

## Ep #16: Building Your Dreams Brick-by-Brick



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Leah Badertscher**

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“Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” So goes the Chinese proverb, a quotation from the Tao Te Ching. This is a fairly well-known quote and its message is pretty obvious.

Last week, I talked about the power of believing impossible things. Today, I want to talk to you about taking not just that first step, but the thousands upon thousands of steps you then must take on your journey to making these impossible things your reality. Because many of us can take those first steps when we're fresh and inspired, but what do you do when you are, let's say, 283 steps into the journey and you're tired, overwhelmed, broke, frustrated, struggling, or just plain bored?

Too many dreams are abandoned at this point in the journey, so listen in today and learn about the paradox of the biggest impossible dreams being accomplished by the tiniest most pedestrian of miracles.

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 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, everybody, and welcome back. How are you? Things are great here and I say that partly because there's been no snow days this week. And I know that's not been the case for many of my mom friends across the country. Yes, we go back and forth about the challenges of being mompreneurs when there is like snowmageddon going on and school can begin to feel like it's optional. But this week, for us, for the Badertscher kids, there has been school. Although I guess on Monday there was Presidents' Day, so strike that.

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We didn't have school on Monday. We did get to go skiing on one of those little snow hills in Michigan. So that was the first time for our kids and we skied into the afternoon, into the night, and it was a full moon and just breathtaking. And the kids did such a great job picking it up and I hadn't been in years, and so I was scared at first. I'm not sure how my knee had – I've blown out my ACL before, but skiing under the moonlight and zipping down the hill took over and now I just can't wait to go back. So that was wonderful.

And then, this last weekend was wonderful because I got to go to Chicago to my poetry mentor, Fran Quinn's workshop that he holds there once a month at my friend Caroline's house. And it is just – my heart is so happy and full there. It just feels like one of those times where you find your places and people that you're meant to find and meet in the universe. I just love those and it just fills my cup and then I get to come back and have my own art school.

And *The Art School* is exceeding my own expectations. And it's an interesting place for me because it's very relevant to today's topic, and I've been contemplating this and the topic that I have planned for today. Because with *The Art School* and my coaching practice, I'm definitely in this space where I'm enjoying this beautiful flourishing of a vision I've long had. And I'm enjoying the growth of my business. And I notice, to some people, it looks like this was overnight.

So when they ask me questions like, hey, how did you do that, what changed, what did you do – my mind kind of hits a brick wall or it's like this big blank space, because there really is no one big answer. It's not like I landed on some magic formula for a funnel. It wasn't even being in a book, not even one endorsed by Oprah, like it was.

What it is, like why my mind stalls out, is that I just got to all those places of the tiny, tiny, almost, it seemed to me at the time, imperceptible to anybody else things that I did all along the way, and beginning even with this

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painting that I first did after I graduated law school and setup my makeshift art studio in the basement garage. And I didn't know where to start, I just knew I had to start somewhere, and I tore this pretty clichéd picture out of the Ballard Designs Catalog of poppies. And I loved poppies and they reminded me of my grandmother.

So I taped paper up on the wall, made this poppy painting with watercolors. Even though it looks kindergarten-like, I knew it was very significant to me and I have kept it all this time to remind me of that and it's hanging in my office to remind me of that, to remind me of that young woman who risked all sorts of things, including being very vulnerable and being willing to love something enough, live a dream well enough, love a dream well enough to suck at it and let it be seen for what it was and to continue on anyway.

And then there are things like all those years along the way, like writing a blog that hardly anybody read and I wrote it very consistently. There were trainings I attended that were awesome, and then there were trainings I attended that were terrible and I cried and cried and cried because I thought I had wasted so much time and money and I didn't have much of either to waste at the time. And then there were workshops and retreats I offered that no one attended or two people attended and I was hoping for like 25, and all these small things that I attended to along the way, even when I didn't feel like it and I for sure was not getting results or positive feedback about it.

And so right now I'm enjoying this new level of success and things have really taken off, and now I have this moonshot goal of being an example of what is possible as an artist and as a coach. One of the ways of being that example is then making two million in my business within a year within three years, and inspiring other people to do that along the way, that they can also make a living and achieve their dreams being creative and can do it on their own terms, can do it in a way that's healthy.

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Right before I sat down to record this podcast, and something I've done every time to get into the right space – I say a little prayer and I set an intention that I hope, I make it my intention, that this is useful for a lot of people, that it reaches a lot of people. But if, for right now, even one person hears this and because of something they hear they keep moving towards their dream, and because of something they hear, maybe they are encouraged to write the song or play the song in front of people, or they make an offer and get a new client or they get their paints out again or they write a chapter in their book or a poem.

If someone does something like that then this would have been well worth it. And I suppose I might not know whether that happens and I for sure can't control that, because I can't control other people, but I definitely want to encourage you. And I'm creating this podcast with the intention that it serves my mission of creating a new paradigm of thriving artists and creatives, that it goes back to this idea that I had way back in law school, this renaissance, this rising and swelling of creativity that is like a creative revolution, and emphasis on the evolution that looking at creativity in a new way and wanting to create our dreams but also having that sacred twin intention of evolving ourselves as humans along the way, that that's what I'm doing with even just the small act of recording this podcast in my living room at 10:30 on a Wednesday night, because that's when my children are silent and that's when I don't have coaching clients.

So all of these acts, like the ones that I took in the past and those that I take now, the very small ones, even especially the very small ones, I think are all acts of love. And that's the way I choose to look at it, anyway – or acts of stubbornness, maybe my husband would say. But I think I know that not giving up on yourself and your dreams is love. And maybe stubborn love is not so far off from unconditional love, but I think sometimes especially it's those smallest of acts. It's those acts that you do that maybe you're not entirely sure of how things are going to turn out, but you know it's your next step to take and you take the responsibility of taking it. I think, sometimes, those small acts are some of the most radical acts of love.

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So, as we continue into today's discussion, I wanted to share with you a question I received from someone who listens to the podcast, because her question was very representative of three other questions I received this week. And the way she stated it really kind of encapsulates the spirit and the questions of the other people who had asked.

So, if I heard from this many people this week on this topic, I thought more of you might also need to hear this, and it's also very relevant to today's topic of, you know, how do you embrace that paradox of believing in impossible things, inviting in that kind of big miraculous creative energy and then how do you also take the very human next steps?

So, her question, or her statement actually was, "You know, I want to make my art and I want to make lots of money from my art. It always seems selfish to want that, and somehow a waste of my intelligence and school degrees." And I had asked her if, for instance, she were to like work with me or work on this with another coach or in *The Art School*, like, what would be her top three outcomes?

And her first was to make back the money invested, which is awesome because I always encourage people to do that. People that join my program, if that's a goal of theirs, I always encourage that, and I encourage other people to do that as well, to make back their initial investment. And then, I encourage them to ten-times that.

So, her second goal was to make \$25,000 per month, eventually. Her third goal, learn how to keep my goal in front of all my to-do lists, instead of working hard for a few months and then, quote en quote, forgetting what my goal was. I address this in a couple different ways, and where I wanted to start was with the thought that's in the way, that's not even going to help you take those first steps on that journey of 1000 steps.

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So, the thought that I really wanted to point out to her, and this was also just strikingly very consistent with the other questions and writing that I received was this thought that, “It always seems selfish to want what I want, and somehow, that’s a waste of my intelligence and school degrees.”

So, here’s what I wrote to her and to the others about that. “I want you to question that. I want you to question this thing that you’re assuming is the truth, that it’s selfish to want that and that it’s a waste of your intelligence and education. Question it because, right now, you are seeing that as the truth and it’s not actually the truth.

What it is is a certain set of thoughts you have chosen to believe. And I want you to ask yourself, are those beliefs serving you? The truth will serve you. The truth won’t beat you down and keep you small and shame you. So I would challenge you turn those thoughts around, that it seems selfish to want what you want and a waste of your intelligence and education. I challenge you to turn those thoughts around and see how the opposite is true.”

And here’s my example of turning that around; to not commit to making art and making lots of money from it is selfish and is a waste of my intelligence and school degrees. To me, this seems way more true, as does, by making art and making lots of money, I get to stop worrying about whether I’m going to make it – which that kind of worrying makes me neurotic and self-absorbed and selfish – and instead, I’m going to be so free to be so creative, so generous, so giving, so caring. I’ll be able to make a greater contribution and I can think of no greater use of my intelligence and my education. I’m going to put all of me to the highest use possible by following these dreams and bringing them to life.

And I closed with, your dreams are not selfish or a waste, ever. Going for them is not selfish or a waste, ever. It’s the opposite that’s true. And I know you’re onto yourself and you’ve got this. So keep creating art and make your millions, stitch by stitch. And so I closed I closed with the stitch by

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stitch for this particular woman who wrote in because one of her art forms is she does these amazing portraits with, I believe the term is floss or thread, but beautifully colorful portraits done stitch by stitch.

And I thought that was such a profound metaphor, not just for her, but for all of us and anyone listening, that's really like all of our art, anything that we're building, whether it's businesses or raising families, what have you, it has to be done breath by breath, stitch by stitch. I think sometimes that we get – and I have been guilty of this too – you are swept away with believing the impossible thing, which I love and I want to be someone who builds castles, but not in the air, like actually on the ground. And as a castle builder, you also have to know that you're going to also be a bricklayer, because castles are built brick by brick. You might conceive of them in a vision, but then you have to also embrace the role of bricklayer, metaphorically speaking.

So that visual of the stitch by stitch to me really resonates. And sometimes, that's as small as our action can be, and we have to have the faith that that's enough to then bring our creative vision to life. It's a problem I hear from so many clients, that very creative people can feel overwhelmed by the potential – like, one very brilliant client who called it idea-phoria. And you can create worlds in this idea-phoria place. You could innovate endlessly in your mind, but then when it comes time to channel it down through your body here that's in time and space, it can feel so frustrating because it can feel limited, that you can only do one thing at a time.

But, as I told another client, you know, maybe you feel this sort of cosmic, even divine potential or inspiration, and then maybe that's actually that this grand consciousness wants to play with the constraint of being human and experience the beauty and the miracle of what it is to take the potentially limitless, like an infinite and eternal, and channel it into, like, limited time and space through human hands and through the materials of the earth. That limitation that we can think is so frustrating is actually what's so, like, exquisite.



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So I also wanted to share some very specific suggestions I had for this listener who wrote in, because even if your situation is different, I think you can take from these specific suggestions and think of a way to apply it to your own, because with her goals of wanting to make back the investment, and then eventually wanting to make \$25,000 a month, based on where she is, I said, I would start by asking your brain, give it the creative direction of, how can I make an additional \$50 a week?

And then repeat that until you're doing it consistently. And then ask, how can I make an additional \$100 a week, and then up it to \$500. And then commit to doing that like your rent or your life or what have you depended on it, and keep working your way up and keep asking your brain these empowering questions. Giving it creative directive.

You don't want to lose focus and you don't want to make yourself available for any other option than success and then in the beginning, you keep your sights set on that \$25,000, but for right now, you break it down into something that's like, I could probably do that because it's this dance between how can I set it up so it's almost harder for me to fail or to not follow through than it is to follow through.

And years ago, I used to do this when I was training myself for triathlons and then training other people. Like, in the beginning with the pool, I just dreaded pool workouts, so I'm like okay, four minutes in the pool. All you have to do is really get there, get through that dreadful routine that felt to me at the time dreadful, of getting undressed and getting in the pool. Four minutes in the pool and get out.

And then I would just build on that because who can't swim for four minutes? And like now, years later even, I can easily swim for an hour or hour and a half. With another client, one time she was really procrastinating on getting her website up and running and there was a few weeks and she was going to do it, wouldn't do it, wouldn't do it. So I gave her the one assignment for one whole week, her only assignment was she had to

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schedule time every day to sit down and turn on her laptop, open the lid, turn on her laptop, and just sit there.

And then the next week I had her do it for two minutes. And then the next week I had her do that and then open a browser to where you would start working on a website, and just sit there and look at that page for four minutes. And it was like, partway into that second week where then she just had it, had enough and then just built the website as well as she could in a few days.

So don't let your mind say, oh, that stuff is too small, because that's where a lot of people get stuck. That's where they get stuck on the 283rd step of the thousand step journey and they just abandon their dream right there because it's not maybe the big scary thing like getting up on stage that intimidates them, but it's the small tedious things and it's especially the small tedious things when it looks like nothing is working, or especially the small tedious things when you're losing money or you're on a job search and nobody is calling you back, or you've just received your 12th rejection and you're tired of cold calling.

At those points, when you really are not feeling encouraged that you have to instead rely on belief, and belief doesn't always feel good. Belief often instead is just the commitment to believe that your result is inevitable because here's the thing; if you believed your result was inevitable, like no matter what, and you knew now you just had to go through this series of steps to get there, like, would you get there? Would you take that very next step?

So that's why I phrased it the way I did in the intro, that the miracle of creating things that are seemingly impossible so often must be accomplished by the tiniest, tiniest, and most pedestrian of steps. That is like, our feet on the ground, our sleeves rolled up, digging in, and doing the work. Because true belief will cause you to act, and it won't always feel like inspiration. It oftentimes doesn't, but a true belief will result in a

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commitment. And that commitment is the belief that those results are inevitable.

Because if you truly believe in your outcome and in the beauty of it, you won't wait for it to happen. You won't talk about it in a way like, well, for a while there I felt like it was going to happen, I was really feeling it, and now nothing seems to be happening. I don't think it's happening, maybe this is just not happening for me, maybe it's not in the cards. You can tell when people aren't really believing in it. They don't have a commitment when they talk about it as like, it, as like, it's outside of them, outside of their control.

You also, if you are truly believing that your results are inevitable, you're not going to wait to feel better before you act, and you're not going to wait for the dissipation of resistance or negative emotion. Just know that some resistance is always going to be there, and you can instead of forcing yourself through it or gritting your teeth and bearing it, you instead also have the option of just cultivating so much more love and compassion and gentleness for yourself as you do difficult things.

And I know that sounds contradictory but it's actually not, and you can use physical training as an example. You can be in a difficult yoga pose and in that space you can work on, you know, what is my mind saying to me here and instead can I hold a compassionate space? I was running today and I was doing a harder run at times and definitely working hard but also holding a very loving space for myself, and I definitely have big expectations of myself in my work, in my business, and as a mother, but I have learned how to do that and hold those expectations while it also being something very loving I do for myself.

And the other thing you won't do if you are truly believing in your outcome is you won't wait for the miracle. You'll know that you are the miracle. There's a quote, a Yogi Bhanan quote that I'm sure you will hear me say a million times because I love it. "I don't believe in miracles or rely on them,"

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and I think that can be taken many ways because who among us does not rely on miracles every single day?

I mean, we're on a big ball spinning in the middle of space, supported by who knows what? Like, a lot of physics, and we're breathing area of just the right amount of atmosphere that allows life to thrive. We have these minds that we have, these bodies that we have like, we are all relying on miracles every day. So you've got a heart, a body, you're listening to this, you've got technology that's like, huge bonus. You can breathe, you've got everything you need to be the one who works the miracles. You get the vision and then you go out and work the miracle and nothing can be too big for you and nothing can be too small for you.

And you want to create and adhere to a discipline for yourself that allows you to take care of yourself and take extraordinary care of your dreams. Because I hear too many people say, oh, discipline, that just sounds so punishing, but actually discipline is being a disciple to your intention and discipline is a way. The only one who can make it punishing is you. You are the adult. You can decide what discipline means for you.

And the other thing I also hear is like, my vision is so big and I am so tiny, or my problem is just so big and it's just way too daunting. What's really going on there, the truth in that is that when we are saying this to ourselves, we just have it backwards. And it's really that we're so big and the problem or task or daunting thing in front of us is really so small in comparison to what we can do.

The thing is we can't always do it in one fell swoop and it may take a thousand small steps but the thing that's going to set us free with that is if we can learn to keep our eye on the prize and believe in our results and also not reject the present moment or attack the present moment by thinking the future is going to be better. Because here's an important distinction, believing in a seemingly impossible dream or goal is not the

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same as believing in that thing happens, then everything is going to be better.

Because right there, you've already shot yourself in the foot before you've already started. The paradox, again, the key is that if you want to create those seemingly impossible things, you can't do it out of a place where you're rejecting the present moment and thinking, oh, I want that because some day it's going to be better.

But instead, the most powerful place is I choose to believe I can create that, it will be amazing then, and right now what's in front of me is writing the outline to a book that seems maybe so impoverished compared to what the vision of it feels like, but allowing myself to write it and knowing that I might have to write 10 books to start to begin to touch that book that's inside of me.

So it's taking that very first steps. It's maybe you're building a business but right now you're doing your taxes and you're having to look at the fact that you had a loss again. Whatever it is, it's looking at that moment and not rejecting this moment but expanding your capacity to feel all things in this moment because that's going to expand your capacity to hold that space for those impossible things that you're creating down the road.

So I for sure believe in the power of imagination and how flexing your imagination by believing impossible things that infuse your life with so much energy. It can feel like touching a miracle. And I also want you to know about how taking small steps can infuse your life with a similar miraculous energy, with pride, with strength, with confidence, with acknowledging the miracle that it is to have a human mind and body that work and that we get to do this consistent daily repeated over time work, and that that consistency builds up and has a compound effect, that it can be a miraculous energy to learn how to cultivate a loving discipline around nurturing your dreams.

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And nurturing your maturity and your attentiveness to them every single day, even, and especially when you don't feel like it. Even and especially when you don't want to that day. Saying you don't want to do something in any given moment or you don't like to do it is not necessarily per say just a reason not to do it. You have to look at what did you decide from a higher level of consciousness and live your life by that direction rather than just in the moment, I'm just not feeling it.

Like, that's not being attuned really to your creative spirit. That's just being lazy with responding to how you're feeling in any given moment. So you really want to give yourself both of those miraculous gifts. Access to both of those really life-giving miraculous energies. Believing, flexing your imagination, believing in impossible things, and then taking that.

I mean, like what - as the poet David White says, "What is my very next step? What is the next step that I can take? The very next step, the one in front of me?" That also will infuse your life with miraculous energy and it will feel so much more empowering because you will have known that you're the miracle worker.

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 and work with me and coach with me. So, given that I really want to emphasize the important of the physical and taking action, today's assignment for you has two parts. First, I want you to list out 10 things that you've been avoiding.

Either maybe you can decide and also kind of give a title to if you were to write a book about the things you avoid. Would it be you avoid things out of boredom or I avoid things because - some of my clients tell me that the title of their book would be like, shiny object syndrome, which essentially boredom and going off into next ideation. Would the title of your book be I don't want to be seen or things are too tedious, or things are too hard, or too expensive?

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Whatever your title would be, whatever your flavor, list out 10 things that you're not going. Could be small steps, they could be big things that are necessary steps if you want to create what you want to create. Write those down and look at those and look at your reasons for not doing those and decide if that is really a good reason to abandon your dream. If you really want to step at 283 or if you can look at those reasons and check them off one by one and take the next step and take the next step. And celebrate that as you do and feel proud and confident as you do.

And so then the second part of my coaching assignment or suggestion for you today is this very - this is totally mine - very idiosyncratic, this is my pushup meditation. Pushups as in the exercise. So here's something I do and it gives me a chance to watch my mind and not just in some I'm not sitting in a chair in lotus, which is great, I actually like that too a lot. But this gives me a chance to watch my mind as it's like, under stress and as I'm applying pressure.

So, every day I do a set of at least 25 pushups or at least one set of pushups and I watch my mind as I go through this process and I pay very close attention to doing a proper one all the way down, chest first, all the way up, not snaking like, proper form. And again, watching my mind closely as I do this because it's a metaphor for that step of a thousand journeys, only it's 25 pushups instead of a thousand.

And along the way, it gives me - it's like a way of taking the temperature of my mind and energy that day. It's kind of a metric of where my mind is. Usually every day around 14, my mind is like, why is this still hard? We've been doing this practice for a long time, shouldn't this be harder by now? Maybe we can just stop at 14 today because you've been doing this for a while, we can take a break today.

So then I just keep right on going and then there's usually another point, also at 18, it's like, dang already this is hard and now we have to do 17 more and a feeling of dread sets in. So all of these tiny little micro

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observations I'm making, I ask myself, where else is this showing up in my life?

And without fail, it's those same voices that show up other places in my life, where I have a discipline around doing something that's important to me, or my mind says oh gosh, I know we thought this was a great idea but maybe we can go to the gym and lift weights instead. Or maybe we can just do two sets tomorrow and skip today. And that kind of thought pattern can show up in the rest of my life, and if I'm not aware of it, it can stop me. If I'm aware of it, I can listen to it and proceed on with what I committed to anyway.

So I want to offer that to you as a way of getting to know your mind and how it talks to you as you go through difficult things, and also as a way of giving yourself an opportunity to encourage yourself and be very intentional about how you then want to speak to yourself in those situations. And going over the top with being encouraging and supportive because that too will help cultivate that voice for you in other situations, and it can help to teach you the inner terrain of how you work through a creative journey and can help you to retrain from just defaulting to the voice that wants you to give in to resistance and instead cultivate your creative cheerleader or your creative coach and mentor and guide instead.

Thank you again for listening to *The Art School Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode, I would love it if you take the time to leave a review on iTunes. You can do that by heading over to iTunes. You can also go to my website, [www.leahcb.com/itunes](http://www.leahcb.com/itunes) and follow the instructions there for how to leave a review and also anyone that leaves a review and then writes into me, [leah@leahcb.com](mailto:leah@leahcb.com) and sends a screenshot of that review will be entered for a chance to win a creative audit session with me.

So the closing thought I wanted to leave you with today is this; so think of what your thoughts tend to be when you wake up first thing in the morning and then as you go about your day. And so if you've never heard this one before, I just wanted to hand that to you as a possibility. You can try this

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out tomorrow and hopefully in the days to come, that when you wake up, what if you thought the universe if rigged in my favor?

Have a beautiful next week everyone and I will see you next time.