



Simple, with Tsh Oxenreider

Episode

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## Segment One

Tsh: This is Simple; I'm Tsh Oxenreider.

Hey friends, in this episode I'm chatting with my friend and co-host Christine Bailey, and as we usually do on the show, she and I are talking about what we wrote this week. Christine shared about a pretty significant milestone for her last summer when she was on a houseboat with some friends at the lake. From it she started facing her body images head on. Here she talks more about simple but not always easy ways to overcome negative body image issues, which I think a lot of us can relate to. And then this week I hit publish on something that felt pretty vulnerable to me. I'm sharing with you all how I'm going on sabbatical next month in July. It feels pretty vulnerable because our productivity obsessed world as a petri dish for all sorts of limiting beliefs about why we shouldn't or couldn't take something like a sabbatical from our work. In this chat, I talk about how I've grown to overcome some of that thinking this year plus some practicals of how I'm making it happen and my game plan for what I'll be doing on my sabbatical. Hint, I won't be working, but I also won't be doing nothing. Let's get right into this episode. Here's Christine sharing her wisdom about overcoming a negative body image.

[01:25](#) Christine, you wrote this week about a body image manifesto so tell me more of what you're thinking in this department.

Christine: My post this week, it was a pretty vulnerable when for me. I dove into the topic of body image and how I have struggled pretty much my whole life since about fourth grade with this particular issue. About for the past 15 years I've been on an ongoing journey of just healing from just the lifetime of body image issues. I've done a lot of hard, intentional work in that area just in accepting my body and loving it for how it is. Being a farmer has definitely helped in that area just embracing my strength aiming to be healthy and strong rather than a particular size.

I had this experience last summer when some of our really close friends invited us to spend a long weekend on their houseboat at a lake nearby. The post is about that, just a story of that experience. We were so excited to leave the farm for a few days and be in water and have a break from dirty nails and all those

kinds of things and just relax and play. There were about 12 of us there. There were six adults and six kids.

Tsh: That had to be a big houseboat, by the way.

Christine: It is big. It has a full size kitchen. I was shocked and there are about three bedrooms, they pack a lot into these little houseboats. It was so nice and so fun. Shortly after I arrived, everyone just changed into their swimsuits without any cover ups or anything. I realized, oh my goodness, I know it sounds real simple but I'm going to be wearing literally just a bathing suit this entire time. I just realized this is how it is at the lake because the nature of what it is there is you're constantly getting in and out of boats and in and out of the water and there's a lot of play and going down slides and getting on wave runners. The other families had been there before and this was my first experience with it. I had this moment where I panicked and I really had a decision to make and I had to decide was I going to walk around for four days, self conscious of my body and just tunneling down into these issues that I've had for so long. This feeling of being too large or taking up too much space in the world or was I going to make the choice to just be liberated and free and to not cover myself up and just to enjoy the freedom of being at the lake. I feel like this experience really was a step in healing for me and I have this moment where I was literally standing in front of the full length mirror in our little room on the houseboat and I'm putting on my swimsuit and looking at myself in the mirror and thinking about my daughters that are outside getting on their swimsuits. I decided to just choose life and freedom, not just for them but for me and to really soak up the trip I was going to have to really leave behind that self absorption and just enjoy that freedom of being at the lake.

Tsh: [04:36](#) I think so many of us can relate to this, especially at the start of summer right now when we are anticipating a lot of time in swimsuits. It is funny to me. I mean, it's not funny, it's sad, but it's also just funny, interesting how fraught with emotion and psychological warfare swimsuit season is for so many of us. So often, men don't really get this. I'm not saying they don't have their own issues, but this is such a thing among women I find. It makes me mad at our culture, it really does. Like what you said, this is a thing that you have worked on, maybe not worked on, but dealt with since you were a kid. I think so many of us feel the same way.

Christine: [05:25](#) I really think so. Every woman I've talked with, no matter what size she is, deals with this in some way. I love the phrase you just used psychological warfare because that sounds pretty severe, but I feel like it is really is such a battle. Even though I've made a lot of strides in that, it was just another layer of healing, just another step in the right direction on that trip. Hopefully it'll help someone else. It was interesting because I made that choice and at first it didn't

necessarily feel like I believed it, but just in vocalizing it to myself and making the choice, I am going to move forward as if this is true. It really started to feel true and nothing changed about my body. Like my thighs are still touching at the top and my stomach is still soft but it almost felt like these things are not only okay but it's wonderful. This is my body and all its beauty and stretch marks and wrinkles and scars and I'm out here and I'm just me and really no one is paying attention to me like I think they are.

Speaker 4: [06:34](#) I'm so glad you said that last part because that's what comes to my mind. If we're going to get really practical here, I think we are all thinking about ourselves in these situations really, most of the time anyway. I think about that all the time when like we're on the beach or at the lake or something, that it's so easy to think, oh my gosh, everybody is talking about the fact that I am here in a swimsuit when nobody, almost everyone is, well, not only is nobody else even noticing that I am there, but most everybody is probably thinking some version of the same thought. Everybody's noticing me and we're just not.

Christine: It is so true. If someone is really scrutinizing someone else that closely, that's their own issue. It's not our issue, you know? I just really enjoyed writing about that. It was healing for me to even write that story. I share a photo at the end. I love people to see it. We jumped off the boat at the end, me and my two girlfriends, and just even that image was just so beautiful for me. I never would have ever published a photo of myself in a swimsuit on a public website. That just shows a lot of progress in that area.

Tsh: That is a really big deal. That's very cool.

Christine: Today I just wanted to go into a little bit more practicals about body image and I thought I'd share just some practical ways to engage in a healthier body image. Like you said, it's summer we're going to be in swimsuits. This is a good time to embrace that. I found a really interesting study by this place called the Melrose Center in Minnesota and are are specifically a center for helping people deal with eating disorders and healing from eating disorders. I'll definitely linked to this pdf but it had so many, I think just one step is knowing the facts and statistics that are out there about body image. They did a great way of explaining it just the difference between self esteem versus body image. Self esteem is how we think and feel about ourselves as a whole, like a whole package. Body image would be how we think and feel about our body and that body image is a component of the overall self esteem. I was thinking about this, I really feel I have a strong self esteem. I feel very confident in who I am as a woman. I know I have so many gifts to offer the world and I do feel beautiful as a person. But then there's this component, the body image component that I do still struggle with. Just because I think it is so deeply rooted from so long ago, but some of these statistics they had were just absolutely shocking. They said

80% of US women do not like how they look. For men that's only about 34%, which is drastically lower. 80% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat. 53% of 13 year old American girls are unhappy with their bodies and that number grows to 78% by the time they're 17.

Tsh: [09:35](#) Oh man. Just knowing that statistic alone, as a parent of a 14 year old, I've been thinking about this so much lately, like these high school years really mattering for my daughter's body image in the long run like. Here we are, you and I talking in our early forties about this stuff. What gifts can I give her now? Not saying it's all on me, but anyway, I know that's another topic, but those of us that are parents, parents to daughters in particular because of these statistics, I think it's really helpful to keep in mind.

Christine: [10:08](#) Absolutely. It's just very eye opening to know that this is really going on and this is a very big thing. They mentioned that some socio cultural factors that affected are obviously media and then even toys, which is interesting for younger kids and then peer and parental comments. That was definitely a lot of my background. But it said as early as the preteen years, girls start to withdraw from activities, such as like going to school or going to the pool because they feel badly about how they look that I so identified with that. I can name so many times I've done that. I mean, even as an adult, that I just felt so deep in a hole about my self image that day that I missed out on experiences and that's what I am not gonna do anymore. I won't tolerate that for myself anymore. I feel like the lake trip really was a step in that direction of it could've been a completely different experience if I had allowed myself to be withdrawn the whole time. Instead of just enjoying the freedom of it and everything was okay, everything turned out okay. I think just knowing the facts is a really good step, a practical step.

Secondly, just changing how we're thinking about it in our own minds. I think we all realize body image is an internal issue. It's not really a physical issue. It's really something deeper. It's an internal belief. It's about contentment with our own selves. I think it really starts with the thinking. With that, I really love the word reframing. We're always going to believe certain messages in our brain. We just need to reframe the negative and toxic thinking and reframe it with good and healthy thinking. I mean, that's pretty simple. But for me, some of the ways that I reframe that is reminding myself I am allowed to take up whatever space I need in the world and whatever space I want in the world and I'm entitled to that. I'm not offending someone by being uncovered and my body is not shameful. Those are some of the thoughts I have to keep reframing in my mind and focusing on all the amazing things my body can do. Being thankful that I can run, I can jump, that I can play with my kids, that I am really strong and I can do so many things on the farm. Focusing on that and a lot of those negative

thoughts can turn into nonverbal cues. That's something I am really aware of with my girls is, and if I'm not in vocalizing something negative about my body, what's maybe a negative thought that is coming out in how I'm fussing with my clothes or my face contorts when I look at myself in the mirror, even body language. At the lake, am I walking out in my swimsuit hunched over and shrinking down or am I walking with my shoulders high and with confidence that I'm allowed to be here, I'm okay. I'm allowed to walk out here just in my swimsuit.

Tsh: [13:18](#) I think that's a really good point that you're bringing up specifically under this category of how we think about it because these things are simple, but they're super not easy. This is not one of those just change your thinking and it'll all be great, I mean we're talking about unpacking a lifetime of negative thinking. I think this speaks into a little bit of that whole acting your way into believing it. Do you know what I mean? The way you walk into a room I think not only speaks to our daughters but it can speak to ourselves. We are playing a mind game on ourselves in a good way. Like what you said about being allowed to take up the space that we take up, that we can walk out onto the lake with more of a posture of confidence. We're telling ourselves that it's okay even if we don't believe it yet.

Christine: That is exactly how I feel. I think the belief sometimes has to come later. But if we wait for us to feel that way, maybe we'll never get there. You know? It's just that sometimes you don't feel brave, but you just have to be, you have to take this step anyway. I'm not saying I know that a lot of this takes years of counseling and this isn't just something where you're like, okay, I'm going to start talking good about my body and I'm going to be fine. This takes a lot of counseling for some people. For me it's taken a lot of work in that area too. I don't want to downplay and say this isn't a big issue that takes a lot of work, but I think there are proper ways we can move forward in healing and health.

Tsh: [14:50](#) I think that's a good point. I think that idea of if we wait until we truly believe it not happening, I think so many of us, the version of that is, once I get into shape or once I look a certain way, or once I can wear this kind of swimsuit, then I'll believe it. If we keep doing that and it inevitably never happens, what are we saying about ourselves and our value and our...

Christine: [15:12](#) ...that we're not good enough now or something.

Tsh: Yes, exactly.

Christine: I totally agree. The next point I have is just change how we're talking about it. Obviously our thoughts, come first, but in that study that I was talking about earlier, they say that comment about weight and shape developing bodies and

putting children on diets to lose weight and teasing all have a negative impact. Obviously those are just things I all experienced as a child. I'm hyper aware of those things around my daughters and teaching them to avoid weight related comments about anyone and making sure I'm not making those kinds of comments around them and avoiding making size judgments in general about people. I think they are listening. What's interesting is that children, I've found this with my five year old, that children naturally notice size and that certain people are maybe bigger or smaller than the other and I think that that's normal and that's a fact about people. I think it's not ignoring that we're all different sizes. It's almost like race. We're not ignoring that there's people of all different ethnicities and skin colors. That's not celebrating it, it's celebrating that we are all different sizes and that one is not good or bad.

Tsh: [16:38](#) Yes. I think that actually is really important because the household I grew up in, it wasn't that I got negative feedback or negative comments. We didn't talk about it at all and it's still messed with my mind. My mom never mentioned anything about my body and she never mentioned anything about her body either. I don't think I ever heard negative. As an adult I heard it more, but when I was in my formative years, I don't have any memories of her talking negatively about her body, but there was never anything positive said. It was just this weird, we don't talk about this message. I don't think it was intentional at all. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if my family did that thinking that was a good thing. You know what I mean?

Christine: Right. But then you just end up hearing the messages other places.

Tsh: Yeah, you get it anyway. Right?

Christine: [17:27](#) Yeah. This is something that I've really thought about just with friends and things like that, but we have to be careful not to assume that just because someone is "a smaller size" that they don't also deal with body image issues. Saying comments like, oh, it must be nice to be that size or surely you never struggle with. To women that are smaller framed is really, it just buying into that whole lie that our society has about body image. It's just fueling the whole thing that small is good and big is not.

Tsh: [18:02](#) And it also assumes so much about our smaller framed friends.

Christine: [18:05](#) Exactly. I have just as many smaller framed friends that deal with different kinds of body image issues maybe they wish they had curves or whatever. Like I said, it's a contentment issue that's internal and it really has nothing to do with how we actually look.

Tsh: That's right. So true.

Christine: I think those are really helpful and I just try overall to just vocalize healthy statements about my body in front of my girls and even say, my body is strong and I'm going to use it well, or I'm so glad God gave me this body the way it is and just hope that they hear those things and that that's the strongest message to hear.

Tsh: Remind me how old your girls are?

Christine: They are five and my oldest is about to be nine. In this next year or two, she's really going to be more aware of that and hearing more things from peers. I just think it's even more important.

Tsh: [19:02](#) I think for those of you with slightly older girls, like my daughter at age 14 I think I'm even, this is something I'm working on. I'm not great at, but being even more vulnerable by saying, I am choosing to believe these things, even if I don't always feel that way so that she knows these feelings are valid and normal and that we are in that psychological warfare that this is a very countercultural way to think because I don't want to give her accidentally the assumption that this is easy for me because I want her to know that we all struggle with this. I think it's important to you to be vulnerable about that as well. This isn't easy for me, but I'm choosing to believe it.

Christine: [19:40](#) Yeah, I agree. We're going to mess up. We're going to say things that aren't good or healthy and do things and then that's a chance to talk to them about that as well. They know that we're not perfect. The last point I had was just a practical tip is just change what we're looking at in consuming from others. Obviously social media, and we're going to talk about that. I had never heard this word before, but I'm sure others have, "thinspiration". Have you heard that?

Tsh: [20:07](#) I've seen it on Pinterest and on Instagram. Yes, unfortunately.

Christine: [20:12](#) Basically it's images and words and mantras intended to inspire people to be thin. What young girls are seeing in googling that word, just to find the images and find things to help them be thinner it just breaks my heart in every way. Personally I just have to be really aware of what is in my Instagram feed and what images are showing up there and who I'm following and taking action to not follow the people that I feel are fueling an unhealthy image for me. I think part of that is really celebrating and supporting companies that are changing the perspective. I don't know if you agree, but I feel like now more than ever, there are so many clothing and swimwear and lingerie company, bra companies that are featuring women of all different sizes and women of color. I love that. I feel like it's now more than ever because it used to just be supermodels and every image.

- Tsh: I even noticed this at Target. I don't know if you've been there, but I've noticed some of their mannequins are larger, which I really appreciate it.
- Christine: [21:24](#) It really is. That is beautiful and that is humanity. In just a couple of the companies that I really appreciate that I follow that I love that they're doing this, Third Love, I think they're a sponsor of the show?
- Tsh: That's right. They are a sponsor of the show.
- Christine: I love them. I've worn their bras. Harper Wild is another bra company. Roolee, Piper and Scoot. I love their clothes and they always show closed in all different size models and then Madewell, I know Madewell has all different range of sizes in their jeans and then Jessica Rae swimwear, and I'm sure there are so many other ones, but just celebrating and supporting those companies because they really are stepping out and doing something that is against the flow of society. And they're changing the conversation. They really are.
- Tsh: [22:13](#) That's a good word. We'll put links to those places in the show notes.

## Segment Two

- Tsh: [24:44](#) I am taking a sabbatical the summer and I have never done this before in the almost 12 years I've been online in some capacity doing the work that I do. I have never truly taken a sabbatical. What I mean by a sabbatical is an intentional pause, an intentional break. It comes from the same word Sabbath that we have, which is basically it means to stop. I'm taking a sabbatical after years of wanting to do this and it feels a little weird to me to be honest. In my post, I talk about the mindset shift I've had to grasp this past year as I think about this coming up because it's very easy to, I'll get into in a minute, the mind games we can play with ourselves about sabbatical, but really taking a sabbatical is counter cultural and I think more rare than it should be. I don't think most of us really have the freedom to take a sabbatical without a lot of forethought and planning. I anticipate this to feel a little weird, to be honest. Even in sharing the post, I shared about taking a sabbatical. I felt a little weird about publishing it because to me, being able to take a sabbatical is such a privilege that admitting that I'm even about to take one, I feel almost almost guilty, I'll just be honest. This is a belief structure that I am fighting against quite intentionally over these next few weeks. I thought in this chat I would talk a little bit about the steps I've taken to prepare for a sabbatical so that maybe a listener might just bookmark this idea for maybe one day down the road so that they can, or if maybe they have thought about this and are truly ready, that this is something that can help them take that next step and just take the plunge to go ahead and do this.

This is not something I'm just deciding to do. As I said, I've been wanting to do this for 12, well I haven't wanted to do it for 12 years, but I have wanted to do it for probably seven or eight years. Roughly a little bit more than half of this time that I've been working. If you know the backstory of my work, this whole thing, the writing, the podcasting, the whatever-ing it is that I'm doing. It became my job somewhat accidentally. I wasn't seeking it out. I'm not saying accidentally, like I tripped and fell and here's a job for me, but I never started it with the thought that one day I'm going to turn this into my full time job. But it is. With it, I've had to learn as I go. I did not have any sort of background in business or even thought of myself as a solopreneur for a long time. I'm learning as I go, what it means to be somebody who is the breadwinner and be somebody who works a lot, but also prioritizes my health and wellbeing. To work back, I have taken some form of a break from the Internet, I want to say since about 2010. I remember, I think it was around 2010 because that was when my youngest was born. His birthday is June right around now and I went ahead and gave myself a quote, maternity break, a maternity leave. But as we all know, that's not exactly restful. I mean, it's totally the opposite of restful, but what that little blip of time, I took about two months off from really publishing or posting anything while I was just doing my newborn baby thing. I came back to it with this refreshed perspective on what it is I do, namely that, oh, the world goes on without me. This is fine. I was able to take a break and nobody really cared. I took that and put it in my pocket and took that with me as I started approaching every summer and just decided to start taking a break. The thing that happened was I never really took a break. In fact, I started kind of behind the scenes calling it a fake break in that all I really did was I didn't publish or create things as much online, meaning like the average drive by viewer or listener to them it seemed like I was taking a break because I wasn't creating things for them to consume as much. But all that time I was doing something else. Whether that was working on a book or organizing the files on my computer or making plans on some kind of new thing that I was going to start or working in some other capacity. All that to say it never really was a break. It was all just a pretend I'm just going to look like it or maybe I am not going to tweet as much, but I'm still on Twitter scrolling. You know what I mean? I was still thinking and doing all the things. I wasn't a real literal mental and emotional break.

All that to say is over the years that build up had been happening. I knew at some point if I don't stop and really stop, it's gonna come back to bite me. Now, that doesn't mean I don't ever take vacations or breaks. I usually take a few weeks off during the holidays and there's a vacation every now and then here and there. I'm not to say I work nonstop, but I definitely have never taken an intentional step away from what it is I do and almost really turn around and walk away from it. That's what I'm going to do this summer.

Christine: That's awesome.

Tsh: Yeah, I'm really excited about it. Like I said, it does feel pretty counter cultural because there's really not a lot out there about how to do this well, how to do this healthily, how to do this as a normal person. Meaning I'm not going to go take a sabbatical on my yacht because I do not have one. I do not run a multibillion dollar or \$1 million companies. It's not like this is because if I don't work, I'm still making millions of dollars a day. It's nothing like that. I'm very much a normal person with a family and a mortgage and all of the things of life. All this to say this is summer of 2019 and I'm going to be taking the month of July off. I started preparing for this last summer. I remember leaving London. We went late July, early August. I remember our last group conversation in our living room in our London guest house and we were talking about what's next for us. I mentioned to the group, I am planning to take a sabbatical next summer and that feels really weird because I'm now saying this out loud so this means I need to do something about it and I am telling you this, so that for me, I can mark this as the time when I'm going to start being intentional about making this a reality instead of wishing it would happen and then, oh, it's two weeks before I would normally take a break, I haven't prepared. Oh well, I'll just keep working lightly or something. No, no, no. It takes a lot of forethought.

This isn't to say in a way this is because I've been doing nonstop work with the sabbatical in mind. I still had very much a normal year that I always do. It's not like I suddenly made 10 x the amount I normally do. I took on the teaching job, I've got my normal life parenting stuff all this past year. It hasn't been a full time job just to prepare for a month long sabbatical. But it has been something that I've added to my plate in anticipation for this. I thought I'd just share a little bit about what that's looked like this past year in preparation.

Like I mentioned, a sabbatical requires a shift and it requires a shift in three main areas that I have found. The first shift has been in finances, the second has been in productivity and in the third, and this is the biggest one, is in thinking.

Christine: I would imagine in your line of work it's even more, I can see how this would be something you would really need to do or just working in a more public online world. I feel like the work that you do can get even more almost like draining if you don't take a long break like this every so often.

Tsh: Like I was saying with the thinking, I think that hints to one of the first ideas for me why I'm doing this is not only am I recognizing my need for rest, I'm recognizing my need to remember that the world is fine without me. Technically the world can go on without me. I mean even more if I were to quit and stop, I am sure there are people that would be sad about that. But the world would be ultimately okay. Everything would just keep going as usual and that's a healthy

thing to remember. I think people that are these quotes online influencers, that's a good thing to remember. It's so easy whenever you see all these numbers and people applauding you and oh my gosh, can we be best friends? To remember, nope. I mean in all the right ways you're not that important. I mean that in a good way. I'm saying that to myself. I think taking a sabbatical is that it's not only is it counter cultural, but it's almost a resistance movement you can take within yourself to say, I am turning my back on that idea that, that I'm that significant. I think that's especially important for those of us that do public work.

Christine: Yeah, that is really good. I wouldn't have thought of that as even one of the main points. That's a really good perspective and like you said, totally against the grain of what's what's happening now and especially in your line of work online.

Tsh: Along with that, it helps our work because it's an invitation to do something different with our days, it's only a month. It's a few week or whatever time, even if it's two weeks or whatever time it needs to be. It's an invitation to do something different with our time and that is good for our brains and sometimes we need that combination of rest and seeing things with fresh eyes. Whether that's like just having a different morning routine all the way to traveling somewhere new as part of your sabbatical, going somewhere. We need a little bit of that. It's almost a hit of the reset button and just a refreshment so that we can be creative. It wakes us back up. That's a little bit of why I'm doing this. The other thing is all of this, it's good to remember that we're not what we do, that we are allowed to just be, like what you were saying in our first segment, that you're allowed to take up the space that your body takes up. We are also allowed to not produce. That is very hard to remember because we applaud productivity, we applaud you giving us things that we can consume. Those are the people that get the attention. When we do this, when we take a step back, we are saying, I am not going to produce for anybody. And that's a big deal. And that requires a pretty big shift in thinking.

Christine: [36:00](#) I think you're really brave and stepping out and saying this because like you said, it's not normal and almost seems like a grand luxury in our culture to do something like this. But on the other hand, people are more than fine, running themselves into the ground and everyone is just barely surviving, you know? But somehow that's okay and celebrated that you're just working so hard and producing and achieving, that's celebrated more than taking a rest like this. I think this is so great.

Tsh: [36:30](#) If we're even considering, if you're even going to go with the whole, we are what we produce, which is completely not what I believe, at minimum, if you're going to go ahead and embrace that, think about this is going to help you create better things. You will be more productive. Those people you're afraid will turn away from you and not be there when you get back. Those

people that like your stuff, they will be glad you did this because the stuff you create will be better. If you can't yet embrace the idea of we're not what we produce, at least think of yourself, or at least think of a sabbatical as something that will help you produce better.

These are all the mindset shifts I have slowly been working on this past year to where like I said, I feel a little weird about publishing the post I published, but I have come full circle to where I completely embrace and validate the need for regular sabbaticals, in particular for creative people and in particular for public people. These are the mindset shifts I've been taking over this past year. If it requires a shift in thinking, which is the biggest one, once you at least can embrace, what you're saying earlier, if we can act our way into thinking then there's other just practical things which is finances and productivity and I'm not going to get into the nitty gritty of finances because it's honestly not really that much to say other than I have set up things for my sabbatical so that as a family we are still going to earn income while we are gone. I say that just because I want my fellow middle class listeners to understand that this is possible whenever you work for yourself, if you can just set things up the way you need to set them up.

For me, this looks like podcasts will still go out while I am gone. Blog posts will still go out while I am gone. Emails will still go out while I am gone. It's just either I am doing these things in advance or somebody else is going to do them for me. The podcasts that are going out, I have been recording them in advance because we are going to do a special series that's evergreen, meaning they're not time sensitive and so it's okay that I recorded them a while ago because when they go out in July, listeners can still enjoy them no matter when they were recorded. We've got that in the works and it does require a lot of logistics. I'm not going to lie, I'm glossing over the details that are just too boring to talk about. Just trust me, it's not exciting. But also things like Andrea, our fellow cohost and my managing editor, she's going to be sending out my weekly email, Five Quick Things. We've just decided, let's just let her write it. That'll be fine. It's only four. Nobody is going to care. Those are things that are important to my business so that our family can eat, so that they're worth doing even if it requires planning in advance. The other thing is that just because this is under the category of finances, we are not planning a luxurious sabbatical. I hope one day down the road there will be a space and time in our family for us to do something slightly more extravagant, like maybe we will go back to Europe and spend some quality downtime there. But for this one we are simply mostly road tripping, like what we really always do. That's the thing. We're not doing anything that we don't often do as our family. We're driving up to Oregon like what we do most summers, were spending time with extended family. We're spending time exploring a few new places just because we like to travel. We are

spending time camping. I mean you don't get more unluxurious than camping. I'm saying this not in a martyr-ey way or that it would be wrong to do something more than that. I'm just explaining this to say what we have planned is not to spend tons of money. We are still going to more or less live the way we normally live. It's just a choice to shut down the work part of how I would spend my time as we do those things because as a solopreneur when we travel, I usually am also working, which I hate honestly.

Christine: [40:45](#) So you're saying the big difference between just a long vacation and a sabbatical is really removing all the distractions, really creating that space and freedom that you wouldn't maybe normally have on a normal vacation? Even like a long vacation.

Tsh: That's right. I mean there are times when I might take a week, and maybe two weeks to not work while I'm traveling, but I can't ever think of any time that I've spent more than two weeks not working while I also travel. Our big trip that was the premise of my book, obviously I worked all through then, but even when we do something like our summer Oregon road trip, I bring my laptop and my podcast recording equipment and I just plan to keep working as I go and just embrace the freedom that my job allows me to be able to do that from anywhere and I'm very grateful for that. This is different from that in that I am not planning to work as we travel. In fact, I've had to even explain this to the kids because they are so used to seeing me squeeze in, not squeeze in, but just claim work hours as we go. They see me in the passenger seat typing on the laptop or they see me setting up a little podcasting spot in their grandparents' house because I'm about to record from there. I've been telling them, I'm not actually going to do that. In fact, I'm not going to bring my microphone. For them, I don't think it'll quite hit them until we're on the road and they see that, oh, mom's not working. I'm not saying that again to be a martyr. It's just how it's been for us and I'm grateful. I'm glad that my job is like that, but this is different.

Christine: I love it. Major goals here, that is a huge goal of ours in the next five years, maybe, because I understand as self employed, I always have my phone or laptop or something and so I love the idea of just being able to completely shut it down and just be completely present and building those residual income streams so that you can do something like this is really smart.

Tsh: That's right. In the past like six months or so, I've actually taken some practical steps toward the category of thinking about productivity, so that this does work. Right now we are furiously behind the scenes working on this stuff. As I alluded about with all the moving parts of creating the podcast episodes. But there's also just a lot of communication back and forth with my team. I'm a solopreneur but I do have my assistant Caroline who I talk about some, she's going to be doing a lot so that I can take this break. She's going to be holding down the

home front and checking in on things, doing some of the jobs I normally do and helping these things take off smoothly. And Andrea, the managing editor I was referring to, she's doing some parts too, taking on a little bit more than she normally does so that I can take this break and all of this just requires good communication, delegation and figuring out who's doing what. But part of that is also embracing the idea that some things that you think are important and need doing maybe just don't need to be done.

My friend Emily, who I lead Literary London with, she has said this thing many years ago that I thought it was really great for those of us who write that yes, what we do sometimes, what we do is good sacred holy work. Yes. But also we are not curing cancer here. Sometimes, yes, it's good to take our work seriously, but sometimes we can take it too seriously. It's helpful for me to remember this, that I love what I do and yeah, what I do changes lives based on what I've heard from listeners and readers. But also it is not the biggest deal in the world here. I am not doing the most important work in the world and that's a good thing. I say that as a good thing and that's helpful to remember when you start thinking about the logistics of what needs to happen while I'm gone.

Things don't need to literally be exactly the same as when I'm gone. I have Caroline and Andrea doing things, but some things are just gonna be paused and that's okay.

Christine: It's good point.

Tsh: The other thing I've done is I've made a little bit of a game plan about what I'll be doing on sabbatical. This is not just closing down my laptop and walking away and then the next morning saying like, well, what should I do? At the same time, this is not vacation mode and sometimes those of us that love travel can approach this idea with a little bit of, almost like how we would approach work so that ultimately this isn't that restful, we're going to go to all these places and see all these things and before you know it you're not really getting the rest we desperately need.

I've thought about a four week game plan of what this is going to look like so that it's more than just taking time off work. Week one for me is going to be simply a decompressing, I'm going to decompress and I'm going to debrief from the year, meaning since the previous summer and really from the insane June that led me to July. June has looked like a book deadline. It has looked like wrapping up my school year and it's looked like leading Literary London. In fact, when I go into my sabbatical, I will be starting it basically once I get on the plane to leave London to go back to the US. That's going to be the start of my sabbatical. I will be coming from a marathon. If you think about when you cross

that finish line, you're not just going to go straight into doing something fun and vacationy you're gonna rest.

I'm going to be doing a lot of debriefing, asking myself questions about what this past year looked like. I've gotten some training of that over the years from my life coaching training but also just my experience in cross cultural work and doing all the things I do. I know how to debrief myself fairly well. Week two is going to look like play and so play for me, I don't again mean hardcore travel. It is going to involve travel. I'm actually flying back, I'm leaving Austin to go to London, but then I'm flying back to California and my family will pick me up because they will already be on the road and then we're going to make our way up to Oregon.

Christine: Oh, so fun.

Tsh: We will be traveling, but it's going to be chill travel. I'm anticipating just reading and specifically it is not going to be reading work related books. I will not be reading books about writing or about entrepreneurship or about any productivity, anything. Hopefully it's going to be some good novels. I'll be reading, I'll be doing things like exercise, but in a way that's life giving and not pushing, a what that I actually want to do because it feels good and really a lot of spontaneity and that's part of what I need here. What I was saying earlier about it engages a different part of your brain so that you come back more creative. It's going to be with that in mind, just this idea of maybe I do want to wake up and go on a hike today. Maybe we do want to take this detour on this road and see what happens and check out this little tourist spot. That kind of thing is going to be week to week three is going to be more play, but near the second half of the week, I'm going to start processing a little bit of how I'm doing and I think that's important to not do that too whirly. I'm going on what I've heard from other people, not because of my own personal experience, other than I have had that experience before of trying to think about what life will be like when I get back from vacation by day two of vacation.

Christine: That's so hard not to do. It's hard to truly rest and truly turn your mind off.

Tsh: Yeah, it is. I anticipate this not being easy for me. By week two, I can see myself already starting to think about, okay, what do I want to work on when I get back? I've actually heard, I've heard from people and there's actually a really great podcast episode I'll link to in the show notes from Michael Hyatt and his daughter Megan because they both went on the sabbatical last summer where she talked about by week two she was fidgety. She was almost like, okay, I'm ready for this to be done.

Christine: That's what I would be.

Tsh: It was uncomfortable. I anticipate that so that by week three I will be chomping at the bit to start processing how I'm doing. But I'm also hoping maybe by then I will really have started feeling more rested and more like okay this has been really good. I'm hoping. By week four I'm really going to start processing how I'm doing. Really take the time, sort of the opposite of debriefing as I think about the future. But I'm also actually going to debrief from the sabbatical, look back on the past few weeks and reflect on how those were for me and what that was like. And then slowly start strategizing what it's going to be like to move forward. But I anticipate also that first week I'm back, the first week of August, to be gentle. It's not like I'm planning to suddenly jump into some huge project when I get back. I'm going to ease back into things.

In all of these, these four weeks, the practicals are gonna look like little to no screens. I'm going to have my laptop but not for work reasons, it's going to be for like Netflix reasons, no email. I do not plan to open my email at all and this is because Caroline checks my emails, so she's in there. No slack, which is what I use for most of my work, both this kind of work and my school work and I mean all of the things. I'm in about five or six slack workspaces, so I'm not even going to open that up.

Like I said, no thinking about work and no reading or doing this with this mindset of so that my work can be better. I'm just not going to think about my work. Which I know is easier said than done, but it helps me to know that people I trust have my back so I can trust Caroline and trust my podcast producer that things will be okay and that they will notify me if I'm absolutely needed. It's gonna feel weird. It's going to be a challenge for me to just turn away from that.

The other thing that I think is important, I'm going also based on what I've heard is that it's good to have low expectations even on a sabbatical. It's easy for some people, I've heard this from pastors in particular who sometimes get sabbaticals, to go in anticipating you're going to accomplish all these things, maybe on a spiritual level or on an emotional level. Like my marriage is going to be so much more, we're going to have such a stronger marriage. My relationship with my kids, we're going to make so many good memories. I mean, some people even think in terms it's not really work, it's fun, but I'm going to start drafting a book, but it's only out of fun. You have these ideas of what it's gonna be like and then it's easy to actually be a little disappointed in your sabbatical if you put too much weight on what you hope to get out of this.

Christine: That's so true.

Tsh: Yeah, it really is. From what I hear, inevitably you are going to get great things out of it, but if you try to force it, then you might miss out on the things you weren't expecting, maybe some insight or some form of rest you didn't even

know you needed until you paused. I'm keeping my expectations somewhat low in regards to outcome, how all be on the other side. I just know first and foremost I need to rest and so that's going to be my priority. In this weird way, sometimes we can even make resting a form of productivity, more like how we think about it, rest is going to look like this and this and this and I have these ideas of what I hope to do in July, but really I'm also anticipating God showing me as I go in what ways I need to rest. I want to be open to that in all forms. That's where the spontaneity comes in.

Christine: That's so fun. I'm so excited for this and to hear how this goes. I hope you'll do another episode and debrief and let us know everything you learned from it.

Tsh: [52:41](#) Yeah, I am. I don't know if it'll be August or September, but I will definitely come back with the lessons learned from taking time off, which of course I don't even know yet. We'll see what that ends up about. Ultimately I'm so grateful for the listeners of this podcast and for the readers of my books and The Art of Simple for the work that I do because I know not every type of work can allow this or can be shaped in a way that can provide this sort of thing. I'm just really grateful. I love what I do and I want to come back still loving what I do and the time of year around May and June is always when I'm just really tired and really in need of rest. That's where I'm at on this end of things. Tired but grateful. I look forward to coming back renewed and grateful. That's just where I'm at right now. For everybody listening, I'm very grateful for you and your many years of loyalty in listenership and all the things that you provide.

Christine: So awesome. Well we're grateful for you and we can't wait, you deserve this break so we're so excited to hear what you learned from it.

Tsh: Well thank you ma'am.

[54:00](#) You can find Christine at [christinemariebailey.com](http://christinemariebailey.com) and on Instagram @organicstine and to keep up with me, I'm on Twitter @Tsh and Instagram @TshOxenreider and of course at [theartofsimple.net](http://theartofsimple.net) where you can find my writing as well as Christine's. Head to the show notes for this episode number 198 at [thesimpleshow.com](http://thesimpleshow.com) where you can find all sorts of things, links to things we talked about where you can sign up for my weekly email called Five Quick Things, how you can become a patron and support the work it takes to create the show for just a few dollars per month, as well as how to connect with Christine and myself. The show was produced by Chad Michael Snavely and thanks also to Caroline TeSelle, Andrea Debbink, and my furry intern, Ginny. Thanks so much for listening. I'm Tsh Oxenreider and I'll catch you back here soon.