



EPISODE NO. 384

The Psychology of Space

What do the spaces that you live in say about you? And how can we use our spaces to change our self-image? That is what we're talking about in today's episode, so let's dive in.

Welcome to the School of Self-Image, where personal development meets style. Here's your hostess, master life coach, Tonya Leigh.

Hello, beautiful friends. I am so excited about today's episode because we are talking about the psychology of space. I'm not talking about outer space. I'm talking about the spaces you inhabit. I'm talking about your environment. When I started the School of Self-Image and I was really thinking through my own self-image journey and the clients that I'd worked with for over a decade, it became super clear to me that you cannot talk about self-image without talking about our environment because our environments are shaping us, and we shape our environments. And that's exactly why surroundings is a core pillar of the work that we do within the School of Self-Image. And if you're a member, you know that this is what we're focused on this month. I'm taking members through deep exercises, looking at their space as this home portrait, giving them access to uncover things within them that maybe they had buried, they didn't realize, and also using our spaces to help elevate our self-image.

Because think of it this way, if someone were to go into your house right now, what is the story that they would tell about you? What do you think they would say? Would

they say, "She's very creative," [REDACTED] "She is a minimalist"? Maybe they'd say, "She's got a busy life." Maybe they'd say, "She likes to hoard things." Maybe they'd say, "She is in transition." That's what they would say. They came into my house right now. They would be like, "This is a woman in transition," because I've got boxes. I'm packing up because we're going to be moving into our home. Well, I thought it was going to be sooner rather than later, but turns out it's going to be later. We've got like three more months. But it would tell a story. And I was thinking about my own journey as it relates to my spaces, and I realized that no matter where I've been, I've always tried to make it feel a little bit like home, but I've never really settled.

And the way that has shown up is that I don't have a lot of pictures on my walls. I don't have a lot of things. In fact, furniture, I have very minimal furniture because I've never owned a home. I've always lived with someone, or I've rented. Now, what I have had plenty of are clothes. And for me, style has been my creative outlet. It has been the way that I express myself. And it's a core pillar of the School of Self-Image because we can use style to elevate our self-image. But where do clothes live? In the closet, right? So when I look at that space in my home, it has always revealed so much about who I've been and who I'm becoming. And one of the things that I always do, you all, whenever I feel that I'm on the precipice of a big breakthrough is I purge my closet. I will literally go in my closet and say, does this piece represent the old me or the new me, who I'm becoming?

And I will get rid of so many things that I feel like are old Tonya, and I will begin to bring in new things that feel like who I'm becoming. But when I look at the homes that I've lived in, each of them have told a very, very fascinating story. In fact, if we go back to my very first home that I lived in with Sarah's dad, we had just gotten married. I was 18 years old. It was a tiny, tiny little brick house that he had that I moved into. And I was so grateful for it. It was my very first home, but it told the story of a girl who was becoming. But when I went through and I actually did the work that we're doing within the School of Self-Image this month, I did it on this particular house.

And if I had to describe that house, it was very small, little brick house, very simple, and it didn't have a lot of light in it. I too remember that. It felt dark to me. It had dark walls. I did put some wallpaper up in the kitchen. And it was messy. I was messy. And guess what? Looking back on that house, it was such a reflection of how I felt at the time, very small. I had a lot of dark shadows that I hadn't addressed, and my mind was so cluttered and messy. It's really interesting to look back at that very first house and see how it reflected back to me, my inner world. And then I moved into a house with my second husband. And I remember that house was so beautiful. It almost reminded

me of a Frank Lloyd Wright home, but it was very old modern with lots of windows, and lots of light.

And I remember that was a moment where I was like, I want to get my life together, I want to be organized, and I want to enjoy life more. And that house really did reflect the bigness that I started to feel in life, how expansive my life was starting to feel. It was reflecting back my inner world and who I was becoming. And I've done this with every single home, so it's been so fascinating for me to witness my inner world through the spaces that I have lived. Our homes are more than just physical spaces. They are literally mirrors that reflect our inner world. The way we decorate, organize, and even maintain our living spaces can reveal so much about our personalities, our interests, and our emotional states. For instance, a person who values order and cleanliness may have a meticulously organized home, while someone who is more carefree and creative and spontaneous may have a more eclectic and very lived in space.

It's been really fascinating to go through the process of building a home because I'm having to answer questions about what colors I love and what designs I like and what fabrics really speak to me. And I'm really being intentional about this, and I'm paying attention to what I really love versus what I think I should love. Are you with me? Because we go on the Gram and we see everybody's beautiful homes and we start thinking, oh, well, that looks good. But it's almost like seeing an outfit on a mannequin and you think, oh, that looks great. And then you try it on and you're like, but this doesn't feel like me. And so I've really been thinking about not only how I want to feel in this house, but how I want this house to be an expression of me. And one of the things that's become very clear is that I love bright and neutral palettes.

So I love either whites and browns and toques and creams, or I love dark. I love the contrast between black and white. I don't like a lot of color as it relates into walls. But do you know what I do love? I love the flexibility of being able to change out colors, change out pillows, change out artwork. And I realize what that says about my personality is that I don't like being trapped to any one aesthetic. Now, I know that you can paint walls, but I love the flexibility of being able to be creative with the details. And this even shows up in my personal style. I love neutrals, but then I'll play around with splashes of colors with my purse and my belts and scarves. I love the versatility that neutrals allow for me. And so what does that say about my inner world?

I've been asking myself this question a lot because I find it so fascinating, and I've come up with a few theories. One, when I think about self-image, how I see myself, what that

reflects back to me is that I see myself as that calming, grounding energy that is represented by neutral colors. It's that balance. But I also have this other part of my personality, which is super fun, super creative, super sometimes eclectic. It's the part of me that loves to dance until 2:00 AM. It's the part of me who literally, last weekend, laughed until my belly hurt. It's like that wilder part of me. And so I think when I look at my aesthetic preferences of that neutral palette, which is the bigger part of me, but then these bold, fun splashes of color and interesting decor, that represents that other part of me, that free-spirited part of me. I don't think we have to choose. I think we can be both. And so that's one thing.

The other thing I was thinking about is how this neutral palette that I love and these colors that the interesting patterns and textures show up in my business. And I think about the School of Self-Image membership. And when you come in, the first thing that you get access to is the self-image method. That is my neutral. That is the grounding force of the whole entire membership. It is the foundation. But then I get to bring in all of these interesting classes that really support the self-image method, and that's where I get to play and produce and offer value in many different ways. And the last theory I came up with is that I love flexibility. I don't like being tied to one thing. I feel like if I were to paint my walls red, I would be a prisoner to red.

And so by having the neutral color, I can throw some red in the room if I want to, but I can also switch it out. The last thing that just came to mind is I feel like this also represents my emotional control. Because when I think back to another house I lived in, I painted everything red. It was really on trend at the time. I had a red kitchen. I think the dining room was red. I painted everything red. And that was the time of my life where I had no emotional control because oftentimes our colors that we choose are such an expression of our personalities and how we operate in the world. And red is very fiery, very passionate. And let me tell you, that was me, and not in a good way. There's the really good, fiery, passionate, and then there's just the out of control not knowing how to manage yourself.

But now, today, I feel like I have this balance of being able to emotionally manage myself while also expressing my emotions in a very intentional way. Now, am I perfect at it? No. I still lose my cool sometimes. But it's also that balance of being able to stay calm, and also not suppressing my emotions, but expressing them in a way that is intentional and purposeful. So it's really interesting to think about what your spaces say about you. Now, if you were to look in my current space, you would see a woman who is in transition. You would also see a woman who has a lot going on. Just in full transparency, my home right now is not ideal. It's not as organized as I would like for it

to be. My closet is a little bit messy right now, which is not how it usually is, and I'm okay with that.

I think when we go on the gram and we're looking at everybody's picture perfect home, we can start to think, oh my God, we're really failing at life, but everybody's just showing you the highlight reel, right? Now, ideally, one day my home would look like that, but I'm never going to beat myself up for my home not being perfect. Because you know what our homes are lived in? We have humans in our homes who do things in different ways and who have their own value systems. And so it's learning how to cohabitate with other people as well. But right now, my home, if you were to walk in it, you'd be like, "Oh, Tonya Leigh's got a lot going on." And I think about my inner world. There's a lot going on right now. I'm juggling a lot of different plates. There are a lot of projects, and then moving and people coming to visit.

There's just a lot happening, and my home definitely reflects it right now. And so I love using this tool, never as a way to beat yourself up, but as a way to just be aware of what your home may be telling you, because here's the really cool part. The psychology of space says that our homes, our spaces that we find ourselves in can impact how we feel, and then how we feel can impact our homes. Everything you choose to bring into your home is representative of you. But the cool part is we can begin to use our spaces to change not only how we feel, but how we see ourselves. For example, if you want to see yourself as a woman who is fit and healthy, imagine what her kitchen looks like. Imagine what her pantry looks like. And you can begin to let things go that don't fit in with that vision and bring things in that do.

I've told this story so many times, so excuse me if you've heard it, but I literally changed my life by changing my bookshelf. I used to look at my bookshelf and it just told the story of a woman who was broken and who was trying to fix herself. And one day when I realized it, I was like, oh, wait. Because I thought about some of the homes that I had visited in France, and their books told a very different story. Their books told stories of women and men who were well traveled and who loved art and design and who loved reading, excuse me, classics. And I was thinking, oh my God, I want to see myself like that. And so I came home, took all of those books off, except for a few of my favorites, and I started to put books on my shelf that when I looked at them, they told a very different story.


And I'm telling you, what you see is informing how you think. And so we can begin to use our spaces to change our psychology. If you want to see yourself as an organized woman, just pick one area of your home that you're going to commit to keeping

organized and do it for the sole purpose of seeing yourself that way. Not, oh, I'm going to clean this place up and it's going to be organized. No, I'm going to clean this up and I'm going to organize it, and I'm going to keep it that way to send the message to my brain of this is who I am, this is who I'm becoming, I am an organized woman, because you can't see yourself as organized if your space is a mess. And different areas of our home can represent different things. For those of us who work from home or we have our own business that we run from home, just look at your desk. And what does it say about you as it relates to your business?

And if you don't like what it's saying when you look at it, use that space to change your psyche, to change your self-image. Maybe you want to clean it. Maybe you want to put some beautiful flowers on your desk. Maybe you want to organize the papers on your desk. But whatever you need to do to send that message to your brain of this is what's up. This is who we are. This is who we're becoming. Now, when I'm teaching on this topic, one of the questions that I often get is, Tonya, how do you bridge the gap between your current space when it feels like it's so far off from how you see yourself? And I've been there. I have lived in all sorts of places and spaces, and none of them have ever felt completely like me. But here's what I want to offer you.

Number one, stop comparing your current space with other people's spaces. Now, you can use it for inspiration, but if you're using it as a way to beat yourself up and tell yourself that you're not where you want to be in life and that you should be somewhere other than where you are, it's just not useful. And that's one thing I'm really proud of myself for. I've never gone on Instagram and seen beautiful spaces and thought, ugh, my life sucks. I've been inspired. I've been like, "That's cool. One day, maybe." But I've never done that, and it's just freed up my energy to look at the second point I want to make. How can you make where you are be closer to how you want to see yourself and how you want to feel in your life?

Bring it back to present day, your current home where you're living, even if you're living at home with mom and dad, even if you're living with roommates. Ask yourself, how can I bloom here? How can I make this space feel more aligned with the woman I am and how I want to feel in my everyday life? Then you can begin to look at the practical steps of this process. And I always encourage women to start small. Maybe you pick one corner of a room, or you pick an entire room. Maybe there's a room that you've been avoiding. It may be an area of your life that you've been avoiding that that room represents, and that's why it's powerful. Because you address the room, you're also addressing what that room represents. But look at that room and just imagine how you want it to look and feel, or that corner of the room. And you can either, A, paint it.

You can maybe purge. Maybe  are things that you want to get rid of that's old energy that's weighing you down.

You may want to start bringing some things in, new decor, a piece of art that really represents how you want to see yourself and how you want to feel in your life. Maybe you want to paint a room, or maybe you just want to start with some simple things like candles and flowers. And maybe this is where my love of flowers came from, because when you're renting a place, you don't want to, or at least I didn't want to invest a lot of money into painting walls and putting up expensive draperies. I just wanted to make it beautiful for that moment in my life. And so I fell in love with flowers. For you, it may be something else. But no matter where you are, it is an opportunity to begin to use your space to uplevel how you see yourself, to change how you feel in that space, and to use that space as a tool to completely change your self-image.

And what I've noticed is that doing this inner and outer work simultaneously, you begin to expand. And then what you are capable of expands, what you have room to hold, expands. And you'll probably look around one day and realize you're in a completely new space because you really bloomed in the spaces that you had. Because let's face it, you all, fighting with where you are doesn't get you anywhere. It keeps you stuck. So decide right now, no matter what your home looks like, no matter where it is, that you are going to bloom there. You're going to make the best of it. You're going to use this space to support your growth. And if you love this topic, you're going to love what we're doing within the School of Self-Image membership this month. And it just so happens the doors are open and we are doing a deep dive in a class called Your Home Portrait.

I did this work years ago, and it literally changed my life. And I have worked with private clients around this, but I've never taught this class for the membership. So I'm so excited for you all who are in the membership to dive deep into the exercises and the challenge for this month. And if you want to join us, come on. Head over to schoolofselfimage.com/join. Have a beautiful week, my friends, and I will see you in next week's episode. Cheers.

Hey, are you ready to transform your self-image but lack direction and support? If so, I'd like to invite you to join the School of Self-Image. This is an exclusive monthly membership where you'll create your own powerful before and after story. Through weekly classes and coaching, you'll learn powerful techniques on how to elevate the quality of your mindset, style, and surroundings to change how you see yourself and

create extraordinary results in your life. Head over to schoolofselfimage.com/join to learn more.