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Branding, Color, and Style: An Interview with Personal-Image Consultant Julie Shields Brand + Design Scoop ep. 007 Podcast Transcript

[Kelly] Welcome to Brand + Design Scoop, where I share practical, relatable tips on branding, design, and building a business for sole proprietors. I'm Kelly, a brand strategist and Squarespace website designer and founder of AKS Design Studio. Today, I'll be chatting with Julie Shields about picking the best colors for your brand. Julie is a personal-image consultant who helps people find their best colors and their best style so they can stand in front of the mirror every day and say, "Damn, I look good." Welcome, Julie!

[Julie] I love that! I just yeah, it's a perfect example of what I like to do.

[K] Isn't that is the best tagline ever? I love it so much.

[J] I have a good friend Cindy that came up with it. So kudos.

[K] Really? Oh, my goodness.

[J] I mean, she said everybody in the room went, "That's it.

[K] It's excellent.

[J] Yeah.

[K] Okay, so how long have you been an image consultant, a personal-image consultant? And how did you get started?

[J] Oh, that's, how long do we have? So, I'm not originally from Pittsburgh, which is where we both are. I was brought up in Scotland. And I've been in Pittsburgh now for 14 years. And for nine of those years, I've run a franchise business with House of Colour. I trained in the UK with them. [When I] moved over here in 2007, I was just a little bit kind of lost as to what to do. And I had a six-month-old, and how was I going to kind of maintain that.

[J] And, you know, I really wanted to work for myself like that. I had had my colors analyzed in London by a friend that had just bought into a franchise in London. And in the UK, it was a big, big thing. And I came here and then about two years into being here, she said, "Oh, they're looking to move into the USA. You should do it. You would be amazing at it." And I was like, I think I might.

[J] And so I ended up, you know, hotfooting it to London and their training facilities just sort of, at that time, there was a training facility just outside of London. And there was also one in Martha's Vineyard. But, you know, as pretty as Martha's Vineyard is, if I get a chance to go transatlantic, I'm gonna go.

[J] So, then I had the ability to stay with Katherine, who'd gone through the training. So I could come home every day for the training with like, all these notes and all these colors in my head and all this information, like brain exploding. And she would hand me a glass of wine. And she's like, "You don't need to know the difference between Kelly green and emerald green on day one." Like every day, talking me off the color cliff. And so I did the training. And at the time, you and I were both living in the Mexican War Streets. And I put it out to the Women of the War Streets and said, "This is what I'm doing. And if you would like to come and see what this is all about," and I just I had a line out the door. And it was, "Yes, amazing!" And it was funny because what would happen is we would have that monthly get together. And when I would walk in, and everyday be like, "Oh, you went to see Julie!"

[K] Yes, because it made a world of difference. Like, women would walk in, not looking at all like they did the month before. All of a sudden, the people were like, "Damn, you look good!" And it's not that they didn't in the past. But you know, it's like, we didn't really care. Or, you know, most women just came in looking like whatever. Most women just didn't give a thought to their colors, or what they wore, you know. We'd just come in, after a normal day, or even after having been at work, but didn't pay attention to our colors. It was just, you know, wear what you like, regardless of what it looked like on us. And then women would go to you, and eventually men, and finally be like, "Oh, my god, wow, this really makes a difference." And then, and I want you to tell what we mean by having your colors analyzed, but go on with what you're just about to say, please.

[J] I think for a lot of women, it's an issue of becoming invisible. I think a lot of women go through, well, we all go through different seasons in our lives. And I think for a lot of women, especially [when] they have so many other things going on, whether it's husbands, boyfriends, girlfriends, kids, and businesses, jobs, and all of a sudden, they come into a season, and everybody else has moved on. And they're still sitting, you know, with things they wore 10 years ago, or 15 years ago, because it still fits. And because, you know, who cares? Like you say, like, is that important?

[J] And so for me, as much as what I do is extremely visual, I like to think about it, that it comes from the inside. [...] who you are on the inside, showing that person to the outside world, that giving you the confidence to step into it. You know, like giving you the confidence to turn up even if it's just a small, regular social gathering, and walk into the room and have, it gives me goosebumps. And have people turn around and say, "Wow, you look amazing. Like, you look amazing." And we're not talking about the color, or the glasses, or the hair. We're talking about that person. And that is what really like, you know, gets me all fired.

[K] And it's not even getting dressed up. No, because we're not going to name her. But I'm thinking about one of our friends who does not wear makeup, who doesn't get dressed up. But she had you do her colors. She brought in her whole family. And she didn't really change out any of her clothes. She went back, I mean, she changed out some, but she went back home and discovered, "Oh my god, all of my shirts are pretty much, my favorite shirts are pretty much in my autumn color." And it just made her so happy. And she does look good. And you know, and so I think everything she's bought since then she's just made a point of buying in her color.

[J] And and I'm pretty sure I know that person we're talking about, but that person is not what you would call a fashion victim. And but, but also what I deal in is I deal in people and style and personalities. I don't deal in fashion. Sometimes I realize what's in fashion or on trend is because the company sends me a report. And I'm like, "h, okay, like, really?"

[K] Yeah. That's funny. That's funny. All right. So what does it mean then to have your colors analyzed.

[J] A lot of your American and listeners may remember Color Me Beautiful back in the 70s and 80s where mothers, when they came home with these little swatch cards of their best colors. And House of Colour took that and kind of revamped to really, in the last 10 years just before I joined, they took it kind of to the next level.

[J] Color analysis is all about the undertones of your facial skin. And what happens underneath your face is that you have these layers of fatty tissue. Your skin is your biggest organ, obviously. And, but we're human and we interact face to face. And so that's the first thing that people will notice about you.

[J] And the second thing is usually color. So underneath your facial skin, you have a layer of fatty tissue, the [...] attach to that tissue are either tinged with warm yellow tones, or cool blue tones. So what that means is that you and I are both cool, being winter and summer. We look best in colors that are grounded in a blue base. And then we mix in red and yellow, the primary colors, to make over a quarter of the world's colors.

[J] And so through a process of analysis, I have 144 different color drapes. We sit in front of a mirror without any makeup on so we can really see the changes that are happening to your skin tone. The right tones will make your skin appear like vibrant and fresh, make your eyes pop, even to a certain degree can make your hair look more shiny and healthy.

[J] And then the minute we put on a drape that's the opposite to what's going on underneath, everything starts to get kind of drawn. Dark circles appear, you know, we lose our jaw lines and everything gets a little bit droopy. And then we put the right one back on and then all of a sudden that sparks up.

[J] Once we decide whether you're warm or cool, then we go into the sub kind of seasons of comparing autumn to spring, warm seasons, winter to summer, cool seasons. So when you leave, you'll leave with the knowledge that 25% of the world's colors look amazing on you. And within that, some of them are even more amazing. They're like your "wow" colors.

[J] I know we're going to talk a lot about that when it comes to branding and all that good stuff. But we want you to use all of the colors. We give you a fan with like 36 colors in it, but these go into infinity. So even in the next 10, 20, 30 years that I will continue to use color as I've done for the last 20 years. I never, I never will run out of color.

[J] You know, and we also, for those that want it, we do a little makeup session. Then you also get a rating so that we show you what your best colors are, you know maybe what your pops are, like maybe certain tones of red should only be for like glasses, or patterns within a blouse or a sweater. And then we send you off into the world. And now all of a sudden you have a starting point.

[J] You know most people that come to me are just sitting looking at closet stuffed full of clothes, of which they may be wearing 20%, and the other 80% is, "Well, I might need it one day, I might fit into it one day. What if this happens? What if that happens?" And immediately, you can then go to that closet,

like your friend did and say, "Actually, these are the colors that I love. So, now I have a reason to recycle the rest of them and give them to someone else that will also love them and wear them because they're in her colors." And it just gives you a real, I want to make your life easier. I don't make it more complicated than it already has to be right. So that's the main kind of just now.

[K] That's great. Yeah, and I remember when you did me and holding up the colors that weren't mine, like holding up the the warms, the spring and autumn. It just, those colors drained me. I looked tired and older and sallow. It was just amazing. And yeah, I'm a winter, and, thank goodness since I do love black! I am wearing charcoal today. It's a good color for me. It is some color. Yes, yes. I put on lipstick. So yeah, it was it was really amazing seeing that transformation happen.

[J] Yeah, and I think again, it's really allowing people to see themselves. You know, and understanding is sometimes hard because I meet people and they're like, "Oh, what do you do?" And I kind of start to tell them and then they're like, "Oh, okay, so like fashion," and I'm like, "No, no, no, no, no, no." Like, deeper than that. And yeah, I always kind of say to people it's a little bit like the David Blaine kind of magic. You know, "Do that again. What did you just do?"

[J] Because all of a sudden, when you see yourself almost for like the first time, and you're really, the only thing you have to do is look at yourself in a mirror for like 90 minutes, which can be kind of intimidating. All of a sudden, after that initial kind of moment of like, "Oh, look, wrinkles, and oh, my lips are too small, and my eyes are drooping." Once you can just settle in and start to appreciate all your amazing features and how color can enhance that. I really don't care about the color you're wearing. I care about how the color makes you look. The job of your clothes and your colors and your palette and your accessories, is to emphasize all the amazing things about you. That's, you're first. That's secondary. So, sometimes people get obviously stuck in a color rut, and you know, gray and black and navy and cream and they... Not pointing any fingers.

[K] I'm wearing colors in my photos on my website!

[J] I know! Your website looks amazing. And they get stuck in this little kind of neutral wheel. And they create a uniform. And it's safe, and it's easy. But when we we go on to talk about style, a bit of your clothing personality, I've **never had anybody come to me and say, "The words that I want people to remember, the words I want people to use to describe me are 'safe' and 'easy' and 'comfortable'."** Like, that's true. You know, reimagining that, and really, I think for some people, it's, it's seeing themselves clearly for the first time and focus. And it's fun. No, I mean, it's super fun.

[K] Yeah, I haven't heard, of all the people I know who've gone to you, I haven't heard a single person say, "No, it was onerous," or, "I didn't get anything out of it."

[J] Yeah, everyone has loved it and has found it really transformative. Nobody's ever said "Right. Right. Don't do this." And I'm like, exactly. Ready. You ready to see it? You weren't ready to invest. You weren't, you weren't. You know, you weren't ready, you're here. Now let's concentrate on the here and now, the present. You can't do anything about the past can didn't know about the future? Let's, let's be here.

[K] Yeah, very true. So, I love using **this the results of the color analysis in branding for sole proprietors or small-business owners because we are the face of our brand.** And what we look best and I think comes across really well when we use that in our logo, if we choose to have a logo, with color on our website for a color palette, obviously, in our headshots or the quote headshots, you know, the photos that we use of ourselves on our websites.

[K] So, that's really what I want to get into with you today. Because I think that you've had clients who are sole proprietors and have gone on to use their colors in for their branding. And I know it's difficult for some people, because lots of sole proprietors will just pick colors they like for their brands. And, you know, it's not terrible, because then they enjoy looking at their websites, they enjoy looking at their business cards, and they enjoy their branding in general. But then they go and put their photos up. And either their photos clash with their websites, or at least don't coordinate, or they don't look good in their photos because they're not wearing quote their best colors. So, you do have clients who have done this, right? And really branding themselves and their sole proprietor, you know, small businesses around their colors.

[J] Yeah, I mean, I think again, for somebody that is starting out as an entrepreneur, you know, whatever level of business you're doing, it's a huge undertaking. And for a lot of people, it starts with you, yourself, and I. So, you are necessarily, you know, looking at how you put your Instagram together, your website together, your email together, your service list together. And so there's so many other things to consider. And, and sometimes I think people look at things like, you know, personal branding and image branding and the business side of it is almost, I'm just gonna stick this out here. Like, it doesn't, you know, once they figure out who I am and what I do and what I can do for them, we'll build that team. It's too late. You've already lost them.

[J] Yeah, because if, if I, you know, there's an, there was a study done, and I won't get you who, who it came from, but there's an effect called the **Halo Effect**. It talks about when you meet somebody for the first time, before they've even opened their mouth. They're, they're making decisions on you about, okay, what kind of car do you drive? Where do you live? What's your education? Who are you married to? Or living with? Or how many children do you have? Or what kind of house do you live in? And can I trust this person? Is this person funny? [...] Like, before you even had a chance to like, say anything, they might be looking at you from the other side of the room. So when you hand somebody that business card, or you share something on social media, it's, it's instant. Yeah, it's, you don't get a second opportunity.

[J] So, when I come to somebody's website, and I see a dated fuzzy picture, or I see like, all the colors of the rainbow, smashed in, or everything's blinking at me, and it's neon, and I can't, I can't find the information I'm looking for. Then yep. Again, I'm confused. You've confused me. So therefore, I think you're confused about what you're trying to offer. And I think that you have just kind of, you know, slap this up there, put a sticker on it, and not really thought about the focus of it.

[J] And, you know, **there are lots of other people on the planet doing the things that we are both doing**, even just for, for what we do. And so yeah, you have to think about how you're going to project that out to the world. And I do believe that. I mean, it's interesting whether this is the same for you or not. But I do believe that you attract the people you should attract. And I know in one of your Instagram posts the other day, you were talking about how to attract ideal client and be specific on, I can't remember the word for it. But like somebody, somebody at a conference, I went to—avatar, like what's your avatar? What's your perfect **client avatar**? And people are like, and when I first started, I was like, "Oh, anybody that wears clothes." Nope. Nope.

[K] Yeah. **Because when you try to appeal to everyone, you end up really speaking to no one.** You're just using generic language, generic branding. And then someone arrives at your website or listens to you, and it's not that it's confusing, it's just that it's bland.

[J] Yeah. And it's so hard. Because when you are a solo entrepreneur, and you are, you know, I hate to use the word kind of desperate and, you know, the scarcity mindset. But you do have those thoughts. **And so anything you can do to personalize who you are, and who your personality is, you know.** I look at your website, and I'm like, it's clean, and it's calm, and it's effective as to what I would love my website to look like. But I may go to somebody else's.

[J] And of course, then there's the, oh, you know, like the comparison game. Because there are other stylists in Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh is a stylish place now. And so yeah, **sometimes what you do is you play the comparison game. And you look at things and you're like, "Well, I'm just going to copy her. She seems to be doing well. And that works for her." But it's not authentic.** It doesn't tell me the story of Kelly or Julie or whoever. It just tells a story. And you can't keep up with that. It's important. You can't keep playing that facade game.

[J] **And so, to me, everything we do is so much about relationships.** You know, I mean, I would say that probably 85% of my business comes from referrals, comes from people hearing the Scottish accent on their heads. And they hear somebody, "I'm not sure what color to get." They're like, "Whoa! Hold on! Don't do it! Call Julie."

[J] And that's something I know is a factor when when Jason and I, my ex husband and I were sitting down, making decisions about whether this would be a good idea for us as much as for me. He's like, the one thing that you have that not many people in Pittsburgh have is this Glaswegian accent. And it's a draw. And the other thing I like to think I have as this, this energy and this ability to like, connect people, and really, you know, hype people up for want of a better word. Well, that's why when you come to like, especially my Instagram, like, it is fun. It's, it's not solemn, and it's not me sharing like it to know what, you know, buy this way or buy that. I don't have any interest in selling you clothes. I have interest in giving you confidence to make good choices. And I think that that's a gap that sometimes is missing. People are in such hurry to put the business out there, sell, sell, sell, instead of you know, having a conversation with somebody like you, that says, "Okay, what are the essence of your business? Like, what? How do you want people to perceive yourself? "

[K] And you do a really, really good job of that. On social media, I feel like you are always trying to, like you said, boost people's confidence. You're adding real value. I don't see, I mean, you are reminding people that you are here to offer services. Well, people can hire you, but you're not pushing that. People who follow you are having fun. Your stories are great. And you are sharing information about style, you know, try belts and try tucking shirts in or try a statement accessory. And all of that's really helpful. Because I'm one of those people who wears a uniform and gets in a rut. And so you remind me, "Okay, I could try something." So I love that.

[J] Yeah, it's connection. It's connection. We are, for all intents and... You remember brands. You know, look into Target. Never wear red walking into Target. You'll get harassed the whole time. And, you know, and we even, you know, I know that I learned this phrase, a long, long time ago, where people said, you know, "There's no such thing as bad publicity." But when you're a solo entrepreneur, and you're just getting started, that's, that's not always the case. You know, you want people to talk about you for the right reasons. And I think you want to be able to be proud of what you're putting out into the world and feel confident about it. Because let's face it, there are so many other things you have to think about. **Like if, if your website and your brand and you're, you know, going down to the little details, like the color scheme and stuff makes you that 1% more memorable than the last design that somebody looked at, and they immediately say, "Oh, this is super clean, and it's efficient, and I am clean and efficient.**

These are my people." You know? Then, then it takes it that 1% above the rest, and that 1% above the rest. Then so yeah, super important.

[K] Right. And so it's something you just hinted that there is colors, different colors have different meanings, or represent different feelings and have different connotations. So in addition to like the website being uncluttered, and like you said, coming across as clear.. So, for example, orange represents fun and creativity. Blue, shades of blue, you know, can be very professional and represent stability. Purples represent spirituality, for example. So what if someone has had their colors done and so they've decided, "Okay, I'm going to pick my brand's colors from my colors." But they're like, okay, but I'm in the coaching business, for example, and I really want spirituality to come across. But purple isn't one of my colors. What would you say to that? I think I know what you're gonna say.

[J] **Every season gets every color.** Every season gets every color. The only exception and the one that women hold on to like the grip of death... And it's so funny to me, because there are people that, you know, I call them like butterflies. So they come in. And I always say to people, I don't post a lot of those typical kind of before and after pictures, because I want people to go out and start using the information I've given them and then post those pictures when they've kind of evolved. But I do have butterflies that go out into the world and just want to like, give it, give it all and tell everybody every last detail and you know, make a little bit of fun of themselves. And the big one for women is oh my god, I can't wear black anymore.

[J] And it's like, "What?" I'm like, Yeah, I haven't... And whenever I give, like, you know, speeches and presentations and workshops, and I say, "I haven't bought anything black since I had my colors analyzed over 20 years ago." There's usually someone in the back that passes out. Actually, what did she say? She doesn't? And I'm like, because it's not a color that I associate with. And for me, it does nothing for me. I'm not against it. It's it's one color in a universe colors. Now when it comes to, when it comes to choosing your kind of your wow colors, an how you then pick the branding of those colors, that was the question right? I've gone off.

[K] Yes. Yeah. If someone wants a color for their brand, because it has a certain meaning, but they think it's not one of their colors.

[J] Yeah, I went, I went off on that.

[K] Totally fine. I love tangents!

[J] So, if for instance, you have just exploded into autumn. And autumn's words are rich, warm, earthy, and vibrant. And you can use those words, to pick your colors. But every season gets every color. Other people go back down that rabbit hole, but so what I mean by that is, every season gets blues and purples and pinks and neutrals. And every season gets head-to-toe dark colors that they can wear as they would have worn black in a previous life, like before Julie, I call it.

[J] And it's not that you, you cannot pick a purple, or pick a blue, it's just that sometimes there'll be a subtle enough difference, where we're taking you from maybe you know, a teal, to pine green, where you put a teal and a pine green together. They're not too far away from each other in the universe. You can push them farther and farther apart as much as you want to take it. But it's not without the realms of possibility that you could put these two colors together and they would work.

[J] So it's, it's about visually, what kind of level of impact do you want to make? Do you want the impact to be, "I remember that website because of oranges and brights," or do you want the impact to be a real slow, steady, kind of sleek? You can you could still do a shade of like a burnt orange or amber or saffron and mix it with like, browns and sage greens and moss greens and olive greens and make it look super sophisticated. But the tagline, and the tagline appears in that orange, and then that elevates everything else up. So it doesn't have to be all or nothing.

[J] But I find it so interesting, when we go into the kind of deep dive that style is, that **50% of your style is your personality**. I can dress people structurally super easy, but I have to get into your personality. Because otherwise I put you in clothes that you don't feel comfortable in or don't represent who you are and that you would never do without me. So I can take you up in a in a nice, amazing clothes. And then you're like, "Well, I'm not I'm not really gonna dress like that I'm I am?" I'm like, "Okay, yeah, we missed the mark here."

[J] It's the same with your brand. When you take that brand from the person onto the screen or a business card or brochure, there has to be a way to communicate that brand. And you can really do so much of that with color and font. You're the expert with this. I'm sticking to what I know. But I know that I have had clients. And when I look at the website, like the before and after, and I'm like, "There she is." There's that little, you know, that little kind of sophistication. Joy Sakonyi, who's a practitioner down in the Northside and who's our wellness guru, as I call it—love her to death. Now, she sits in the summer palette like me, but she's a lot more of what I would call a romantic and feminine personality. And when you look at her website, it's almost like you're just sucked into this, like trying to go like soft navies, and raspberry red and all this kind of and it's just like, oh, I just I want to hug this.

[K] Yeah, yeah, it is great. Very good points about bringing in style as well, and that it has to be your personality that your clothing style isn't based just on your body shape, that it has to be your personality to, that's really good.

[J] You have to work together. And we use the philosophy of the the yin and the yang and how, you know, if you have a black circle with a white dot, or a white circle with a black dot, there's not, there's very few people that walk in my door that are fully one personality. There's six different archetypes, there's very few people that walk through with just one of those. There's always a secondary one. And the secondary one is the yin to the yang. And that's what then, you know, like, mine is a mixture of Audrey Hepburn me Cher. Good luck with that....

[J] But you know, on some days, and again, this is the other thing, you know, your website is kind of stationary if you like. So it's always there, and it's humming along. **And so like styles and trends that come in and out, you want your website to reflect who you are all the time.** So you have to kind of pick that that middle ground that represents you in every aspect of your life. Because, again, people want to get to know the person. And so I think that with style, when we come into it, there's always something that leads, there's always a bigger presence, if you like, that when we get to that second point almost sometimes it makes the first point make more sense.

[J] So I don't have to always do the huge statement necklace. Sometimes I can take two or three necklaces and make them look like a statement piece but not as big and as obnoxious on me. Or, you know, maybe the jacket isn't a bright chatty red. It's, I can have deeper raspberry or burgundy red, you know, style comes down to personality. So even looking at your, your website, there's like a dramatic scale to it because there's "D" there. And so, but it's effortless. Which is what, I like that, that's the thing, like once you really dig into it and and figured out what your purpose is and what you really want to, you

know, empower your clients with, the flow just becomes like, effortless. All the pieces of the puzzle fit. And there's no, there's no kind of strangers sitting there saying. Yeah.

[K] And that takes time. That takes real work at the beginning. And once you figure it out, then oh my god, you like feel it in your gut, like, yes, yeah, now I've got it. And then your marketing message from then on just clicks. And every time you post on social media, write a blog post, do a podcast, talk to a potential client—yeah, you just, it's there.

[J] And it evolves. It doesn't have to, it doesn't have to remain stagnant.

[K] No, exactly

[J] It evolves. But if you start from, if you start from a base of knowledge and understanding of why certain things work better for... It's just like when you talk to your clients about educating them on their brand and their website, you know. I'm sure one of the first questions as well, what does it need to do? Yeah, like, what processes do you need? Do you need scheduling? Do you need payment? And do you need examples? You know, do we need to link these blah, blah, blah, like a little like checklist?

[J] Well, it's the same, you know, when you get dressed every day. It's the same when you walk into a store. Like let's not overwhelm ourselves with everything to choose from, right? Let's start narrowing this down to what's really important and what's going to give us almost like, the biggest bang for our buck. And I feel like it, it does translate to every aspect of our lives. I feel that once you then have that continuity, that's when you get to the point of like, this is easy. This is fun, like I'm now able to do so much more. Because I'm not I'm not fretting about or what does this background look like? And what do I look like? And you know, you're just you're off and kind of running. But yeah, it does. Yes, it's not overnight, and it and it will evolve. And we'd like to show up on bloody Facebook memory. And you're like, "Oh, man!"...

[K] Yes! And I'm like, delete, delete, delete. You know, though, it's kind of a shame. Like I saved no screenshots of my old websites. I kind of wish I had though, just so I could be like, "Okay, now this one's good." And then one day, I'll probably look back and be like, "Now THIS one's good."

[J] It's your history. It's where you're from, and it's where you're going. And it's yes, proof in the pudding. And I don't have that many. You know, like, when I was growing up, and I was working, I was on a ridiculously awful uniform, polyester head to toe. so, yeah. So, I don't have as many great digital images of me through the years. But every so often, something will pop up or I'll be going through a full album, like, like when my mom's here visiting and right now, and it's interesting because it does tell a story. It is, you know, a moment in time.

[J] And I think, as business owners.... I'm working with a really great coach right now on a program that's called Amplified Mentality. And I should introduce you to David. But we talk about, you know, how the stories we tell ourselves and the beliefs that we have come from that journey. **Sometimes we're not necessarily telling the right story.** And so, you know, as part of who we are. But we can create a new story. And once you have the tools to do that, then that's, then yeah, the world's your oyster.

[K] Yeah. **And that's what we do in branding, too. We're telling the story. Now, we are telling the story of who we are, what we do, who we do it for, and how we help them.** Yeah, that's the story. And without story, no one's gonna want to hire us.

[J] Yeah. And it really, again, going back to that, we do a session within the style that we talk about perceptions. How do you want to be perceived? So, if you designed a website for someone, and they looked at it, they would come up with words that describe the website. But then they might hand it to 10 other people in their network and say, "What do you think of the website?" And they might come back with different words. You can accept those words, because they're coming from a different viewpoint. Or you can use those words to make the little tweaks that then take off that 1%. And that 1%, it doesn't mean you're in charge of that. That's also whether it's your website, your personal image, you know. You know how the lovely ladies in Downton Abbey get their maids to come in and dress them and pick their jewelry and do their hair and all that. Like, that's not real world. Although many people say when they're getting dressed in the morning to hear Julie say, "No, I wouldn't do that".

[J] Those words, when we look in the mirror, you know, and I say to people, "I just want you to look in the mirror and be like, "Yeah, damn, I look good." I want that every day. I don't, this is not dress up. This is real life. **How you turn up on on Monday is how you should turn up on Sunday. How you turn up in the first client, and how you turn up for client 500.** You know, I've been doing this for nine years. And I still get as excited when somebody sits in that chair and is putting their you know, I mean, they're not really putting their lives in my hands. But they cannot. I mean, yeah. For at least 90 minutes. When you make that decision to like, be your best version, and you really go all in, then that's that's when like, the magic happens for sure.

[K] Yeah. Yeah. Like you didn't get me to stop wearing black, but you did get me to get rid of the autumn colors in my closet. I love looking at autumn colors, but I can't wear...

[J] Did you paint your new house in autumn colors. That's I want to know.

[K] No, but I couldn't get rid of my furniture. I love them. I love that couch. Yeah. So couldn't get rid of that. But when it wears out in however many years way in the future....

[J] Emerald Green, emerald green would be really...

[K] I love that. Oh my god. When I bought this couch, I didn't think it was going to be rust colored. I thought it was going to be red. So, it was like false advertising.

[J] Also, it's not about, you know, telling you what you can't do. Because if somebody comes to you, and they say, "Here's my color palette," and you're like, "Woof. Okay." So your job is to guide that person and say, "All right, here, this is our starting point. This is a great starting point. Let's put all those colors up." Then your job, as is my job, is to guide you, you know, however gently or harshly you decide, to say, "Okay, so this is what you came to me with. And now I've given you this education. Let's take a little sidestep. What does this look like?"

[J] You know, so for me that could be taking somebody from a black and putting them in pine green or put them in a really deep burgundy or putting them in an amazing like beautiful navy. It's not taking them to fuchsia pink and you know, turquoise blue, or acid yellow, because you won't do that. Yeah, it's not maintainable. It's not who you are. It doesn't speak to you, your person, your personality. And it's the same when you're when you're building a brand. And you have to be wary of you know, you can make an impact for the wrong reasons as well as the right reasons. You know, so you can walk into our website and be like, "Okay, I don't know where I'm going. I don't know why this thing's flashing at me. Please don't ask me for my email address 14 times." I hate that. Pet peeves.

[K] God, those popups.

[J] I can look at it and immediately decide, just like when I'm standing in front of a person, do I want to trust this person? Do I want to invest in this person? And I think to your point that you've said, so lovely, like, I'm not into hard sales. I've been, I worked in sales in travel from when I was 16. I left school and went straight into work. And, you know, I learned a lot. **I think when you're dealing, because when push comes to shove, we're both dealing with people.** The people and emotions and, you know, everything that comes behind that, and, you know, sometimes I say it's not really about the clothes.

[K] Right. We both put people first. Yeah, they have to come first.

[J] 100% Because without that there's there's a missing piece. There's no, there's no personality, there's no, there's no connection.

[K] No relationship, or a bad relationship.

[J] Yeah, the last couple of years has also taught as is that we, as humans, we crave that and we need it. You know, now, when I go to, I went to an event the other night, and it was like the first event I'd been in a long time. And it was just like, energy and the room was just, but it also felt different because I feel like the energy in the room felt like, everybody wanted to be included. A time when I saw somebody, like if I saw somebody kind of standing off by themselves, immediately somebody brought them in. I think we've had that whatever button you want to call it, reset, pivot, team, pause. Pause button. And I think we're just ready to go back out into the world a little bit more thoughtful, and kind and authentic?

[K] Yeah, I think you're right. Just one nice thing to come out of all of this.

[K] Well, this has been wonderful! You have just given so much great information that I think is really going to help people and their branding in general. You know, I thought that the focus was going to be on colors. And now this has just been so much more. It's been really great. So, where can people find you online? and I will share links to do so.

[J] So my main favorite place to be is Instagram. And I'm @JulieShieldsImageCoach on that. And Facebook is the same. And you can you can actually just google me, Julie Shields Pittsburgh, and I pop up.

[K] Awesome.

[J] So and then I offer kind of free discovery calls for people that are not sure what the best way to attack, whatever challenges they're having, you know, as something they want to have a conversation about, you know, actually branding when it comes to their business as much as as themselves. Then yeah, we can we can start to have a conversation with that.

[K] Awesome. Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate your being here today and sharing so much awesome information. And again, I will share links to your social media accounts. You have any last words for listeners?

[J] I'm excited to see where this goes for you. And I'm so excited about your new ventures and all the things that have come into place for you. So it's going to be, I'm excited.

[K] Thank you. I really appreciate that. Yeah, I'm excited, too. This is still in its infancy. Yeah. The whole podcast and everything. Yeah. It's been fun so far. And you're my first guest!

[J] We'll come back and we'll come back in a couple of years. And we'll be like, "Let's just, let's listen to that and then do it again."

[K] We will need to do it again. Yes, or another, a variation of it. Yeah. All right. Well, that's it. Thank you, Julie. That is it for today. I'll be back next week with more branding, design and business tips. See you next time on Brand + Design Scoop!

[Check out Julie on Instagram](#)

Angela Kelly Smith provides custom Squarespace websites, branding strategy, and marketing instruction so freelancers and entrepreneurs can run a successful business while spending more time focusing on the work they really love doing. Check out her [website design + marketing strategy services](#).