some of why we probably have those and how we try to deal with them, it's not really that helpful a lot of times. So, before we even get there, I think let's just be clear, the problem we're talking about here, the problem is not that we're not happy all the time.

The problem is that our expectation is that we're supposed to be happy all the time. It's not that we're not, it's that we're thinking we should be. So, I want to be very clear about that. Now, I remember the first time I really became aware of my desire to be happy all the time and that it was a thing, and that it could potentially be a problem. And I was sitting in a classroom a few years ago getting my life coach certification and I was listening to my life coach mentor and teacher talk about the concept of 50/50, meaning sort of the nature of life is 50/50.

So, on any given day, or week, or month, or across a year, or across a lifetime, about 50% of the things that happen are good and about 50% of the things we would consider bad. Or as she calls it, 50% of life feels amazing and 50% feels like ass. And the last two years it may have been more like 80% feels like ass. But the point being it's not 90/10, 90 happy, 10 bad. It's not a 100 happy ever.

And I have to tell you, when she was saying this, this was really the first time in my life I had clued into this whole concept and had the aha moment that I had been believing in the 90/10 life and that it was possible. And in this moment, it was like my eyes were open. It was like I took off the goggles and I could see that I had been striving for total happiness for as long as I could remember. And at the very least, 90% happy, that was my worst case scenario. And that the goal was only 10% bad or 10% sad or negative.

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And even though that 90/10 belief system I had was mostly unconscious. I wasn't really aware of it. It was for sure the goal. I mean it was what I was working on every single day and working towards. And I would think about it in the morning, get up, and I think a lot of us do this, we get up and we sort of check-in with ourselves. And we're like, are we good today or bad today? Do we feel horrible? Is this a crappy day or is this a good day? And I was really living that life from that perspective.

And I can see now, no wonder it always felt like I was failing kind of at life in general. Even though there would be high moments, it was kind of like in a sense that waiting for the other shoe to drop because there was always something that was going to feel like it sort of knocked my knees out from under me. So now that I know this, I have this perspective I know that 50% of life at least, may be more on any given day feels like ass. It felt pretty awful to even admit that I couldn't ever achieve 90/10, kind of felt a little defeating just to let go of that expectation.

But ultimately it became one of the most liberating things that I ever did. So not only is 90/10 likely not possible, at least over a sustained period of time, it really was starting to sink into me. And I'm fully clear on it now that it's not even a good thing to want to be happy all the time. Because think about it, without contrast in our life, without contrast, without what we would consider negative, or not perfect, or not great, would the highs even fill that high? I'm not sure that they would. If we were happy all the time, would we even know we were happy?

If we never felt sad, or angry, or fearful, or uncomfortable would we know joy, would we know safety, would we know comfort, would we know serenity? We probably wouldn't. But as I sit here today about four or five years after that moment of learning that life was 50/50, I still find myself and notice the others around me also are wishing for, and striving for, and hoping for ourselves and everyone else in our lives to be happy all the time. And we're ill equipped to deal with people being upset, including us.

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Think about this for a moment, how do you feel when you or someone you love, or someone you're having to interact with is sad, or they're angry, or they're anxious, or they're disappointed, or they're lonely, how do you feel in those moments? It feels pretty uncomfortable. In those moments when we or someone else is upset, or not happy we think something needs to be fixed, or repaired, or at the very least, someone or something needs to get blamed for the situation and the negative emotion.

Our whole goal in those moments is to get everybody happy again so all can be right with the world. And especially so we can relax and feel good. If you can just be happy then I can feel good. And we believe that if they aren't happy that we can't be. And again, whether that's our kids, or our clients, or somebody else we're dealing with, it happens all the time. Maybe that's where the saying, if momma aint happy, aint nobody happy came from, if you've heard that. I know if you live in the South, you've heard that.

But really, it's like our negative emotions feel contagious. And we feel some obligation to feel negative along with other people or for other people to feel negative along with us. And it's the desire to be happy all the time that has us as a society constantly buffering, numbing our negative emotions with food, or alcohol, or work, or gossiping, complaining, sex, scrolling social media, drugs, exercise or whatever you figure out how to buffer with and numb out with, Netflix. We do it all the time as individuals and collectively as a society, so we won't have to feel our negative emotions.

We just cover them up or distract ourselves from them. And in those moments, even though it feels like an instant gratification when we do this, we think that the behavior will make those negative feelings go away. But typically, we're just postponing them. And we're also a lot of times adding a lot of other problems on top of them that come with buffering with food, alcohol, drugs, sex, overexercising, whatever, overworking. We're causing more problems, but we think we're at least fixing the negative emotion problem but that's not true.

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We're typically just postponing them and waiting for them to pop up again so we can start the buffering cycle all over. And when we have things in our society like the whole wine culture for moms, that is showing us how often, and again I'm not saying that wine is bad necessarily. But it's just an indication of how often we're buffering and numbing out instead of dealing with our emotions. And what we're not doing when we buffer is we're not feeling our negative emotions and we're not allowing those negative feelings or emotions to exist. And we're not allowing it to even be okay that they exist.

So, let's be honest about this, I don't think we even know what it means to feel our feelings or to allow our feelings or emotions. I don't think we know what that means. Of all the life skills we're taught growing up, this should be the number one, should be the main one that we learn. And most of us don't ever learn it even as adults. As a master life coach, I had many, many hours, and still get hours of trainings and education including learning to process emotions. But I feel like I'm still such a beginner at this skill.

I know in theory how to process an emotion, but I don't really have a habit of it. I know how to not resist it. I know how to describe a negative emotion or an emotion in general and then I think a thought about it that it's negative. But I know how to describe it. I know how to think about where I feel it in my body and what the sensation feels like. And I know that if I allow it to be there and hold space for it to be there without judgment and I don't resist it, it'll often pass in a minute or two. I know all of that.

And I know that a feeling is just a vibration in my body and that it won't kill me. And it doesn't actually physically hurt me to feel a negative emotion. The worst thing that it can do is create that uncomfortable vibration that I don't like. So, I know all of that. But practicing it, a whole other thing. Practicing processing my emotions regularly as they come up and allowing them to be there is still one of the biggest challenges I have in my life. And it's certainly not a habit yet. My go to response when anyone is unhappy, including myself is to go straight to fix it mode or even worse.

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And I'm going to explain what some of those worse things are in a moment, besides buffering, definitely do that one a lot. But even harder for us than processing and allowing our own emotions seems to be allowing others to have negative emotions because we feel responsible for other people's feelings. We have a habit as humans of taking responsibility for all these emotions that are happening in other people's brains and bodies, and lives, as if we have control over any of those things. We don't control those people's thoughts, or feelings, and the actions that come from them.

But we definitely at some level feel a responsibility for other people. So, whether it's our family, or our clients, or society at large we cannot bear the thought that maybe we did something to disappoint another person, even if that person's a stranger. We can't bear to let people down, or let other people think negatively about us, or be wrong about us. And we just in general don't like knowing that other people feel bad or sad, especially if they're sharing their thoughts or complaints with us about those negative emotions. We don't like it at all.

And guess what? We've all been feeling at some level our emotions our whole life. And for me that's almost 50 years. Yet most of us are not adept at all of knowing what the hell to do with those emotions, ours or other people's unless the emotions are positive and happy ones. We don't know what the heck to do with them. I mean I still feel this way when my daughter's upset about something. I still feel helpless, and I struggle with allowing her to have negative emotions and not feel obligated to fix them.

So, when we feel any of the emotions that we consider negative, we create such a story around them, a narrative. We could call it drama too, but we create this whole story. We need a reason for them to exist. We need an excuse for why we feel them. We need to explain them we think, or justify them, find a solution for them. And we typically feel like failures for not feeling positive all the time. And when we feel that way and we judge ourselves a lot of times it leads us to three other practices or habits besides numbing or buffering that I think can even be worse.

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And I want to talk about those. So, the first thing a lot of us do, especially in our culture and society today that wants everything to be perfect and happy is we practice what's called toxic positivity. Now, according to the online source very well mined, it's an online publication, toxic positivity is the belief that no matter how dire or difficult a situation is, that people should maintain a positive mindset. Sounds like our culture. So, it's sort of that good vibes only approach to life, or at the very least looking for a silver lining, or even maybe believing 'everything happens for a reason'. We know that.

And maybe everything doesn't happen for a reason, but we put that positive spin on everything when we're practicing toxic positivity. And while there are benefits for sure of being an optimist, I consider myself one. And there are benefits to engaging in positive thinking. Toxic positivity instead rejects all difficult emotions in favor of a cheerful and often falsely positive façade. And we all know that having a positive outlook on life is good for your mental wellbeing. But the problem is that life isn't always positive.

As we have discussed here today it's closer to 50/50 and sometimes worse than that. And that is true for every person regardless of your income level, or gender, or race, or any other of our differences. Privilege doesn't prevent us from dealing with negative emotion. Now, there are definitely some groups that maybe end up having more negative emotions because they do lack privilege. And so, life can even be harder. So, I'm not trying to diminish privilege. But I'm just saying even a person like me who fits in every privilege category of white, and I mean the only one I don't have is male.

So, I'm white, cis gendered, have financial privilege, all the things, even me, I have 50/50 life. So, it's not something we can buy our way out of or escape, it happens to everybody. We all deal with painful emotions and experiences. And those emotions, while often unpleasant are important. They need to be felt and they need to be dealt with openly and honestly. They are there for a reason. And toxic positivity takes positive thinking to an overgeneralized extreme as this article says.

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This attitude of toxic positivity doesn't just stress the importance of optimism, it actually minimizes, or even denies any trace of human emotions that aren't strictly happy and positive. And you all, this is happening all the time for a lot of us. And in fact, we think it's the goal. And we don't know it's a problem. We don't know that it's toxic positivity and that we're denying our humanness in a lot of ways.

There's also another problem that's similar that's a response to negative emotions and not wanting to feel these negative emotions and it's called spiritual bypassing. And according to the same online site, are very well mined, spiritual bypassing describes a tendency to use spiritual explanations to avoid complex psychological issues.

So according to author, John Welwood, in a book that he wrote, I don't know, I think in the 80s or 90s called *Toward a Psychology of Awakening*. He's the one who coined this phrase, spiritual bypassing. And he defined it as a tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds, or unfinished developmental task.

And when we say spiritual, that means different things for all people. It could be your religion. It could be yoga. It could be meditation. It could be a lot of things. But spiritual bypassing is using spiritual practices and thinking to diminish our negative emotions, to bypass them. So as a therapist and a Buddhist teacher, this author, John Welwood began to notice that people, including himself, often wielded their spirituality as a shield or a defense mechanism.

And rather than working through their hard emotions, or confronting unresolved issues, that would make too much sense for us to feel our feelings and process them. So instead of doing that he noticed people would just dismiss them with spiritual explanations. And so according to this article, and they're well mined, while spiritual bypassing can be a way to protect the self from harm at times, or to promote harmony between people and groups of people it doesn't really resolve the issue.

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So just like buffering, just like toxic positivity, the problem with these tactics is they don't fix the problem. And maybe the problem doesn't even need to be fixed or resolved but it doesn't address the problem. And instead, it just glosses over the problem, leaving it there, as this article said, to fester without any resolution. So spiritual bypassing is a way of hiding behind spirituality or spiritual practices. And it prevents people from acknowledging that they're feeling these negative emotions. And it distances us from ourselves and from other people because we're not connecting over these issues.

So, here's some examples of what spiritual bypassing could include or look like. Think about, do you do these things, do you avoid feelings of anger? Because the world says we shouldn't be angry. Anger gets such a bad rap and it's kind of my go to emotion as an Enneagram 8. So, we avoid feelings of anger. We believe that traumatic events must serve as learning experiences. Oh my gosh, this is me in a nutshell a lot of times. I think I should learn something from everything or that there's a silver lining behind every negative experience.

That bullet point is Tobi in a nutshell. And that's where I notice me doing things like this and downplaying the effect of things like COVID or other things happening in our lives. So, so far do you avoid negative feelings of anger? Do you believe traumatic events should be a learning experience or have a silver lining?

Do you believe that spiritual practices such as meditation or prayer are always positive? Because they're not necessarily, sometimes you bring up really negative stuff in meditation or prayer. If you're trying to only make them positive, they probably aren't really serving you. And if you're only focused on the positive or being overly optimistic every day, that's spiritual bypassing potentially too and it's definitely toxic positivity.

Are you pretending that things are fine when they're clearly not? A lot of us just don't want to admit things are not okay so we just keep using these tactics to pretend as if they're not.

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Here's another one. Do you think that people can overcome their problems through positive thinking? That's spiritual bypassing, that's patriarchal, that's white supremacist. There's so many roots of that if we're like kind of that bootstrapping mentality of just like buck up and think positive. And think your way out of whatever actual problem you're dealing with. Do you think that's possible? And thinking you must do that. You must rise above your emotions. In fact, thinking you shouldn't even show your emotions because you're rising above them.

All of these are examples potentially of spiritual bypassing. So spiritual bypassing is a superficial way of glossing over problems in a way that might make us feel better in the short term but ultimately solves nothing and just leaves the problem there to linger. And I would say that is also true of toxic positivity and of numbing. Wow, eye-opening stuff.

Now, remember I said at the beginning, if this is bringing up triggers for you, if this is hard to hear because sometimes it is, be gentle with yourself. Have some compassion. Stop this podcast, come back later. That may sound dramatic but it's really not. Believing it's dramatic is probably some level of toxic positivity or spiritual bypassing. Because we really, really need to allow our emotions and the impact of things we've been through to be real and legitimized in our life. It doesn't mean that we have to be negative or depressed. It just means we should acknowledge them.

Okay, so there's a third thing that you could be doing, it's related. And it's a way to practice dealing with our negative emotions and it's called self-gaslighting. So according to Psychology Today, most of us have heard now the term gaslighting. It was really started in a movie I think in the 50s. But a lot of us have heard it the last several years. And what it is, is it's a form of emotional abuse when someone else is gaslighting us that uses manipulation and minimization to make someone question their own reality.

So basically, something's happening to you and someone else is saying, "Oh, it's not, it's not happening or it's not a big deal." And you kind of start to think you're crazy or something's wrong with you because they have you

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question your own reality. So that's gaslighting. Now, self-gaslighting is when we do that to ourselves, when we downplay the trauma or a situation that we've been through. And you all, I do this a lot, I honestly do. I'm always going, "Oh, it's not that big of a deal. It wasn't that hard, I'll be fine." And yeah, I have a pretty privileged life, but we all go through stuff.

We've all been through this pandemic. We all go through things with our children, in our marriages, with other relationships, with our parents, everybody does. And this tendency to downplay the things that are really traumatic that we've been through is self-gaslighting. So, let's be really real here. Most of us have been through a good bit of trauma, especially lately. So, here's what self-gaslighting might sound like. You saying, things like, "Maybe it wasn't that bad", or "I didn't experience real trauma", or "If I was a stronger or a more spiritual person I wouldn't feel this way."

This white supremacist, Americana belief system that we should be strong and independent. And if so, if we were strong enough, we wouldn't feel trauma. Another thing we might say is, "I should be over this by now." Instead of having it impact every aspect of my life, I should be over this. Those are the kinds of things we're saying when we're self-gaslighting. And Healthline publication, another online publication says self-gaslighting often looks like the suppression of thought or emotion.

So, if you're just constantly suppressing, or editing, or not allowing your thoughts and your feelings to be valid, that in and of itself can be considered self-gaslighting. It sounds like we want to be happy all the time. So, one of the examples from the Healthline article, and again, can you notice that these things are problematic? Because there is a lot of content. If you go do research on any of these things, toxic positivity, self-gaslighting, spiritual bypassing you're going to find a lot of information because it is something that is prevalent right now.

And one of the great examples that the Healthline article gave was say somebody says something insensitive or hurtful to you. And you notice your feelings are hurt but then almost instantly or impulsively you think, I'm

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probably just making too big of a deal out of this. I'm just being too sensitive. You all, I do this all the time.

Now, I do love to manage my mindset because it doesn't serve me always to hangout in the place of drama. But that's different than not acknowledging that your feelings were hurt and not allowing them to be there at least for a period of time as you process them. That is totally different. So, the problem in this example is you leapt from point A to point C without pausing at all to understand point B, which is in between, which is where your own very valid emotions that you have the absolute right to feel and express, were happening. We just skipped right over those.

We're like, the thing happened, and now we're just moving to the silver lining or to the gaslighting and making it okay. And we're skipping the feeling and the allowing of the emotions. So again, this is not to say we need to stay there and wallow in it forever. But when we're not allowing us to feel it and I do this so often and I move straight to what my mentor would call rainbows and daisies. It's actually a problem.

There's even another article about this on Forbes. So again, lots of articles, it must be happening a lot and it is. But according to Forbes, gaslighting has become this buzzword in recent years. It refers to a type of psychological abuse as we talked about where the victim is manipulated into doubting their own thoughts, feelings and sometimes even their sanity. But Forbes says that the problem with identifying self-gaslighting is that it may have already become part of your mindset. And there's so much talk about mindset.

And I would say this is something I have to really watch for. It may have become part of your mindset, your core beliefs or even your values to just move to the positive because it's what we've been taught that we're supposed to be doing. So what Forbes is saying is it's really hard to spot or identify when you're self-gaslighting because it may just seem like a part of who you are, I'm just an optimistic person. So, there's several signs that Forbes gives to help you identify if this is a problem for you, if you've

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already made this, integrated this self-gaslighting into a part of who you are in your mindset.

So, do you minimize your own feelings all the time? Do you constantly blame yourself for everything? Do you doubt yourself all the time? Are you your own worst critic? Do you question yourself, including questioning your memory about how maybe that's not how that really went down? If you're doing this that could be an indication that you have made this self-gaslighting part of your mindset, your approach to life.

So, when you gaslighting yourself you put a negative spin on your life in essence. But at the same time, you also think things could always be worse for you. And that a lot of what you're thinking about that feels painful or negative must just be in your head. I think part, the diminishing part, the part of things could always be so much worse for me, that is one of the biggest problems I see happening, especially with those of us who live with financial privilege, or we think our life hasn't been that hard.

So, for those of us who do feel like we have it pretty easy or pretty great, or at least think we should believe that. We do diminish things because we go through that comparison game. And then we start to feel guilty for even being upset, or even having our feelings hurt, or even having a negative emotion because we can think of so many other people in the world that have it so much worse than we do. We go to the place, we're like, "Well, at least I have a house. And I have my health. And I have, my family's safe", or whatever.

And all those are true and all those are blessings, but we tell ourselves that we should be grateful instead of feeling the negative emotion which in a lot of ways is spiritual bypassing again. We're attaching this, and a lot of times there is a spiritual component there and a God component. And we should be so thankful to God for all the things we have. And I'm not saying we should not. But I'm saying that when we're weaponizing that against ourselves we are diminishing our own negative experiences that are there for a reason.

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And one of my therapist friends talks about this. And she's like, "Yeah, you may have a lot of privilege, but you still experience the trauma. And your feelings are still valid." And so, I think that's super important for you to hear right now.

One of the most interesting things to me about being a life coach and having tools that can be amazing like the thought model, which I do absolutely love that I learned to use. And I teach other people to use for managing our minds. It's amazing but it can be tricky too because if we aren't careful and if we have integrated that belief that we should always be happy or we should always help other people get to happiness.

And if we're trying for the 90/10 life all the time then we're accidentally weaponizing these coaching tools against ourselves or others by just moving our thoughts straight to positivity. And that is not the goal of life coaching. That is not the goal of these tools, at least not step number one. Maybe step number two, or three, or four after you've processed some, yeah, you're like, "Now I'm ready to move on. I'm ready to reframe this." But reframing from the get-go and skipping over point B as we talked about a minute ago is not the goal and it can actually be a problem.

And depending on how we're thinking about any situation it could fall under any of these things we've talked about today, our behaviors could fall under them, numbing, toxic positivity, spiritual bypassing, self-gaslighting. They're all things we're using, and the life coaching tools can help us use that. Yeah, I love the thought model, let me just go straight to an intentional model and feel warm and fuzzy all over again. And that's not the point.

I think the biggest thing I learned in master coach training is maybe they'll not even ever go to the happy positive place with these tools. But to be able to sit in the emotion you actually feel, and process it, and understand it. So let me reassure you again that I'm not trying to make us all negative Nellies. I'm not wishing depression on us. I'm not wishing the negative 50, the 50% that feels like ass. I'm not wishing it on us, but it is part of the human experience.

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And I love that we do get to feel happiness, and joy, and fulfillment, and abundance, and love. All those emotions feel so incredible. And they definitely make life worth living but I do wish for us to have the full human experience, the whole amazing gamut of emotions that come from being human, all of them. And I'll say for me my biggest blessings a lot of time, especially in the way of growth, and learning really do come from the hardest moments. So, without them I would absolutely not be where I am today or the person I am today, and I hope that you recognize that too.

But for a lot of us yeah, noticing this and allowing ourselves to embrace the 50/50 life. Now, for some of us it seems like we're not even at 50. We're not even feeling happy 30 or 40% of the time, much less 50% of the time. And that can be a challenge so why is that? Why do we have such a hard time feeling happy even part of the time, not just all the time, and not just during times like the pandemic or when things are we're in a global crisis? But what about when we're not in those moments, why are we still not happy?

What about all the times that things seem like they're going right and we're still not happy? That is a problem for a lot of us. That's confusing for a lot of us. And I believe that in addition to what we've already talked about today, part of this particular problem is when we're not happy at all or rarely, goes back to the way we define success, particularly in our culture, especially in America. And I think that that is absolutely a big part of the problem. We're living in a time where mental health issues are incredibly high.

An article in The Washington Post in 2019 reported that the CDC said that we were the closest to despair that we had been since World War 2, in between 1999 and 2017, which was just a few years ago, suicide rates in the US rose to their highest level since World War 2 which was obviously a very traumatic time globally and in America. So, we are in really unprecedented times with mental health and that's pre pandemic. In 2021 the World Health Organization says suicide is still one of the leading causes of death worldwide and that mental health is a crisis.

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So thankfully they're working to reduce those things. The World Health Organization is working to reduce the suicide rate hopefully by a third by year 2030 with mental health and awareness, and destigmatizing initiatives. But I believe until we change our beliefs around success and what success looks like and what we're supposed to be doing to be successful, and what hustle culture looks like, hustle culture, it's hard to say. What hustle culture is and what it looks like, until we change these definitions of success and hustling it's going to be difficult to reduce suicide by 30% and increase mental wellness by the year 2030.

Earlier this year and this is the last thing I'll tell you, it's also a little heavy, I'm going to tell it to you and then we're going to give ourselves a break and go love on ourselves a little bit. But earlier this year I read a book called *The Patriarchy Stress Disorder* by Dr. Valerie Rein. And you all, it was a difficult book for me to read. It felt very triggering or trauma inducing for me a lot of the time while reading it and I had to put it down quite a bit. And in this book, Dr. Valerie is mostly talking to women and about women.

But let's just be clear, a patriarchal society also takes a toll on men because of the expectations set for everyone. So, in the book she talks about how, particularly for women, despite checking off all the boxes of worldly accomplishments and all the things we dream of, most high achieving women are secretly dissatisfied. We feel stuck in lives that look perfect on the outside, yet on the inside they're unfulfilling. And we're plagued as she says, by this nagging feeling that there's got to be more than this, there's got to be more to life than this.

It sounds like those negative emotions we've been talking about popping up again and we want them to go away. And we're like, "Why do I feel negativity? There has to be more to life than this." So, she says we feel guilty, and we feel ungrateful, remember how earlier we were like we say we should be more grateful. But we feel guilty and ungrateful for being trapped in lives that are so good, they look so good, they should feel so good we believe but we feel trapped in them. And so, we disown our pain around this.

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And we numb out with all those things we've talked about, exercise, work, eating, drinking, shopping, social media, all the stuff. And she talks about in this book how we search for solutions everywhere just like I do all the time. We're like, "Give me the book. Give me the meditation. Give me the yoga. Let's go to the therapy. Get me on medication, let's go to a workshop or a seminar." You all, and I do all of those things and I bet you do too. But we believe if we just keep searching, we'll figure out what the thing is that's missing.

But in this process of searching and not finding a solution, and still striving for what the world says looks like success but all the while feeling unfulfilled, believing we should be grateful. It's kind of a train wreck. And it hits way too close to home for me and I'm sure it does for a lot of you. And in those moments, we ultimately start to wonder what's wrong with us. What is wrong with me? I have everything and I'm still not happy.

So, we're setting ourselves up for failure with our perfectionist expectations, and our standards of success, and our desire to be happy all the time, and our desire to never feel a negative emotion. And neither that level of success or the ability to not feel negative emotions is even possible and it's certainly not healthy but we keep trying for both.

So let me offer you this, because I've given you a lot of heavy things to think about. And as I told you at the beginning of this episode I was going to. And it's not always easy to take a hard look at ourselves and gain awareness around what we're believing, either consciously or unconsciously. I sometimes discover some unconscious beliefs hiding in there like I thought 90/10 was a thing, figured it out, it's not.

But I want you to at least walk away with this, notice, start to notice if you're trying to constantly gloss over negative emotions for you or other people, consider if you're using buffering tactics or something possibly more, I don't know, nefarious, like toxic positivity or spiritual bypassing, or self-gaslighting to put a shiny beautiful rose colored filter on what you're feeling, notice if you're doing that.

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And consider whether those negative emotions that you don't like might be there for a reason. Are they trying to tell you something about your life, or your expectations of yourself, or of the world, or your goals, or your boundaries, or your choices, or your wellbeing? Are they trying to tell you something that you need to be listening to? And the same goes for others in your life. If they're feeling negative emotions listen to them. They may need to be seen. They may need to be heard. They may need that to help them gain awareness around their own wellbeing.

And it's important not to diminish their emotions as being valid. It's important to not try to move them straight to rainbows and daisies even though that seems like it feels so much better. And gosh, it's my go to first too. But we've got to allow people to have their negative emotions and not dismiss them and hold space for them. We aren't typically really listening to ourselves and others when negative emotions are coming up. We're not asking enough questions from a place of compassion. We are trying to move away from the negative emotion instead of being curious about it.

Why am I sad? Why am I mad? Why am I depressed or frustrated? What do I need to learn or notice? So, think about how you might hold space for yourself or for other people just to have those feelings. And instead of trying to move us through them because we feel impatient, which is the number one feeling I feel when someone around me is upset. I'm impatient and I want to hurry and get them to rainbows and daisies. But impatience doesn't really serve us here for ourselves or other people.

So, make it okay to feel however we feel and for them to feel however they feel. And see if you can practice more compassion and more empathy for ourselves and for other people because we're not listening. We're doing our darndest to evacuate these emotions pronto. But remember a 100% happiness is not a thing, neither is 90%, neither is 80% all the time. It's a myth, it's an illusion. And I want us to normalize feeling all of our feelings. Let's normalize as they say now, that's a buzzword, normalize.

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Let's normalize being a full human being. We're not machines. It's time to stop treating ourselves like we are machines or robots that just work really hard and feel happy about it all the time. So, allowing all the emotions in your life, it takes practice. It really takes practice to allow them without judgment, without judging them as good or bad, without trying to fix them, or change them, or wish for them to be different than they are. It takes practice but you can practice this.

Okay friends, you can totally do it I promise. And yeah, you can be grateful for a lot of things in your life, including the negative emotions, be grateful that they're coming up which sounds a little weird. But be grateful because they're there to tell you something. They're there for a reason. This is not toxic positivity, everything happens for a reason. But our negative emotions often are there to tell us something and maybe even they're there for a lifesaving reason at times.

Okay, oh, one more thing, remember speaking of lifesaving, if you really are feeling overwhelmed, if you need help processing your emotions, there is so much help in the world for this. So, depending on where you are in your journey, you could use a life coach, they can help you sometimes move into a different way of thinking. If you're struggling with something like severe depression or anxiety, please consider calling your doctor and working with a therapist. I work with both a therapist and a life coach. They are truly both a lifeline for me at times as I navigate the human experience.

So, there is no shame in asking for help. Any stigma that you've heard other people talk about or be embarrassed about with asking for help, I want you to hear me loud and clear. I don't believe in it. I don't agree with it. And I personally have my own life coach and my own therapist and they're basically on speed dial. I love them. They help me get through all the things that we go through as humans. And if beyond that you're experiencing depression that leads to suicidal thoughts I want you to please right now call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

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Or if someone you know is struggling, do not hesitate to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. That's what it's there for. Their number is 1800 273 8255 and they have somebody there to talk to you or someone you love that's struggling, 24 hours a day. It's confidential. And again, there is never any shame in asking for help.

And on the website at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, I think it's [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org), they also have some other specific resources for coping with specific things like community unrest, like the racial injustice that we've dealt with in the last several years. Or they have specific resources for dealing with the emotional wellbeing, or lack of it that is due to the COVID crisis. They have resources specifically for youth, for native Americans, for the LGBTQ community, for those dealing with natural disasters. They have resources for veterans.

So, there is a lot of help at the [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org) if you are really feeling some heavy, heavy emotions and want to talk with someone there, please reach out to them if you need support. And that's what I have for you. I love you, all of you. And I want us to love ourselves more and to acknowledge our experiences, and our traumas, and our negative emotions for what they are and allow them to be there.

And I want you to hopefully, this is my wish for you, that you show yourself and others, but especially yourself, compassion, and you're gentle with yourself as you move through your days now that you've heard this episode, as you move through the next week, be gentle with yourself. It's all okay. It's all part of being human. And yeah, be kind to you and I'll see you back here next week with another exciting episode of the *Design You* podcast. Bye for now.

Thank you so much for listening to the *Design You* podcast, and if you are ready to dig deep and do the important work we talk about here on the podcast of transforming your mindset and creating a scalable online business model, there has never been a more important time than right now. So, join me and the incredible creative entrepreneurs in my *Design*

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*You* coaching program today. You can get all the details at [TobiFairley.com](http://TobiFairley.com).