

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible



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With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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As I'm recording this, it's Valentine's Day; a day celebrating love. For many, this can be a hard day. Love, whether in relationships, for your work, for yourself, for life, can feel hard to access sometimes. If you're struggling in some area of life that really matters to you, constantly feeling exhausted or like every day you confront the same unsolvable challenge, like you are trying to work this impossible Rubik's Cube, then you need a strategy.

You need to access your creative genius for a better way, for that third way. And for me, I've found that the most potent creative strategy is love. Sometimes, the thing you need to do is to fall in love again with your life, you work, your art.

That can feel hard, out of reach, even impossible. And those times then, often, the thing you need to fall in love again with whatever it is is to believe that you can. And who better to instruct us on this than the Queen of Hearts herself, from Lewis Carroll's classic, *Alice in Wonderland*.

Here is an excerpt from that tale, "Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying,' she said. 'One can't believe impossible things.'

'I dare say you haven't had much practice,' said the queen. 'When I was younger, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes, I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.'"

So, listen into today's episode to learn how believing impossible things can be a powerful tool for communicating with your inner genius and falling in love with life all over again.

You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves. Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

out of making money, and the struggle out of making art. Here is your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

Hello, and happy Valentine's Day, my listeners and friends. This really has been a love bomb of a week. And it started Sunday night with the Grammys. I've not watched the Grammys for a while. I don't watch much TV and it's not for any noble reasons. It's mostly because on a lot of nights, I just fall asleep putting my kids to bed, or if I get back up again, I'm recording a podcast, like tonight, or I always have a stack of books on my nightstand that look really delicious and crawling in bed with them sounds awesome.

But for this last Sunday, my girl, Brandi Carlisle was nominated for six awards and was going to be performing, so I stayed up to watch it and it was more than worth it because, I don't know if you saw that performance, but if not, you need to look it up on YouTube because she just brought the house down. It was just like a spiritual experience. She's so amazing.

I'm not done talking about her today either, fangirling, so sorry, you'll hear more about Brandi Carlisle and my love for her and her artistry later. But then also this week, again, it's my son Elijah's birthday, which was awesome, except for the fact that our oven decided to die and I'd put the cake in the oven, got on a coaching call, and then smelled something, and then came out at the end of my coaching call and there was, like, smoke rolling out of the oven.

We are living in and renovating this, like, 1848 farmhouse. The oven is not that old, obviously, but it was put in in the 60s. So there are flames in the oven, and then I reached over to turn it off, one big, like, firebomb pop of an exit, and then the oven is no longer. So, there's that. I had to go out and buy him a cake instead.

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

And then also this week, we started *The Art School*, and I am just – like, I know I started it, but I also feel like it's something that is really bigger than me, and I'm just very grateful. We have an incredible group of women and I wanted to make sure that in the first week, I exceeded all their expectations and blew them away, and they just did that right back to me. So it was really an awesome week.

So, on to our topic today; believing impossible things. I think it's not a fantasy thing, not just fantastical. I think it's more than just a prerogative as humans, especially in this modern-day society. But I think it's our obligation. We have this faculty. We have imagination. We're no longer in survival mode.

We're no longer just getting by, so what are we to do then with this precious gift of our minds that we have? Like, what is really there for us to unpack? And I think it's necessary that we unpack it. I think like, the world, circumstances, are asking us to unpack it and to evolve. And I think imagining and thinking about what is currently impossible is one exciting way to do that, is one exciting way to tap into whatever it is in us that has this ability to conjure up what has not yet been.

And I'm a big believer in mindfulness and meditation, though the many years I spent following those paths, I have to say, sometimes I think what is not taught well, or at least is often misunderstood, is the idea of presence and being present and in the present moment. Because automatically – and sometimes – people would restrict themselves from thinking about the future, whereas I often started to see that what people were calling presence and present moment wasn't actually that, it wasn't actually being with and awake to the now, but it was recycling past experiences and sitting in an expectation that the now would be what it always has been and sort of artificially cutting one's self off from this ability, this faculty we have as humans.

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

I started to think of presence more as Einstein talked about it, that there is really no linear time, that past, present, future really are existing all at once. And so if you think about it that way, using our imagination to conjure up something that has not yet been, we might think of it in linear time as though we're reaching into the future, but really, what if that construct is wrong and we're just really opening ourselves up to something that exists on this universal plane that we're in right now.

And so, in that, we're present. We're present to all things, to all things that are possible, past, present, and future all at once. I don't think presence is just looking at what is here always in the moment, watching the wind move a leaf. I think there's so much more to it than that.

And I loved this quote from Alice in Wonderland because I think our imaginations are definitely a muscle and a skill, and one that as adults, too often, is under-flexed. And I hear Alice from many of my clients, I hear people saying I can't believe in an impossible thing that contradicts itself, or when I try to do that, it's terrifying. I don't want to be that disappointed.

Or I'll hear people say, well, I'm just open to receiving what the universe has in mind for me. Or, I'm open to god revealing his plan and unfolding it for me. And to that, I want to say, don't attribute limitation to the universe and god that is actually yours. Because too often, I hear people cop out of imagination by saying they feel like they're getting too big for their britches, like somehow the universe is going to come and smack them down. It's the old, like Icarus flying too close to the sun complex.

But god, the universe, whatever high-intelligence is out there does not have the limitations that you have, does not have this notion of impossibility. And I think it is actually for us, by giving ourselves the prompt and giving our inner creative genius the license and giving our minds the creative direction of, let's think impossible things, I sort of feel like that's like handing it the old fashioned phone number to dial god up, like a direct line to, you know, what

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

wants to happen, what is possible, what would be something greater than me? What's out there?

We're tapping into that. Jung called it the collective unconscious, but maybe it's the collective consciousness. So as the queen in Lewis Carroll said too, she's basically saying it's a muscle. She's telling Alice, when Alice says, well you can't believe in impossible things, the queen is saying, well of course you can, you're just saying that because you haven't practiced it enough. And then she gives a pretty literal instruction, like, I practice even six times before breakfast.

So, you can do that in your own life. You can be the creative director in your life, because thinking impossible things is one thing, but it's then, when you try to make the leap to believing them, that's going to create this uncomfortable cognitive dissonance in your brain. And that's the space that you have to practice holding, and that's the space you have to practice holding without your mind automatically lapsing back to reconcile in favor of the past and what has been and just recycling past experiences or what other people have done.

You need to be comfortable holding that space of cognitive dissonance that happens when external reality as it is now differs from this impossible thing that you've chosen to believe in. And again, your mind wants to be efficient. It wants to seek pleasure and avoid pain. And when you want to believe in something new, that goes against that motivational triad of the mind, and the mind really does want to conserve energy and just go back to the way things are.

So you have to be able to think greater than the discomfort, that disbelief causes in the moment. So, in this way, it's interesting because, on one hand, we have this brain that allows us to imagine, or whatever faculty that is that allows us to imagine, and at the same time, our brains are also wired

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

to resist this kind of creativity and resist this kind of commitment to a belief in the impossible, because it requires tremendous resources.

But the thing is, if you want to be truly creative in your life, you cannot rely on past evidence. If you want to be truly powerfully creative, you can't rely even on evidence right now or taking action and hoping evidence comes. If you want to be a powerful creative, you have to create the evidence with your belief and you have to be willing to just sustain yourself on belief for a long time until that evidence starts showing up.

And it's not that when the evidence shows up that you believe it; it's that from your belief you create the evidence. So this is why I think this practice of choosing to give your brain the directive to believe – not only think about, but really believe impossible things – is a powerful meditation, because believing in something requires more of an embodiment.

You can think something. That's like stage one of imagining, this innovation that just happens in our mind and doesn't require that much of us. But then to go on and really believe that thing, that becomes an embodiment. That is really like a meditation. You have to focus, and then, like, what does that feel like in my body? What is the difference between thinking something and believing something?

It requires a shift in your mind. And because the brain really resists believing in something that it might be disappointed by, or again, it doesn't have evidence in – so, for instance, I can think, I would be awesome to do the album artwork for Brandi Carlisle. That would be amazing.

I can think that in my head and I can create and innovate that way in my head. But for me to, like, believe it, just like it happened yesterday, just like I got an email or a phone call from her that said, "Hey, someone brought this to our attention that you have this painting and it fits perfectly with this women's anthology that we're going to do..." like, that belief like it's already

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

happened, like it's been in the past, that, even just saying it now, viscerally creates a different response in my body.

And so, when you embody a belief like that, you feel it in your brain differently. You feel it in your body differently. You're going to take different actions, you're going to show up in the world differently. You're going to think about yourself differently. Your identity is going to shift.

And from that shift in identity, you're going to think different thoughts. You're going to think the thoughts of somebody who it's just their bread and butter, it's just like the breath of their everyday life that they make album covers for their, like, super favorite artist. So, if you experiment with this, I really want you to think about this.

Like, stop this now if you're on the treadmill, or whatever you're doing, folding laundry in your studio, and think about that. What is something that you want to believe that's impossible and notice the difference in your mind. Try version A, thinking about it, and then try version B. What is it to really believe it, as in like it happened yesterday?

And so here's another really interesting point. Like, you have to know that the nature of the mind is going to be towards that negative bias. It's going to be towards, hey, this is impossible, this is not going to happen. And one thing that points this out, that just screams this, is the fact that our minds tell us this about things that have already happened, about things that we've already done.

My mind tells me that a lot of the things that I've already done are impossible because I'll be working on my business for instance, seeing where I am in my books and on my financial targets and my mind will get sidetracked or be unsupervised for a while and I'll start to feel anxious and I'll realize it's because I'm thinking, well, how am I going to make that target? That's impossible.

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

And then I'll think, wait, I've made a lot more than that before in a month. What about those 25K months, what about that 50K month? What about all those paintings you sold? And then my mind will be, like, oh yeah, right, we forgot about that. And we'll bring it back on track, but it resists that again. Or I'll have a break from painting and my brain will say things like, oh, you're not an artist, you're not painting, you're not an artist. And then I'll start to feel, like, true panic and anxiety and this, yeah, just mental suffering.

And then I'll be, like, wait, like, right here on my website and in my files and on my feed, like I have from clients, people who have bought my paintings, I have all these paintings that not only do I love them, but other people love them and bought the, plus my house is filled with paintings that I love so much that I've kept them. So take that, voice that says I'm not an artist and I can't paint and it's not available to me.

But it's so fascinating that that is how our minds work, and it's good to know. And it's good to know that that's a thought and that it's not true and that we don't have to plug into it and we don't have to give it power. It is so powerful to realize that it's just a voice and that's what the voice says.

I was describing this to someone the other day as that kind of voice is like the jagged voice. And for me, it was really powerful to have had the experience of, like when I was an athlete, I got very familiar with these two different energies in my body.

And at first, I was really only identifying with, like, the jagged voice. Like, I thought that was me and it was the voice that was just, like, very critical, and also very, like, pushed me in a punishing way. And I learned over time that there is actually a much more powerful energy inside of me, that it's very strong, it's quiet, it's compassionate, it's gentle, it's flowing, it's steady, and that when I access that energy, I really do feel unstoppable and strong and deep, like I have a reservoir of strength and energy available to me.

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

And it doesn't need to push and it doesn't need to punish and it knows, much like the Lau Tzu line from the Tao Te Ching, like, whatever is not done is done, that sort of paradoxical energy. I've found that so powerful in my art and in my writing as well to distinguish between these two different energies when I'm creating anything, whether it's something right in front of me, or something impossible seeming I'm envisioning is to know the difference between that jagged voice that is always going to discount things and is always going to say I'm not good enough or my capacity is not good enough or my work's not good enough, and to be able to identify that as those are the jagged pieces, that's the jagged voice.

And, over time, those jagged pieces have shifted so that they feel less like a mountain range and more like these little molehills or foothills. So again, just to know that that's the nature of our brain, and we don't have to take it so personally. We can also give it creative direction with questions like, what are impossible things that we can believe? And especially in the beginning of the day – I don't know if that was intended on Lewis Carroll's part. But the nature of the mind when you wake up first thing in the morning, what are you thinking about? What do you ask yourself?

Do you think about, how bad is this day going to be? What if, instead, you thought about how is the universe rigged in my favor? What is going to happen today that's incredibly awesome? What am I going to look forward to? Because those things are equally available to us and we're so worried about deluding ourselves. But the thing is, we're really way too comfortable with catastrophizing, which is essentially deluding ourselves towards the negative.

And there's a little bit that's like wordplay between – you know, we don't want to think too much of ourselves, or we're so quick to say, who do I think I am? But then, so often we're okay to delude ourselves about our smallness, to indulge in delusions of smallness. And then therefore, when we delude ourselves in this smallness, we also dilute ourselves.

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

So, instead, give yourself, like, powerful directives in the morning, like, what amazing is going to happen today? And believe that amazing things are going to happen to you that day, and then look for them, big and small, at every turn. And also, catch yourself, instead of saying, like, why can't I, or why are things this way, give your inner creative genius the powerful directive because it will answer this question. It will want to solve for X.

If you say, if I were to do this thing, how would I X? How would I solve for X? If I were to create Brandi Carlisle's album art, how would I do that/ if I did want to double my income but not work more hours and take care of myself emotionally and do other things I want to do and create the things I want to create, how would I do that?

And if there's a problem or a struggle, something that just comes up over and over again and you're just mired in it – for instance, I was talking to a client this last week and she was talking about how, with a certain situation in her creative business, she had just turned every which way and she couldn't find a way to solve this seeming problem that didn't seem, like, exhausting to her, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, financially even.

And a friend of hers, who is a mutual friend of ours, had said to her, "You know what, it feels to me like you are constantly working this Rubik's Cube and you've almost rubbed off the colors you're working it so much, when actually, you could just put the Rubik's Cube on the shelf."

And I loved that because so many times, what we obsess about as being a struggle or a problem in our life, it doesn't even really need to be. It could be that nothing has actually gone wrong. And also, maybe it's not a problem we're trying to solve. Because another visual, as my client was telling me this, as I was envisioning her trying to work this Rubik's Cube, the visual that I had was that, well, what would a painter do? She's a very accomplished painter. Why not just take your paintbrush and paint and swipe one side white, the other side red, the other side blue, and so on and

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

so forth? And that is also a way to accomplish the end of having all colors be matched on all of the sides.

So I think that, again, reminded me of the podcast last week of the third way, because, so often, when we're trying to solve this thing that seems impossible or we have something that we want to believe that seems impossible, we think we need to get down and grind and figure it out and logic it all out. And if that is your superpower, if that's where you feel strongest, if that's your gift, then by all means, go for it.

But I think there are those of us that, also, our strength is more to settle back and be like, well what is a way – can I set this cube on the shelf, or can I just paint the damn cube? And when you feel that shift in energy, then you use that shift in energy and apply it to thinking about the ease you could have in believing the impossible thing that you want to believe.

So now, this brings me to the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to lean in. I want you to lean in and work with me, and really coach with me. So, I think you probably know what's coming here. I want to give you the assignment. For the next week, I want you to believe in six impossible things before breakfast.

And again, not just think of them, like, oh, check that, check that, check that. But I want you to identify what they might be and then really try to go to the place where it's the shift between thinking about it and believing in it. And write it down and journal about it, because I guarantee, more will come up as you journal.

And if you want to share, I would love to hear about the impossible things that you're wanting to believe. And I'd also love to hear if this opens up your creativity in other areas, because I've found that to be true. I've found that this exercise, I feel like, in the rest of my day, it does something to prime my imagination where solutions in all areas of my life seem to come

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

with more ease and I'm kind of surprised at the different possibilities that come up for me.

So, if you have an experience like that, or whatever your experience is, whatever your impossible things are, I would love to hear about them. And also, I will say, I won't say I told you so when then some of these things actually start to manifest in your life. But I might say I told you so in a very happy for you celebratory kind of way.

Thank you so much for listening to *The Art School Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode, I would love it if you would take the time to go to iTunes and leave a review. And if you have a coaching question for me, whether you are an established artist who just wants to take it to the next level, or really wants to take care of your mental, emotional, or even financial wellbeing, or if you are more in that embryonic or adolescent stage of your creative growth, please, send me your questions and I would be happy to help coach you through them on an upcoming podcast episode.

I am more than happy to not use your identifying information, but I really just want to make sure that I'm offering content that is useful to you. So, thank you again for listening. And I have one more closing thought that is very much in-keeping with the spirit of Valentine's day.

I was having dinner with a girlfriend the other night and I was just remarking to her about how nice it is to see her and her husband together and what a beautiful relationship they have together. Even pictures you see of them, just the way he looks at her is beautiful. You can just tell he thinks she hung the moon.

And she smiled and said, "Yeah, I do think I'm his favorite person." And I loved that. And that's what I wanted to offer you this week, because that thought, that kind of thought not only helps shape a beautiful relationship, but that can shape a loving and lovely life.

[The Art School Podcast](#) with Leah Badertscher

Ep #15: How to Truly Believe in the Impossible

That can create a beautiful and lovely life. So, think about that. Think about, can you, this week, today, look someone in the eye and tell them they are your favorite person in the world, or one of your favorite people in the world. Even right now, just think about how you would change when someone came into the room, if on the inside, just silently to yourself, you were thinking, one of my favorite people just walked into the room.

And so now, I want you to take that too, and make sure you also apply it to yourself. And I hope that that's not one of the impossible things to believe, but even if it is, trust me, you can get there, and it will be so well worth it. So, I hope you all go forth and have and create a love bomb of a week. Don't keep it just to Valentine's day. And thank you for those of you that have been emailing me, because I'm coming to find out that this is really reaching a lot of my favorite kind of people out there.

So thank you so much for letting me know that you're listening. I hope you have a beautiful rest of the week, and I will see you next time.