

## Ep #197: Redefining Success Part 1



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**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #197: Redefining Success Part 1

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 197.

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, hey, friends, we are getting so close to episode number 200. That's so exciting. But what's also super exciting is it's the New Year. Welcome to 2022. I hope you find that as exciting as I do. I hope your year is off to a great start. I'm super excited to bring you something new in 2022. So I'm going to give it a try and if we like it I'll probably keep it up all year long and that is that I'm going to do several series of episodes.

So four to six episodes in a row diving deep into a certain theme or a topic that we're just going to unpack and look at from different angles. And really just really solve some big problems. So for January I'm starting with the series called Redefining Success. And today I'm going to introduce us to the theme for this series, set the tone, set the stage. And then the following three episodes this month I'll venture into some specific areas where success and redefining success really needs to happen, where there's some problem areas that we want to look at.

So like I said, we'll unpack those, we'll really dig into them, we'll question things. And we'll design some solutions for those problems. So for those of you who listened to my last episode to wrap up the end of 2021 and you heard me talk about doing the new year differently, a new way to new year. Then you heard me announce my word for the year of 2022 and it's consciousness. So I'll likely interchange this year the word consciousness and conscious but it's definitely what's guiding me this year.

So you'll hear me talk a lot on this podcast and in my social media, and if you're in my programs you'll hear me talk in those about being a conscious leader, a conscious entrepreneur, making conscious decisions and really just elevating my level of consciousness in my life. And I believe if we're really going to be conscious then we must redefine success in a more

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conscious way. So let's talk about first the current definition for most people of success or kind of what that looks like. And then we'll get into what the alternatives are.

So for most people success is typically about the hustle. It's about rising early, the early bird gets the worm. It's about having the ideal body, thin, fit and white for the most part, the ideal job, something white collar or entrepreneurial that makes lots of money. In fact success is mostly defined by how much money you make or have. And let's be honest, a lot of people who make a lot of money and look really successful don't really have a lot of money because they're spending all their money in order to look successful.

Success is mostly about optics I would say, especially in the US. And that means it's about the way things look. So often we think people are successful because of appearances and lifestyle when the truth is that it's really often all that stuff is really being held together by a thread, like a house built on sand, or as that commercial, I can't remember which commercial but it's the guy riding the lawnmower in his yard and his fancy lawnmower. And he's showing all of the things he owns. And in the end he goes, "I'm into debt up to my eyeballs."

And that always comes to mind to me when I think about success because that's what we do. We work really hard to get all this stuff that the world tells us is a sign of success and often we're leveraged. We're in debt up to our eyeballs with zero time to even enjoy any of it. And so much stress that we couldn't enjoy it even if we had time because keeping it going is a big deal.

So depending on where you live and what industry you work in success is often all about who you know, where you went to school, where your kids go to school, what organizations or country clubs you're a part of, how glamorous your life and your travels look on social media. Yeah, that old, good old highlight reel.

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And in the interior design industry in particular it's typically about how big and fancy the jobs are you're working on or whether you get published in magazines, or you have a book, or a TV show, or if you have product lines, or if you're asked to speak at industry events. Or how many progress photos you're always showing on your Instagram feed. And there's definitely a specific success path in the interior design industry that I've talked about before that if you're in that industry you know what I mean. We could all name it.

You get the first client, then you get a little better one, then you start getting published, start to get some of those accolades, or those products lines, or a book, or other things. And you work your way up the success ladder. But the problem is that it's really not always actual success. I've done a ton of those things.

And a lot of the time, in fact most of the time other than some little highlight moments most of the time it didn't feel like success at all. Because it's not talked about when we're showing the highlight reel that it takes an extreme amount of work, and stress, and money to make ourselves look that successful. We're buying that success in a lot of ways. And that's true I think for life in general. And not everybody has the funds or the resources to buy success, which is all part of the system.

So a few people are actually making a lot of money in any given industry, including interior design. But 'successes' in the design industry are typically usually costing us more than they're making us. We're lucky if we're breaking even but we keep playing the game. Plus so many people are kept out of success in design and every industry.

So many people are kept out because of their race or their age, gender, sexual orientation, their pedigree, their heritage, who they know, how much money they have, whether they came from money or came from connections. Whether they were taught all that surface level stuff like manners, sort of the pretentious part of how to act, and how to look rich

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and sophisticated. That allow some people to fit the description and then sort of be dubbed those arbiters of style and taste.

And so a lot of people aren't ever afforded that. It's so interesting that we buy into that perception, that benchmark of what style and taste really is. You all know what I mean. And it's so enticing to want that success, which has really come at the, quote, success. Because we believe that if we get into that in group, or club, or get invited to talk on that panel, or go to that event, it somehow signifies that we're important enough, or that we've become famous or rich, or at least 'successful' but a lot of times we aren't.

Optics are everything when it comes to success. I thought that was the success path too, I truly did. I bought into all of it. I believed all of it. And I tried all of it. I spent a lot of money making it all happen. And I made a lot of it happen. And there were definitely fun moments and I don't regret all of it. But I just am so frustrated to learn or was frustrated and still frustrated to learn that I wasn't actually going to arrive where I thought I was going to. And you all, I did a lot of that because I had a lot of privilege, financial privilege, I know people.

I have connections. I can make things happen. So I got a ton of results in the design industry in my career. And again I could go do that, honestly, I feel like in a lot of different careers, if I wanted to pick real estate or anything. I'm a smart girl but I also have a lot of privilege. And if I was still willing to buy into the success path and the hustle bus then I feel I could make a lot of 'success' in any industry but I feel like they would all feel very much the same. Because that looked a whole lot like success but at the end of the day it was often pretty disappointing.

It left a lot to be desired or at least those wins were fleeting, not to mention tiring, or actually exhausting. But the biggest problem is that success wasn't something that I could just work really, really hard for and arrive at success and then relax. And I think this is the big lie, it really is. We're like, "If I can just get there. If I can just get there then I can relax." But here's the thing, that type of success, that mythical type of success, it's a machine

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that you have to keep feeding. I feel like it's a money and time eating monster that's insatiable.

Becoming successful is one thing, staying there especially with regard to making consistent abundant amounts of money while living that glamorous life that looks like a highlight reel, staying there, that's a whole other thing. And that's not just in interior design. I think again it's in all industries, because our culture is based on a patriarchal system and a class system. It's all about power and money. And we play into the system and uphold these myths because we've bought into this idea of success and we truly believe it's there, it's possible. Heck, it's the American dream.

And if we just work hard enough then we will too have success. And that's probably true for a lot of people, you will get what the world promised you success is but what you won't necessarily get is something that feels like you thought success surely had to feel like. Because why on earth would we work that hard otherwise?

But if it is a myth or it's not even a myth but it's just not what we thought it was what would happen if we stopped holding up this broken system, this mythical system, this big lie version of success, what if we stopped and we started to redefine success? Would you even know what success would look like for you without others telling you what it should look like? Could you be honest with yourself and confident enough to admit what you really like, what you really want and what really matters to you and why?

Could you really even articulate how much work is the right amount of work for you and what you don't want to do anymore and maybe never did? One of the ways that I get to this answer for myself is to ask myself if this were my last year on Earth, would I spend it this way? Or if I did have a billion dollars already, would I be doing any of this? Those are two profound questions that can really help you oftentimes get to the root of what you really want to be doing. Because both of those things at some level allow you a different way to think, a different frame of reference for sure.

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So I want us to spend a moment here seeing if we can get really honest with ourselves about what success really is to us. I want you to ask yourself, and maybe even write it down. If you're not driving, or you're not at the gym, not out on a walk, if you're sitting somewhere where you have a piece of paper or you can come back and listen to this later, I want you to start to write down what feels like success to you. And I don't mean it feels like success because you're at some fancy party and a bunch of people are giving you validation, that's not what we're talking about.

But I mean truly you feel so good and it's so sustainable you would do this day, after day, after day. So get really honest with yourself right now, not what others think success looks like or what looks like success, not what the world says it looks like but listen to your own body. Tune into your body if that's even possible. So many of us don't even know how to do that anymore. In fact we're going to have a whole series on the body this year. But tuning into your body, your heart, your gut and really checking in.

We usually turn off our own internal GPS system that was made there for us, it's biological, it was given to us at birth, it's genetic, that knowing that our body has. But we usually turn that off, it's like we flip that power switch off on our own bodies, our own intuition, our own inner knowing and we delegate the answer to what we should be doing with our lives, to what culture defines for us.

I cannot tell you the number of times I switched off my internal GPS or overrode it at least, override my own emotions, my own health, my own gut feelings to just push harder and force myself to achieve the 'success' that I thought I so desperately wanted. How many times I was crying when I was leaving my house because I really just wanted to stay home with my daughter, yet I had committed to go somewhere, on a work trip, or do something, or give some talk.

I mean I'll never forget being in Los Angeles when my daughter was about two or three and speaking at the bloggers conference. And my husband was home with her and she was just hysterically crying and I was crying.

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And I really just wanted to be home with her but at some level I told myself the lie that this career I was building was for us and for her. But that really wasn't true. She just wanted me at home and I just wanted to be at home. And it was really miserable in a lot of ways.

So that was just one of the many, many times I overrode my own emotions, my own health, my own intuition to buy into the myth, the lie of success that the world told me about. And I always did really believe that real and lasting success was just around the corner, I was almost there. Surely I was almost there. I was so close to that finish line that I could almost taste it. And any moment it would finally kick in, success that is, it would take as we say in the south and then I could relax, but not a single bit of that was true, especially not the relaxing part.

I finally just had to decide to relax anyway because I was burned out more than once. And often that moment of finally just throwing up your hands and relaxing or being exhausted and just literally falling into your bed or your chair and saying, "No more." It comes because we're so tired of the hustle towards success that we feel in that moment, we truly don't even care anymore, we just don't care anymore.

We are willing to give up any success in that moment, any accolades, any attention, any validation. We're just like, "I don't even care anymore, take all if it because I'm just so freaking tired of pushing and trying. And I really just want to relax and be with the people that I love." So that, that moment that feels like rock bottom, that moment when you're feeling like you don't even care anymore and you say, "I just want to x", whatever things you would fill in that blank of x with, that is your real definition of success.

What you describe that you want for yourself in those moments where you don't care anymore, what in those moments are you saying you want? For me I used to say, "I would pay someone \$1,000 right now if I could just work from home in my bed, if I could just start my morning slower, maybe read a book for a little while, leave on my pajamas for a couple of extra

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hours, have that cup of coffee. If I could cuddle with my family, if I could do that I would pay someone \$1,000 right now.”

I would also say, “I would give anything if I never had to post another picture in real time on social media about my life. So I could actually just enjoy those moments when they were happening instead. I would give anything for that.” Or I’d say stuff like, “I would die not to have to travel for work this week.” I would love traveling if it was for fun with my family and they were going with me. But I would be okay if I never ever had to leave again for a work trip where my family was sad and I was tired. And the last thing I wanted to do was go somewhere again for work.

I would also say, “I would give anything to stop working nights and weekends and really just chill, and watch TV, and cuddle with my people and my pups, and eat some comfort food and have on my PJs at five o’clock.” I would give anything for that. You all, those intimate conversations you have with yourself in your head, those are telling you exactly what success looks like for you. Those are the things that make you happy, truly happy, that create joy.

Those are the things that really matter to you yet those are the things when we match them up or compare them against the world’s success barometer, they don’t look like success at all. They look ordinary or mediocre, are not like you are living up to your potential. Didn’t you get the memo that there’s so much more out there that’s meant for you than this? Didn’t you get the memo to stop playing small? Didn’t you hear that successful people don’t spend their time watching Netflix and lounging around in their yoga clothes at home?

I heard all those memos and they were also BS because you know why? We hear those memos because those stories sell. It’s capitalism, baby. They sell. They sell books, and programs, and courses, and diets, and Botox, and fancy purses, and cosmetics, and supplements, and Pelotons, and personal trainers. And they sell travel excursions, and destinations,

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and fancy clothes, and fancy dinners, and wine, and luxury cars, and all the stuff, and diamonds, all of it.

Because all those things for sure, those trappings of success, those for sure, if you just have all of those will certainly feel like success, we think so. The more mediocre you think you are because you're buying into these tropes about what success looks like, the more those things are going to appeal to you. The more you can tell yourself that you're off the wagon on food or exercise, that you should change your body, that you need to stop just wasting so much time laying around.

Those stories about how you're not enough and probably you're getting worse by the minute with all your bad habits. Those thoughts sell yet when you're exhausted, and on the verge of burnout, and at rock bottom and all those other things, what do you really want? Because it is never the fancy stuff, it's the simple pleasures, it's the downtime. It's like me, another hour in this bed with one more cup of coffee, a \$2 cup of coffee if at that, even with my bulletproof fancy stuff in it in my PJs.

I don't need to make \$10 million to have another hour in my PJs and another cup of coffee and being at home when my daughter gets home from school. And I don't have to make \$1 million to get a good night's sleep. In fact a lot of the stuff that makes you a million dollars keeps you from sleeping. The people you love, the things you love most you don't need all that fancy stuff to get them. So why do we not see the disconnect?

The way to more success as far as culture is concerned moves us farther away from what actually feels good. And I'm not saying I don't like nice things and fancy stuff and travel, you all, I do. This is not me saying we should all take a vow of poverty. But now that I've changed my definition of success I can do those things sometimes too but while also being rested, and recharged, and allowing myself time for the things I love every day.

My idea of success is not to work myself to death. It's not to work myself 340 days of the year like a dog so that I can occasionally have some fabulous or glamorous vacation or be off with my family on the major

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holidays. I think that's backwards. And let's be clear, there are many people who have to work like a dog 340 days of the year because they don't have a choice, they're just trying to feed their families.

But for those of us who do have the benefit of financial privilege or other luxuries that maybe everyone doesn't have, we choose still a lot of times to work that way because of the promise of success. And I think we have this backwards. Gary V, the famous, he was a wine guy, now motivational speaker love him or hate him. I do often come back to this one comment or quote he has and you've probably heard me say it before if you're a regular listener. And he says that if you spend your weeks looking forward to the weekend then your life sucks.

And he may not say it exactly that way, I think he's said it multiple ways. If you're working like a dog so you can take off on the weekends, however you want to say it, your life sucks. And I would also argue and say that likewise if you spend your years working for vacations, and holidays, and stuff, then your life may also suck. But I fell for that same promise of success too for a long time so I get it.

The only way not to buy into it is to intentionally or let's say consciously opt out of it. And that's again not to say that money is bad, or things are bad, or vacations are bad, I'm not saying that at all. I wish all of those lovely things for everybody. But what I really wish for us is that we live a life that actually feels like success. So what would your life look like if you enjoyed more of your days than not? Would it be something like you working for a sustainable number of hours each day, maybe four to five hours, or six hours a day?

Your brain's probably exploding right now, those of you who work 12 hours a day but what if you worked a normal amount of hours like four to five? They say five to six is the best for productivity. And what if you spent the rest of your day doing what you love every day, whatever that is?

For me that would be reading and watching TV with my family and lying in bed a lot, usually with my electric blanket on even in the summer

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sometimes. Doing needlepoint, or playing Sudoku, or napping, or listening to podcasts, getting facials or massages regularly, drinking Moscow mules, sitting by our firepit, doing a puzzle, taking care of my plants. Having dinner with friends sometimes, going for walks or hikes, making homemade green juice, baking now and again. Enjoying trips with my family three or four times a year, maybe more.

Growing lettuce in my hydroponic garden, planting flowers, burning candles, wearing overclothes, or cozy sweaters, or my Ugg fuzzy platform house shoes most days. That's what success looks like for me and it's not about fancy stuff or fancy cars for the most part. Yeah, my hydroponic garden's kind of fancy and some of those vacations are too. But day in and day out, laying in yoga clothes, working and coaching for a few hours a day and then doing a lot of other things that I love, that's what feels like success and luxury to me.

When I talk about how many books I've read in a year which I do a lot and last year that number was 42, the comment I hear most often is, "How do you have time to read?" Not even just how do you have time to read that much but, "How do you have time to read?" And my answer is always that I make time. I make time to read. And when I talk about other hobbies like now that I'm getting back into needlepoint, and last year I was taking some painting classes which I loved, and I think I'll do again some this year.

Or when I talk about listening to podcasts, or even taking a nap, always the same comment, "How do you have time for that?" There's a lady named Bronnie Ware, you may have heard of her. She's an Australian palliative, yeah, is that how you say it, palliative nurse? She takes care of people when they're dying. She spent years taking care of people in their last three months of their life. And you may have heard of the books that she wrote about this about what people say when they're dying.

And so she questioned every one of these people that she was taking care of for over, gosh, years. And she asked them what regrets they had or anything that they would do differently in their life. And she saw that these

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five common themes surfaced again, and again, and again. So what were the greatest regrets she heard from patient, after patient, after patient? It was not, I didn't make enough money. It was not, I didn't work enough hours. It was not, I didn't take enough vacations. And it was not that I didn't have enough homes. Not even close to any of those things.

The five greatest regrets of the dying are, I wish I had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me. I wish I hadn't worked so hard. I wish I had the courage to express my feelings. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends. And I wish I had let myself be happier. Not a single one of those things aligns with what we believe the definition of success is. Not a single one of those things aligns with what we think we're working for when we're on the hustle bus which often really feels like the struggle bus.

So as we start this first week of January 2022, I want you to take a hard look at how you define success and what's important to you. And the way you know what's important to you is not what you say is important to you but look at how you're spending your time. Most of us say a lot of things are important to us and they never, ever, ever make it onto our calendar, they never get into our days.

Most of us are spending our days working long hours, saying it's to make money for those people we love, saying it's the pursuit of success, saying it's going after our dreams even. But what the people that we love most want often is just us to be present, and relaxed, and not exhausted and overworked. What I want for us is that we actually get time to do the things we enjoy and that matter. For so many years I didn't even know how to have fun or what pleasure looked like because the cultural definition of success squeezes all the pleasure out of our life.

So I'll be back next week to take us a step further in this Redefining Success series. And next week we're going to talk about workload and the unpaid work gap and what it looks like to really create success for you and your team if you have one, or your family if you have one. And it's probably

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not what you think. But until next week I encourage you to get thoughtful, or a better word might be to raise your consciousness when it comes to your definition of success.

Get honest about what you thought success was, and how you might want to rewrite that definition for a life that won't have you sharing those same five most common regrets one day. I don't want that for you, friends. I want you to break that cycle. I want us all to. So until next week that's your homework, get really conscious and intentional about what success really would look like for you and to you, and what it would feel like if you weren't buying into what the world tells us success looks like.

That's your homework to decide what it would look like for you and how you then might change what you had planned for 2022. And make 2022 feel like actual success, not the manufactured version, or culture and capitalism would have us buying into yet again, but real success. So take a look at that definition, take a look at your true definition, maybe even take a look at your goals if you've written them this year and just see what you find. Get so curious, don't judge, don't beat yourself up, just get curious about it.

And I'll be back here next week and we'll dig deeper into this Redefining Success series. I can't wait to see you then friends, but 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 You* coaching program today. You can get all the details at [TobiFairley.com](http://TobiFairley.com).