

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 133: TIFFANY SHLAIN

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself Podcast. I'm Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak and live all things disruption.

For the past few weeks, we have been taking a deeper dive into the seven-point framework of personal disruption in anticipation of my book *Disrupt Yourself* being re-released by Harvard Business Press on November 12. If you stick around to the end of this episode, we'll talk about a special opportunity for those of you who pre-order the book.

So, today's deep dive is on accelerant number five. Step back to grow.

Though we always want to be moving forward in growth, this accelerant addresses the idea that our greatest progress almost always involves some type of step back: we crouch to jump, bring a fist back to punch, land lies fallow, we rotate crops. And while we've looked at stepping back in your career to facilitate that growth - one great example being [Dan Shapero's story in episode 97](#) - we haven't talked much about the importance of rest.

Our guest for this episode is filmmaker, Webby award founder and newly minted author Tiffany Shlain. She recently released her book *24/6: The Power of Unplugging One Day a Week* exploring her family's decade-long, transformative practice of turning off screens one day each week for what they call Technology Shabbats.

WHITNEY Tiffany Shlain, welcome to the podcast.

TIFFANY Hello, I'm so happy to be here with you.

WHITNEY First question for you, Tiffany, is where did you grow up and what did you want to be when you grew up?

TIFFANY Um, I grew up in northern California in the '70s. That should set the stage. Think Polaroids and Redwoods and a lot of free love. No. (laughs) And I was, I was given the book *The Making of a Woman Surgeon* four times by my surgeon father, so I was, I was supposed to be a surgeon. Um, but I, I wanted to be a filmmaker. Um, and I think that probably came from the fact that every Sunday night, my whole growing up, we went to the movies and used films to kind of discuss the meaning of life. So, um, I went to UC Berkeley and, and studied interdisciplinary studies. So, I studied everything and the connections between things.

WHITNEY And you were valedictorian, I would like to add to our listeners, at UC Berkeley. So, good for you, Tiffany.

TIFFANY I was valedictorian speaker. It was, it was a highlight. But I have to say ... Okay. I don't know, but I ... (laughs)

WHITNEY (laughs)

TIFFANY Um, yeah. I, I was asked then when I, right when I turned 40, I had this really intense year where I lost my father and I'd just turned 40 and just had a baby. And, um, and I was asked to come back and give the commencement speech at UC Berkeley, which was kind of a probably much more meaningful moment in my life, probably one of the most meaningful moments of, of my career. Um, more than, more than when I was 22 and didn't know much, graduating from Berkeley (laughs).

WHITNEY (laughs) Have you ever done, like, a side-by-side of your speech when you were 22 and your speech ...

TIFFANY Oh my God! What I would do to get a copy of that speech. I know that people had, like, VHS's back then filming. But because I would like to see ... I, I have a copy of my talk, but more just, just kind of my mannerisms and where I was in life. It would be interesting, definitely would be funny to put them side-by-side. That's hilarious. Okay. Maybe at some point that would be ...

WHITNEY I think ... Yeah. I think you should put out a call to people and say, "Okay, I need help finding this. Someone can help me find it."

TIFFANY (laughs)

WHITNEY That is my challenge to you on this very early morning, it's to find that other speech and find a way to juxtapose that with your 40 year old speech. It would be ...

TIFFANY Oh my God.

WHITNEY ... classic. Classic.

TIFFANY It really ... It really would be, like, to show ... You're 22. You think you know so much, but you know nothing. And then 40, when, like, life has punched you in the stomach a couple times and what you think about it all then ... (laughs)

WHITNEY Yeah. Exactly. And then do it again when you're 60. So, so it's interesting. You wanted to be a filmmaker. Every week you'd go to the film. Your dad was set on you becoming a surgeon. What did ... I remember I first met you at the time when your film *Connected* was coming out. It was at the Tribeca Film Festival with Craig Hatkoff and the Tribeca Disruptive Innovation Awards. What did your dad say when he saw, oh, she's not going to be a surgeon, she's going to be a filmmaker? What was his response? How did he feel? What did he say?

TIFFANY It was my first act of rebellion (laughs). It didn't go over well. And actually, we were very close. And I should also mention my mother who was very important to me, as well. She, when I was growing up, she went back to school to get her PhD in psychology. So, my dad was studying, like, the biology of the brain or, or working on it. And my mother was centered on the, the emotions, which I think those two different ways of looking at mind, body, and soul were a really, the backdrop of my career now.

When I declared (laughs), when I declared I was going to be a filmmaker, I think at like 20, oh, that's when we started fighting. It was not pretty. But he eventually came around, as in he saw me become a filmmaker and, you know, came to my premiere at Sundance and, it was hard. I mean, I think, you know, now I'm a parent. You want your child to be able to make a living. That's really what it was about is that he felt like I'd be able to make a more solid living as a surgeon. And the truth is that he was probably right in terms of just a more steady path. Um, but he came around. I mean, the irony is that he was a closet filmmaker. I mean, he loved movies. And we talked about them all the time. So ...

WHITNEY All right-

TIFFANY And then he became a writer. I should say that he became a surgeon, had this, you know, great career as a surgeon, and then at 50 published his first book and then became a writer. So, he had a creative side inside of him. And his father had also told him he was going to be a doctor. So, um, and, you know, here I am, almost 50 and I've written my first book. So, it's all (laughs), like, cy- It's all kind of (laughs) ...

WHITNEY Well, Tiffany, here, here it gets even better because Carl Jung said that the greatest influence on a child is the un-lived life of their parent.

TIFFANY Oh my goodness. That's interesting. Yeah, my mother, you know, when I was growing up, she was studying psychology, so I heard a lot about Professor Jung. (laughs) All the great psychologists growing up. But, I hadn't heard that. That's great.

WHITNEY All right. So, let's, um, so you've decided to do film. You've made it your career. And one of the things that I think is so fascinating is there is nothing at all conventional about your style of filmmaking. And can you just talk to us about some of the projects ...

TIFFANY Yeah.

WHITNEY ... that you're working on ...

TIFFANY Yeah.

WHITNEY ... and just, just a little bit about you, you, you as a filmmaker?

TIFFANY Well, I think the reason why my style is so unusual is that there was no film production at UC Berkeley. So, um, you know, I ... So, I had to make films with whatever I had. So, I would make films out of old movies. And so most of my films today, when people see them, they're very collage style. I make a lot of original animations. But I'm using lots of clips from other, from other things shot. So, it has a very collage feel. And it was purely out of necessity because there was no film production courses at Berkeley. And had I gone to NYU or UCLA I would have been a very different filmmaker today, so I feel blessed that I had that constraint of, like, okay, there's no equipment here, so go figure out how to go make a movie without film production equipment. (laughs)

I ended up, I did study at NYU at a summer program my sophomore, junior year at, when I was in college.

But, you know, my films, people have called them, like, cinematic essays. I usually am tackling a big subject and I'm trying to figure it out. And it's not like I'm interviewing talking heads for the documentary. I'm really creating a, a visual exploration of the, of an idea. So, I made a film called *Connected*, which you mentioned, which looked at the interconnectedness of everything and the, how technology was affecting our lives. Um, I've made a lot of films about psychology and about neuroscience. And gender equality. And creativity. I would say those are my biggest interests, those right ... Well, I have a lot, but ...

Whenever I'm trying to figure something out, that I'm wrestling with, I, I think I'm going to try to make, I'm going to make a movie about it. Because to me I can go deep in research, I can go deep on a subject and wide and try to visually express it. And really all of my films, the ultimate goal are to start global conversations. So, my films usually launch, um ... My film studio hosts these global conversations where we let other people premiere our film all over the world. So, last year, for *Character Day* which explores the social science and neuroscience of character, who you are and who you want to be, we let people have events all over the world. And they premiered the film and we gave them discussion kits. And then we unite them all at our film studio by interviewing the top minds in that space. And everyone can go online and watch that.

So, we've done one on gender equality, character ... And this year it's going to be all about screen use and living a good life, how to bring some balance back.

WHITNEY Are you ever surprised when you look at where your film career is landing? Or taking off, as it were.

TIFFANY I think my first ... I mean, we missed a whole part of my career, which is that I kept running out of money on my films, like my father predicted.

WHITNEY (laughs)

TIFFANY And so I would work in technology ... I was into computers, like, back from the Apple 2E, um, and the first Mac and, um, the ... I kept paying for my films by working in the CD-ROM industry or tech. And then I eventually founded *The Webby Awards*. It just like, took off. And it was just the, the timing and my passion for it and being at the right place, right time, and being, uh, tenacious about the web being, going to change the world. And, you know, I was in San Francisco in the '90s which was a very exciting time. We had great hopes for the web. Um, I never imagined ... Well, I had great hopes. I, I felt like it was, along with so many others that were there, changed the way we do everything, which it has. But I never, I never envisioned it would change it as much as it has where everyone is staring at their smartphones all the time and not present in the real world.

So, um, but at the time I founded the Webby Awards, that took me off my filmmaking path in a traditional sense. But I would make all these films for the Webbys. So, we would have it at, like, the San Francisco Opera House and I would make these short films about how the technology was changing our lives introduce each show. So, you know, there was short films throughout the Webby Awards.

And then, um, after doing the Webbys for almost a decade ... I can't remember how many years in it, it was ... You know, I loved making films, I loved technology, I loved doing the Webbys, but I, I made a film for Planned Parenthood called *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*. And Planned Parenthoods around the country used the film on the 30 year anniversary of Roe v. Wade. There was no video on the web on that point, but I could put social action tools online to

accompany the film. And then that film got into Sundance. That was my first film that got into Sundance. And it was a big light bulb moment for me, that if I could combine film with the power of the web and all that I had learned from the Webby Awards, that that's what I wanted to do.

So, shortly after that, I sold the Webby Awards and started my film studio. And really if you look at my works today, it's all about using film to start a conversation, have it, all the accompanying materials online, and then have all these live events all over the world too. Because nothing replaces that feeling of watching a film together and having a discussion afterwards. So, it really is a combination of my whole career (laughs). So, I mean, it was a surprising path, yes. It was a circuitous path, for sure.

WHITNEY But all this disparate pieces have come together.

TIFFANY Yeah. If I spent my first part of my career saying, oh my gosh, the web is going to change the world. How can you engage with it? It's so exciting. And now I'm like, okay, not so much. You're on it too much. How do we, how do we bring meaning and purpose back into our lives and more balance, by not being on all the time. Because for the last ten years, since actually my dad died, uh, my family and I turn off all screens for one day a week for what we call our technology Shabbats. And yes, we are Jewish, but we're not religious. But this practice has brought such an amazing quality to our lives, both in terms of just being completely offline and really being present and with each other and deep thinking and reflection and big picture thinking. And also each week kind of re-appreciating technology all over again.

So, um, I, I think a lot of issues in our society right now are because everyone is online 24/7. If you're distracted all the time, you can't move forward together. And I think personally it's affecting re- personal, mental health, relationships, um, at companies burnout, and I think, uh, our democracy really. I think it's a real big conversation we need to have right now.

WHITNEY One of the things you said in your book on, on page 11 is that, "Our tech Shabbat is a force field of protection that gives us the strength, the resilience, perspective, and energy for the other six days." What prompted you to begin doing this Shabbat?

TIFFANY Well, okay, there's a couple factors. I never grew up with Shabbat. I, you know, much more of a cultural Jew. I love the ideas and traditions, but didn't do it. And my husband did. But in a way that most American Jews do it. Maybe there's a Friday night dinner, um, but not a full day. Usually, people feel like a full day off is really what Orthodox Jews do or is a very observant Jew. So, it didn't really feel available to me.

But when my father died and my daughter was born within days of each other, you can imagine that really shook me by the shoulders and made me look at what, how I was spending my time and what's the meaning of life and how did I want to live. It was a very dramatic mo- That was right around the time of that commencement speech. I mean, like, the whole world was crashing in on me, and in a painful and beautiful way with this new child. And my husband and I are part of a group called Reboot, which did a national day of unplugging. That next year was the first year they did it. And they invited us to participate and we made a, a poem that turned into a film for it.

And you know, that was one ceremonial day that they unplugged and, but we never stopped. It felt so amazing, so we were kind of outliers because we were like, whoa, this is amazing. Um, it feels so good and balancing. So, we never stopped doing it. So, it's been almost ten years. You know, we have a teenage daughter and a ten year old daughter. It's all of our favorite day of the week and it's brought just clarity and perspective and there's so many things, and I talk about them all in the book. I mean, the book really goes into a lot of big picture thoughts about time on and time off and my thoughts on technology, but then it has very practical, and I really describe how you can bring this into your life. Because I think we've never needed it more. I mean, every, every

religion and culture used to have a day off and stores used to be closed on Sundays and people really took weekends. And now everyone is just available to everything and everyone 24/7. I don't think it's healthy. I think, uh, there's a reason that this practice of Shabbat has been around for over 3,000 years. And I think we need to bring it back.

Lots of Jewish people do it or Christian people do the sabbath and Muslim people have a day off as well and, and Buddhists. But I would love the concept of taking a Shabbat to be something like yoga and meditation, that, um, these are practices that bring balance and beauty into your life, but you don't necessarily subscribe to that faith. So, taking a tech Shabbat, which is what we call it, I would really love people to feel like it's available to them. Because whenever people hear about it, they, they can't believe we do it and they can't believe we've done it so long and they can't believe our teenager loves it. They just can't believe. Well, I would just invite anyone listening to try it because it's a simple, free, kind of radical strategy to bring, bring some more joy and balance and a million other things back into their lives.

WHITNEY One of the things that you said that I really loved, and this is on page 21, is that you say, "The promise of technology is that it makes efficient. It saves time and it allows us to get things done, rest us, too. So what if we started thinking of rest as a technology?"

TIFFANY Yeah. I think that we have forgotten how valuable it is to really not be stimulated all the time. And we need that. We need that to, to have the great productivity and thoughts and creativity and all those other things, and presence. We've created a culture where we're just on, we're getting a text, we're seeing the news. We're doing. We can be productive. We can order anything. We can just do, be, be and be available to so many sources that the way I feel sometimes is like a marionette doll, that I'm just being influenced by everything in- instead of my own framing. So, now I have all notifications off on my phone.

I mean, in the book, in addition to how to integrate a tech Shabbat into your life and family, I also talk about a lot of strategies I've done the other six days because it really ... The other great thing about it is every week it really makes you look at the way you're using it and recalibrate. So I do all these other things throughout the week that I feel like have built a better way to live with all this technology, which of course I love also. I mean, I couldn't do these global days of film and discussion without technology. So, I'm not anti-technology. I just, it's gotten, the pendulum has swung way too far in the way that we're using it, I think.

WHITNEY Right. You're the boss of technology, not the, not the other way around. So, two questions for you, Tiffany, on this is ... Number one, what is one thing that you do actually during the rest of the week? And, um, number two is, can you walk us through very specifically what you do for your technology Shabbat? And then I'm going to give you a third question. Um, which is in your book, you talk a little bit about the neuroscience around this and how it actually makes you more productive after you've taken a day of rest away from the technology. It makes you more productive, it makes you more creative, etc. We'd love to hear you talk about those three things.

TIFFANY First ... (laughs) The first one that I mentioned is I, there's no notifications on my phone. The only one I have is ... You know how on your iPhone you can do favorites?

WHITNEY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

TIFFANY Uh, well, there's a feature you can set up on your phone where you can only get texts from your favorites, which I highly recommend. Or notifications, I'm sorry. So, I only get pinged if it's like my husband, my kids, my mom, my siblings, or my best friends. That's it. And, um, that's really cut down on notifications. And all others are off. So, I choose when to go into my phone and it doesn't choose when to make me do something.

The other thing I do is I don't look at my phone when I first wake up. And this has been huge. I used to wake up, phone was an alarm clock, and check the New York Times app and check all, Twitter and email and, ugh, I just was bombarded with normally the stress of the New York Times headlines or something like that. And now I wake up with my coffee and I write in my journal. I have a Five Minute Journal, which I recommend. It's a great ... Just write three lines of, you know ... People can check it out. It's just a very simple journal for people who don't do journals. Even though I am a journaler. But, it's, like, a good five minutes in the morning. And then I have different books that I like to read from. So, the first 25 minutes of my day I am setting the stage. I am also thinking ... In the Five Minute Journal, it says what are three things that would make today great. And that's a great thing to think about every morning, like, just to project. What am I doing today, it makes me think of that. What would make today great. And it just helps you frame the day.

So, um, that is something I highly recommend. And then at the end of the day, um, re- I read in a book. Um, and that also quiets my mind. There's so much research on the neuroscience on why it's good to just read paper before you go to sleep because the blue light is, um, affecting your brain. And it just actually had a study that I referenced in the book where it's finding that the same buildup you get in Alzheimer's is happening from all the blue light and lack of sleep from all the devices near our bed. Um, or many ... You know, a third of teenagers will wake up throughout the night to check their phone and text. And a fourth of adults do. So, just having that luring, glowing device available to you right by your bed is not super healthy.

WHITNEY

So, those are your tips for during the week. Talk to us very briefly about what you do on Friday night and just the overall arc of your day.

TIFFANY

Sure. Well, Friday afternoon I do write by hand or print from the computer what I'm doing the next day, if I'm doing much, because we really, we try to keep Saturdays really without a lot of plans. Our social night is Friday night. We have a Shabbat dinner, which is beautiful. We invite, you know, friends and family over and we make a meal. I make fresh challah. So that's a night of people around the table, you know, eye contact, old fashioned cooking, and having dinner together, breaking bread together. Every Friday. It's always, like, a roving cast of characters or new people we want to know better without distractions. Oh, and we tell everyone no devices. Um, which everyone knows by now for us. Um, so that's always, like, a super great way to kick off a weekend or, um, tech Shabbat. So, that's very social.

And then we usually, you know, go to bed early that night and there's no alarms or devices or anything to wake us up. So, everyone kind of sleeps in. And, and the next day is filled with just, uh, either doing things we love like cooking or playing music or reading or journaling or napping or doing nothing, which is also beautiful. Um, people have often said, "Well, what if my kids have soccer games?" And we have done it with two kids in soccer. And you just have printed in out the day before. And usually you tell the teams that they can't get in touch with you, which by the way, like, 95% of all texts are, like, unnecessary, like, "I'm parking. I'll see you in five minutes." Like, who cares? You know, like, too much communication.

So, if we make a plan with people, we'll tell them, you know, we don't have our land- we don't have a smartphone. We have a landline, which I recommend in the book getting. It's great for emergencies and we use it on our tech Shabbat if we need to. But mostly it's a day about, um, hanging out and, and just being and, and not doing a lot. And then, you know, by five p.m. on Saturday night, the girls will have ... They'll, they're psyched to go back online with their double date, double date of technology. And we go out, Ken and I go out on a date. Then you kind of re-appreciate being online all over again. So, that's kind of the, that's the ebb and flow of our 24 hours each week that we've been doing for a decade. And it's fantastic.

WHITNEY And do you find that once that's over, um, and you kind of re-on ramp back into your week that you have a renewed sense of energy and creativity? I'd love to hear ...

TIFFANY Absolutely.

WHITNEY ... kind of what the experiences that you're having.

TIFFANY Oh my gosh, Sunday morning I feel so creative. It is my most creative day of the week. I just feel so pumped and so many ideas. And actually I, I should say, I have a big piece of paper on the counter for the tech Shabbats with, like, a Sharpie. And there's a lot of ideas flying and I'm just, like, putting them ... Like, I can't, I can't email myself, whatever. I'm just hand and paper. And I've had a lot of ideas, both on Saturday and then Sunday, both, you know, Ken and I just feel so productive. And there's so much research on this, that we need more ... I made a whole film called *A Case for Dreaming* which is all about the default mode network, which shows how daydreaming and doing nothing and just letting your mind process all that's already in there instead of letting you get all this new input, it starts to make connections that are already in your brain, which is what creativity is, unusual connection.

So, when you're daydreaming, that is a, or doing the dishes or taking a shower, that's why so many epiphanies happen or great ideas is because your mind is working on its own making all these links and connections. And with this device in our hand, we're just stuffing it, you're stuffing your brain with new things, new things, new things and there's no time to process what's already in there. The mystery and beauty of creativity is that your mind needs to just lay fallow and, and we're not leaving any space for that.

WHITNEY Yeah. And I, I know, I remember first reading about your doing this technology Shabbat back in 2011. Like, I have a blog post that I wrote about it. And I, I've kind of done it well and not done it so well, but one of the things I have definitely noticed, and I decided to do this experiment again, this past weekend, because I knew I was going to be interviewing you ... is to turn off my email around nine p.m. on Saturday night and then not turn it back on until Monday, until probably about noon. And one of the things that you talked about in the book and I really needed to experience is that with my work it's going so quickly, it can get very, very stressful. And you talk a little bit about this, but I just wanted to kind of give a shout out to this idea, is when we unplug and when we change what we're doing, at least my experience has been, and you talk about how time kind of expands because you get more present. And the, the ability to deal with, not only be more creative, but also to deal with the stress has made a big difference for me. And I don't know if that's been an experience that you've had as well, but I have definitely seen that happen.

TIFFANY Oh, absolutely. Time slows down. It's the longest day. I should say, the 24 hours of the tech Shabbat feels like the most, the longest, most luxurious day. Because your phone is speeding up your mind and how you think about time. And when you turn it off, it really slows things down, which is wonderful because what's the one day you want to feel long? It's the weekend day. But that's great that you're turning off your email. Do you literally go in and, like, log off?

WHITNEY I do a pause. So, I go on Boomerang. There's an app you can use ...

TIFFANY Oh, yeah.

WHITNEY ... Boomerang, it's a plug-in. And I just pause my email, so literally I get no emails. And, and so I'm not completely off my screen. Um, because I'll, like, look at my scriptures or something on there. But that mere act of turning off the email has made a huge difference, so, so anyway.

TIFFANY That's a great ...

WHITNEY Yeah.

TIFFANY I'm glad you've reminded me of pause. Because I've used it a little bit, but I haven't used it on tech Shabbat. But that would be a good ...

WHITNEY Yeah.

TIFFANY I have all these resources that I'm recommending.

For those of your listeners, um, we're inviting ... For Character Day this year, which the theme is going to be your character and screen use ... So, the book comes out on September 24th and then that, that Friday we're inviting people ... Well, Character Day is happening. Um, and we're inviting people to unplug with us for four weeks in a row. So, or one, one day a weekend for four weeks consecutively. Because, you know, building habits, it's all about the ritual and the weekliness of it that has the power, Because I know, I know a lot of people talk about, oh, I detoxed or I didn't have my phone on vacation or I turned off this, but it really is about this weekly practice where the power comes. So, those of your listeners want to try it themselves can, um, you know, go to characterday.org. And even if they're listening to this after this happened, we'll have a lot of resources on how to bring this into your life on 24sixlife.com.

So, I'm really, you know ... Again, it's this very simple free practice with a lot ... You know, I've learned a lot over the ten years of doing it, how to, how to troubleshoot, convincing people in your life, telling your bosses, you know, all the, all the different things that, that you can make this a reality. But I love hearing that you're doing the pause. I think there's so many things you can do to protect yourself. Because that's really what I'm talking about is there's so much you can do and it's so fantastic and intoxicating, but you need to create some self-regulation so that you're not being stimulated all the time, you're not being manipulated all the time. Because a lot of the things you do online are being directed by other people.

WHITNEY Right. You know, it's interesting that you, you use the word intoxicating because I remember reading in your book that it said, you know, in the Hebrew tradition it said that the sabbath day can be a delight. And I definitely have had that experience. So, I think, I love the word intoxicating and I love the word delight. I think it's, it's actually very, very true.

TIFFANY Mm-hmm (affirmative).

WHITNEY Okay, so just a couple final questions before we wrap up. Number one is, if people want to find you and learn more about Character Day and also maybe one film that you would recommend if they aren't maybe as familiar with your work or aren't familiar with at all yet. Like, what's the best way to get introduced to you? So, that's my penultimate question and I'll ask you one final question.

TIFFANY Well, I think if you go to 246, and six is spelled six, life.com. I really kind of handpicked some of my films that I think are good introduction ... But *Connected*, that you mentioned, I mean, that's a feature documentary. Um, or the, the series I did called *The Future Starts Here*. Um, there are, like, 16 five-minute episodes about neuroscience, creativity, unplugging, all the stuff we've talked about. Yeah. I think seeing if they go to the book's website and (laughs) you'll find stuff, ways to get in touch. And, um, and on Twitter. Yeah.

WHITNEY Great. Okay. Last question for you, Tiffany, and that is, you said at the very beginning when you're making a film you tend to make a film about something that you're trying to figure out, because the films are in fact cinematic essays. And I love that description because that's certainly my experience of watching your films. *Adaptable Mind*, by the way, I really enjoyed. So, what is it

that you're trying to figure out right now and what film are you, um, in the process of making or do you need to make because it's something that you need to figure out?

TIFFANY Oh, that's a great question. Well, it's interesting because here I'm writing the book, which is very exciting because it had no images, which is one of my biggest tools. But then with the book coming out, my partner at the film studio, Sawyer Steel, we, we immediately wanted to make some short films that went with the book. And we have six short films that are coming out that kind of go with the book and they're geared towards very different audiences with the subjects. And one is called *Dear CEO*, it's just two minutes. One is called *Dear Parents*, two minutes. *Dear Students*, *Dear Fellow Human*, and *Dear Legislature*. And they're, they're basically tackling this subject from all those different perspectives. And it's really figuring out how to present this issue/problem in a way that is, um, wakes people up and is inspiring and lets them think, leads them to something they can bring into their lives or their companies or their government.

So, um, yeah, I mean, it's a great thing to chew on right now because, you know, everyday there's a million articles on this subject. And I think giving people a way in, okay, how to bring the balance back, what can they do, you know, as a citizen, how can they bring this into their company, or they're an employee. If you're a parent, how do you regain the reins of control? And if you're a student who's grown up with this, you know, why should this even matter to you? And that's been the most challenging film, but my 16 year old daughter, Odessa, has been helping us with language. How do you speak to the youth on - It's not so good to be online so much.

And, you know, it's interesting. I think there is a wave coming. I'm on this advisory board called *Wait Until Eighth*. And it's wait until eighth grade until getting your kid a smartphone. And, you know, six years ago, this was not a discussion with my older daughter. And now, just thousands and thousands of parents are signing this, this pledge because I think we're all seeing the research or the results of their handing your child a smartphone too young. So, I do feel like the pendulum is swinging back and there's an awakening happening. And now, okay, you're awake, you realize you're on it too much, what are you going to do? And I, we're hoping to provide a lot of resources, films and the book, and tools on what the next steps are.

WHITNEY Okay. Final question. I lied. This is your final question, I promise. So, you have now won a Webby Award ...

TIFFANY (laughs)

WHITNEY ... for the work that you are doing around tech Shabbat, 24/6. Um, what's your five word acceptance speech?

TIFFANY I think it would be the web, the web is great 24/6. (laughs) It's not great 24/7. It's great 24/6. I don't ... Have a day where you're off the network, where you're off the grid and you're with yourself. That's what I would say.

WHITNEY Okay. That was a lot more than five words. So, you're saying-

TIFFANY No, no. I was thinking the- No, look it. The, the web is ...

WHITNEY Is great.

TIFFANY ... is great 24/6.

WHITNEY 24/6. Okay.

TIFFANY I'm counting 24/6 as one word.

WHITNEY (laughs)

TIFFANY (laughs)

WHITNEY Okay. The web is great 24/6. Got it. Tiffany Shlain, thank you so much for being our guest today. It's been a pleasure.

TIFFANY Oh, thank you. So great to talk to you. And I love your work, Whitney. I'm so happy that we finally had a conversation together.

WHITNEY Oh, likewise.

TIFFANY Okay, have a great day.

WHITNEY You too.

The thing I love most about Tiffany's practice is that she and her family looked at how they were living and instead of being swept away by the busyness and the distractions, they took control. They took charge of how they wanted to live their lives. In our society, that can feel like a radical act.

Since interviewing Tiffany, I'm been implementing this practice of rest, and I'm seeing a huge difference in my productivity. It seems counterintuitive, but there is opposition in all things. Just like crouching helps us jump higher, restorative rest helps us be more productive. But making the time for the delight of a sabbath means making a decision to create boundaries and processes so that this rest is possible; it means choosing to act rather than being acted upon by outside forces. My hope is that after listening you will give yourself permission to do this or do something similar. That you'll step back in order to grow.

Practical tip: While you may not be convinced that taking a full day away from technology is the way to go for you, what might you commit to? Turn off the notifications on your phone, put on the do not disturb mode after a certain time? Pause your inbox for a few hours each day? Unplug one morning a week. Choose an experiment that will allow you to take a rest from screens and see what happens for you.

Now, for the special opportunity for you our podcast listeners and our newsletter subscribers—For those of you that pre-order the new edition of *Disrupt Yourself* before November 12, I will be holding a private webinar. It is wonderful to meet and work with you in person at your places of work, but sometimes that's not possible. A webinar is. We'll talk about how to become a high growth employee, how to become a boss people love, and how to create a work environment where growth and innovation skyrocket—we'll also answer as many questions as we have time for. For more information, please visit whitneyjohnson.com/disrupt.

Thank you again to Tiffany Shlain for being our guest, thank you to executive producer Macy Robison, sound engineer Melissa Ruty, content contributors Emilie Davis and Nancy Wilson, and art director Brandon Jameson.

I'm Whitney Johnson
And this is Disrupt Yourself.

