

Ep #20: Creativity Heals



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With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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Creativity heals. It can be an art form that heals, it can be a healing art form. But even more than an art, something closer and available to us all, it is a force of nature available to us all, an energy and a life force available to us all. And even though it is every day and absolutely within our reach, sometimes we're surprised by how much it can feel like a miracle and like magic.

So, today, I want to talk to you about just how I know that creativity heals and how you can access this power in your life. Whether you consider yourself creative or not, know that you are. Whether you consider yourself an artist or not, this episode is absolutely for you and will absolutely elevate every area of your life.

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.

Hey, you guys. I'm so tempted, I just always want to do The Goonies there and I can't quite pull it off, but I will practice. I need some sort of, you know, like Mr. Rodgers, "Hello, neighbor." I do think of you as friends and closer than neighbors. So, if you have any ideas on intro, it's always a little awkward for me to get started talking to my computer, when really what I'm holding in my mind and heart is that there's very real people on the other end of this conversation.

And speaking of conversation, can I please just give a huge shout-out and cowbell to Pakistan, because it has come to my attention that this podcast has been getting awesome ratings, has been climbing and climbing in the ratings, has been all the way up to number one in Pakistan and held steady at number 11 in the visual arts for a few weeks. I am just blown away by that. That's amazing. I am honored.

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You know, one of my grand intentions, one of my deepest intentions for this work, this podcast and all of my works, is to nurture and nourish and empower and fuel creative powerhouses. Really, my dream is for that to happen all over the world, so it was a little surreal to see that ranking and also climbing in Germany, so thank you, Germany.

Also, I wanted to shout-out to Chloe and Erika who have recently left wonderful reviews. Thank you so much. Not only does that feel awesome to have great reviews, but also, feedback is great. And I do want to make this a conversation. So any time I hear from you in any form, please know that I read that, I take it in, and do my best to create something that's really meaningful for you.

And another one of my dreams is – somebody asked me the other day, “What do you hope comes out of this podcast?” And I said, “Art babies,” was the first thing that came to mind. I'm hoping for lots and lots of art babies. That would be my dream for this podcast, that you're listening to it and you think, yeah I should go do that thing that's been calling me, I am going to go do that thing, I am going to use all these tools, and you know what, I'm creating that thing.

So lots and lots of art babies from *The Art School Podcast* is what I would love. So whether that means books or songs or albums, awards, you know, Broadway musicals, things that you choreograph, movies, film, whether it means you have a dinner party and you've never done that before but always wanted to. Or, it could mean a literal baby, because I will tell you how powerful coaching is; once upon a time, I was coaching someone who was trying to decide if they wanted to have a baby.

And through the process of coaching and their own beautiful discernment process, they decided yes. And it gives me goose bumps. A really amazing thing is, I see this baby every once in a while just in passing in the community and she's a little girl now. I just think, wow, what an honor to do

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this work. So maybe there's some other real human babies that come out of this podcast.

I haven't positioned it as a love and relationship podcast, but all these concepts, I'm telling you what, you can create anything you want with these podcasts and with these concepts and by embracing your creativity, because as I mentioned in the intro, creativity does heal. I thought about getting a quote for that intro, and some come to mind, and I decided not to this time, and here's why; that is something that I just own myself.

I know it. I've lived it. I've healed so much in my own life by tapping creativity. I have such an intimate knowledge of how that works and I've done that work so many times with clients. I thought, I don't need to foot note this, I want to just declare it. And I have stories to share with you too that I hope, if you are putting your toe in the water with your own creativity, that these stories will inspire you to jump in naked and skinny-dip in the ocean of your own brilliance and your creativity and that creativity with a capital C.

Because here's something else I know, and I'm just going to quote myself because I know it to be true from my own life experience and from years coaching, is that having an extraordinary way of being, having an extraordinary psychology helps to create extraordinary art, and even more than that, helps to create an extraordinary life.

So, way of being – I've said this before, but just a quick review – mind, body, spirit, your relationships, all aspects of life, how you are in the world, how you show up in the world, how you engage with yourself as you create something, what your creative process, what that experience of that is like for you, that's all your way of being. Cultivating an extraordinary way of being will help create extraordinary results.

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And now, here's something I really want to point out and make clear; you cannot cultivate an extraordinary way of being by being hard on yourself for those times in life when you're human. And I think, a lot of times, this is a major block that gets put up to being able to access creative energy as a healing energy, because we have these inhuman expectations for how we need to be in the world in order to create something or in order to have an extraordinary way of being.

And when I say, I just want to be clear that when I say extraordinary psychology and extraordinary way of being, in no way in my mind or in my definition does that not include the difficult parts of being human. In no way does that not include, like, a proclivity to depression or a diagnosis of a mental illness. The thing is, you have this human brain and it can be wired certain ways, and you still can know that you can cultivate that miraculous tool you have for a mind to serve you, to serve your highest purpose.

And I believe in spirituality, I am a spiritual person, so I believe you can use the mind still as a tool to serve your soul. And people sometimes assume that because I am in this career as a life coach, I just came wired with a naturally optimistic positive disposition. And the truth is, I've had a lot of tendencies towards depression or anxiety, and that's why I came into this profession and that's why I've gotten so good at it, because I know intimately about human suffering and pain, and sometimes pain that doesn't even seem to have a cause. I can look around and be like, what in my life could have caused this?

So, I want to say that because I know there are those who feel things very intensely in the world. And I don't think we're quite understood yet, this sensitive demographic, and us artists, often tend to be very sensitive and empathic, and we feel things intensely. And so even sometimes I veer away from labeling things as negative or even depression because, sometimes, putting that box around it then prevents us from going in deeper to understand what's really going on there.

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Because when I have suspended language and enter wordlessness to explore what is happening when I'm feeling what before might have been called depression, I find that I'm feeling things very intensely, and sometimes so intensely that my mind kind of wants to shut down so I don't have to experience it quite so intensely.

But the thing is, I don't want to do that. I don't want to shut down the feeling aspect of me, the knowing aspect of me. I want to just increase and strengthen my resilience so that I can feel all things and I can know what it is, the full range of the human experience, as much as I'm able to be intimately acquainted with that. And not only does that help me become a stronger more resilient human being, but that also has helped me tremendously help others.

So, if you are someone that has struggled with feeling down or depression or seasonal affective disorder, don't beat yourself up for that. Don't beat yourself up for being somebody who feels things. Just know that there is another path; that you can go deeper into those gifts. And I'm very motivated and inspired to learn all I can about how best to do that, with wisdom, and safely, and constructively, and healthily. And especially because I'm a mother too of – and I want to do this for my clients, and then it really lights a fire under me when I can see that my children are also very sensitive and feel things very intensely.

And I think, surely, we are on just the cusp of breakthroughs for understanding what it is to be a human who feels things so intensely. We don't want to shut that down, because I think part of what the power of artists and visionaries and creatives and sensitives is going to be is that canary in the mine type approach, where we sense things and we sense things are problems and we need to signal to the world that these are places that need some attention and there's some danger here, but then we don't need to be the canary that dies in a mine. That's where we need a new metaphor.

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I don't have the imagery yet, but I will get there. And in the meantime, I am figuring out – and this is why it's so germane, why I'm talking about this for the topic today, is because we need to not only be sensitive, but then we also need to, with discipline and strength, with that resilience that we've cultivated, we need to turn our creativity to creating a solution. And maybe we turn our creativity on and we find that the solution is not at the level of the problem, but it's something else entirely.

So, like the Albert Einstein quote, "You're not going to find the solution at the level of consciousness that identified the problem." So, that being said, let's go back to creativity heals. I also think creativity heals because it does cultivate that resilience in you. And I'll come back to that resilience more in a future podcast. But today, let me just bring you down the road I went a little bit in thinking about this podcast.

So, let's talk about the word heals for a moment, or health. If you look up the origins and the evolution of that word, you'll see you can trace heal back to, to be made whole. And you can trace health back also to be whole, and also to be holy. So, the word heal has roots in wholeness and in integration and even to be whole and holy.

So, what does this have to do with creativity? Well, now let's leap over for a second and talk about the brain. Roughly speaking, we understand the right side of the brain to be the creative side of the brain. It constructs things, it creates things. It puts things together that haven't been created before. The left side of the brain is more of the deconstructive side in terms of it's analytical. So it breaks things down in order that it can understand it. It's that logic side of the brain and it's very verbal. So this is where a lot of our thoughts are.

And as we know, our thoughts can be a double-edged sword. If we know how to wield it, it can be a sword that we use. It can be a tool that we use. If we don't know what we're doing, there's that metaphor from one of my

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mentors, Brooke Castillo, the unsupervised brain is basically like you have a bunch of toddlers running around up there with butcher knives.

So, the right side of the brain, creative, puts things together, the left side of the brain deconstructs, analyzes, it's where we have our thoughts. So we can either create good things with those thoughts, or we can create suffering. It's also where a lot of our problem-solving is done.

So, how does this relate to healing? Well, right side of the brain, think about that, creates, puts things together, integrates, it makes whole. So, to put things together, it takes parts of things, oftentimes parts of things that are seemingly unrelated, especially to the left side, the logical side of the brain, and it puts things together. It makes them whole.

So the right side of the brain is creating, it's a side of the brain we want to lean into for creating wholeness, for creating integration and healing. And another aspect of this side of the brain is it often is characterized by the absence of language and words. So, if you think about meditation traditions, that space of wordlessness.

So, all of these things then are very characteristic of what happens when you enter flow. People talk about there's the quietness, that self-forgetting. You're not analyzing things but you're making leaps and making assumptions, putting things together that logic wouldn't necessarily ordinarily do. And here too is where I'm going to come back around to quoting myself, that it is in this space where healing happens.

The left side of the brain wants to know how or why, and I can point to some things, like in retrospect, to explain how it happened. But more for today, I want to just point out the observation that it does happen, that I've seen creativity heal my own life and heal other's lives over and over again, and that you can absolutely cultivate that way of being where you enter that creative state.

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The other thing I really wanted to drive home in this podcast is the relationship between intuition and creativity. Whether they are the same thing or not, I am not entirely sure, but they definitely work well together, and here's one way in which I think they are great friends and allies to each other and to you. Your intuition will lead you to a creativity that helps to heal you. So, let me say that again; quoting myself, but I swear it's the truth that I have lived and I have seen with so many of my clients; intuition will lead you to the creativity that heals you.

Again, as I said in the intro too, I really think that, as an art form, creativity is an art form that heals and it can also be a healing art form. So how can you use your intuition to lead you to the creativity that heals you? And when I say heals you, I'm not saying that you're broken. I'm just that if there's something that's been whispering to you, a call, it could be a vision of publishing a book. It could be just that you keep seeing an ad come up on your Facebook for, like, a local painting class or a cooking class and you keep thinking about that over and over again. It could be, like, I have this one client, he's so awesome, he pointed out the other day, because his energy was kind of flagging, just something piqued my intuition and I said, "What are you doing for fun or for joy, or what would you love to do?"

He's a CEO of a company and he also has had this lifelong dream of being a truck driver. And when he talks about trucks, he knows so much about trucks, and they're these big shiny owner-operator trucks. He's got the enthusiasm and the energy and the joy of a little boy when he talks about these and it just lights him up. The creativity doesn't necessarily have to look like an art form, but for him, that is being creative in life to think about, "What can I do about that? That keeps coming up for me. I love these trucks. What am I doing about that?"

So, for him, the creative act is he's going to go out and he's going to find a way to find an owner-operator who has one of the big shiny trucks that he loves, the beautiful ones, who might consider letting him ride cross-country

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with him if he pays him, like for an adventure. Like, that is an amazing creative act. That's a creative life being lived.

So, notice, if your intuition keeps saying do this, do this, do this – I've so many stories and so little time to tell you about all the by-products that come from this. But even just in this last version of *The Art School*, I've had three different people say, "Have you ever had it happen that people lose weight when they're not even intending to and they're doing this work?" And yes, so I think, collectively, in terms of all the things we're creating in *Art School*, like people are losing 10 pounds, 16 pounds, that wasn't even on people's agenda or radar, we'd never discussed that at all.

But it's just when you finally are attending to that thing that has been calling you and you get your hands in there and your heart in there and you're pouring your life and giving yourself the attention, and that part of yourself attention that it's been so starved for, you then feel more complete and you feel more satisfied and you don't go looking to take the edge off or numb that uncomfortable feeling, that there's something you want to be attending to but you're not by just numbing it out and trying to drown it out in other areas of your life.

I know, for my own life, the first time I took – I've taken one formal painting class, an oil painting class. I took it at the University of Notre Dame. I audited it and there was something – I almost had to leave the studio space when we did the part where we built our own frames and stretchers and we were using the power tools in the basement of the art school. I had this feeling like my heart was going to explode. Like, it felt so full and it was feeling so happy and satisfied that I was afraid it was going to shake right out of my body and I would have a seizure.

It was inexplicable, the physical reaction I had to building a simple stretcher. And when just having my hands on wood and the power tools, because it was shortly after we moved here, shortly after I made the

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commitment to go all in on my creative career and that I was leaving my legal career. There was something about that day that was so healing.

There was this other time when I finally committed to painting big, which was something I'd been longing to do for so long but I'd been withholding from myself because I thought I needed to, "Earn it," earn my way there to big paintings and big paint on big canvasses. And one day, I just decided, no, no waiting, I'm pulling that in right now and I'm giving that to myself right now.

The problem was, I did not have an easel big enough, so I thought, what's my solution? Well, I can drill big screws into the wall. And I was using a corner room for that and so I got out a power drill and I screwed these big bolts onto the wall, and oh my gosh, that felt like a healing. That felt like some block within me being released and dissolving and like I was un-damning myself and I just had tears that gushed from my eyes. I wasn't even really crying, it was just this release of something. That felt so amazing that day, putting the bolts in the wall.

My husband must have heard the power drill, because he opened the door and looked in, and I can still remember the look on his face, but god bless him, he just closed the door and just walked out. And I hung my big canvas on the wall. And that was another, like allowing myself to paint that big and I painted with my hands and I could feel shifts in my body. That's something I want to point out, is that sometimes we do this inner work of coaching in order to get to the place where we can do our creativity more freely, but then other times, we just have to move and act in spite of the fear, with the fear right alongside us.

I drilled the bolts into the wall, I paid for the huge canvass. I paid for all the big paint. I painted with my hands. I got it all over the wall too. Like, with my fear and all my doubts right there, but that there was something then visceral about what happened for me on the inside. Something shifted in

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every one of those moments, and I knew something would always be different, and also that there was no going back in the best sort of ways. And I have no other better way of describing it, other than saying it just felt like a miracle and it felt like magic and it felt like so much fun.

And that is the other thing I wanted to make sure to point out to you today is to not underestimate that creativity, whatever your intuition is leading you to – like for my client riding in that big beautiful truck. There was such fun and joy and delight in that and quickly his mind tried to shut it down, like I can't do that, what's the point of that? And that's that left brain coming back in. So lean into the right side and there's mystery there and there's mystery in wisdom there and there's wisdom that doesn't make sense to that left side, but it is, I swear, so healing and so powerful.

One of my coaches and mentors, and I'm in her mastermind right now, is Susan Hyatt. And she has this remarkable concept that I love and she lives it and I've seen it bear fruit in my own life, and that is fun is a business strategy. And the more fun I have, the more money I make. And I have absolutely found that to be true.

This last year, I have cut way down on my work hours and I have way increased my fun, and I have tripled what I have made in other years and have been so much more creative and so much more productive. So, for those of you who are reluctant to embrace fun and intuition and creativity, and your left brain is very dominant, I'm speaking to that one right now saying it actually is also a very good business strategy.

So, what's the explanation for all this? How does this happen and why? To be entirely honest, I think part of it is a mystery and ineffable. And there are parts of it too that I am entirely willing to speak to, and confidently so, because again, this is from my own experience and it is born out over and over again, client by client, and my confidence in this has just increased, gone through the roof exponentially, by having run *The Art School* two

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times and doing this work with two different communities of people all at once.

And I will say that not only am I more sure than ever that creativity heals, but I'm also willing to say that I think that there is very powerful a way that community compounds that healing effect, that just as limited thinking can be like a virus and a virus can be contagious in a group, health and creativity and wellness and abundance and people rising and meeting their goals and rising over and over again in the face of challenges and then triumphing, that is equally as infectious, and even more so in that when one person in the group is doing that is persisting and then gets a success and gets knocked down and persists again and everyone's cheering, the whole group rises. And that builds and there's a momentum that's created.

That's one way I've seen it bear out. And then the other thing that I believe is going on is that creativity changes you. There is an energy when you engage in a creative act, you are changed. And the thing is, you're required to be a human in the world, interacting with matter and with the material world. And that requires that you exert some power. And if you had been feeling helpless or a despairing form of helplessness in any area of your life and then you take an action and engage in the material world and then you see something as a result of that action, do not underestimate what an infusion of power and life that is to your psyche and your system.

And there's something else too that – this is my belief – is going on is that I sense and understand creativity to be not this idea and not a nice concept. I think it is a very real force. I call it creativity with a capital C. It's a life energy that's available to all of us and that we all can tap into. Again, my spiritual beliefs, take it or leave it, but I think creative energy is love energy and that a creator kind of energy and in a source of all things that is kind of energy, as in a life-giving force and energy, and that when you are a creative, you are tapping into that force which creates and has created all of life and all of things.

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It's a force so much bigger than yourself, which then to me makes complete sense that while you are in the throes of it in the most beautiful way, to be overtaken by something that you have this feeling of being part of something greater than yourself. It's a remembering of, oh I'm not individuated after all, I'm not separate from all things after all.

I am a part of all things that is, and so that thing, when you're in your small self that seems so terrifying, which is annihilation and loss of distinction of self and identity, when you're in creativity, when you're in that wordless space and you're in that joy and I'm making it sound big and mystical, but I tell you what, you can stack a pile of wood and feel this way. I've never directed a symphony, but I'm sure that might feel like the same wordless at one with all that is way as well.

So, no matter where you are and what you do, it's not outside of your reach. And I have something coming up in a bit; a practice that I'm going to share with you that accessible to everyone. But I do think it's moving into that wordless space where then we, like, lose our small self and we realize we are part of something so much bigger. And it is that so much bigger than our small self energy moving through us that is powerful, healing energy. And that is anything anyone can tap into any day of the week with the simplest tools like a pencil and paper. And I'm going to tell you about that in just a second.

And I think too, this must have been the phenomenon that Albert, my boyfriend, Einstein was talking about when he talked about, you know, "You cannot solve a problem from the same level of consciousness that created it." Because maybe you've had this dream too – I've had this dream before too where if there was something I was struggling with in my life, like really deeply troubled by it and then I would have this dream where it was like, why did I ever think that was a problem? That is so not a problem.

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And I would have this dream over and over again and I'm like, well that's frustrating, when I woke up. I would think, well that's frustrating, because it felt so amazing to suddenly realize that wasn't even a problem and now here it is, a problem again. The dream did not tell me how to solve it. But then once what I realized finally, I caught on to what the dream was saying, and the dream was saying your problem is that you're making it a problem. Go to that space where there are no problems, it's not a problem, and also, bonus, you might then be in a space where you receive an idea about how to solve that actually small problem that you're making into a mountain in your life.

So creativity heals because it requires you to do something, which requires you can't do without some part of you seeing, oh yes, I can act and I am a powerful actor. You cannot be creative and disempowered at the same time. You cannot be creative and in survival mode at the same time. And if you think about it, survival mode and disempowerment have a lot in common. Very near term, very problem-focused, very near sighted.

And creativity and empowerment, they seem like once you need results in order to feel the freedom in order to create and feel free but it's actually doing the creative thing that's going to help you realize the limitlessness of your potential and the fundamental fact that you are always free. It's a thought away. It's a creative act away.

So the other reason again, just circling back around to why I believe creativity is healing is because I believe it's the energy, that capital C of divine creativity, of aligning with the creative force. It's that force that makes the green shoot grow, which also reminds me of that other phrase about how every blade of grass has angels leaning over it, whispering, "Grow, grow," which is also another way I like to kind of envision this podcast is you have your creativity that's wanting to grow and me talking to you is - you should just know there is someone in the world that really cares about

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your creative dream growing. And it's a message from the universe, it's just coming to you through me, via this podcast.

The last thing I wanted to tell you today before I get on the coach with me segment is I talk about the creative revolution and there are - and revolution being in parenthesis because this is also about your evolution. Again, I don't ever want to give you the impression that this should feel awesome all of the time. A lot of times healing doesn't. A lot of times healing takes us to face the most difficult things in our life.

But here again is where creativity can help you because if you know you can handle anything and that you can create a solution for yourself or out in the world, that gives you a resilience to keep going. You are no longer avoiding, you are no longer reacting or acting by default. You have the courage to be creative.

And again, it doesn't always feel awesome, but the other energy I want you to lean into to be able to lean into when you're being creative, it's not all about inspiration all the time and I love inspiration as much as the next person. Sometimes, your creativity and your healing creativity is about leaning into a decision and leaning into decision every day, otherwise known as commitment.

Because commitment can be a devotional practice. Commitment can be a loving practice. And I was thinking of that myself just recently. I mentioned, well when this podcast comes out it will be March 28th, which is when my new series, the Victory series will come out. And I was feeling - I was kind of having a hard week and I'm like, gosh, I want to be feeling these paintings in a different way.

So I pulled back. I'm like, what's going on here? And I realized with the help of my daughter's kindergarten assignment, because I had to go through five years of photographs to find some for her kindergarten project, and I

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saw all the pictures of me attending to me kids through all their pacifier, toddler years, some of them - all three of them in diapers and with pacifiers all at once.

And I thought, that's right, I love them so much, I was committed to all the sleepless night, all the diaper changes, all the sickness, including when I felt sick, was sick, and sleep deprived myself, and that that was also love. And that that was also a devotional practice because I am committed to them and I am committed to raising them, and that I can use that same sort of commitment, love energy to sustain me through periods of my art where I'm like, oh gosh, where is the inspiration? Where is the bliss?

I'm like, no, this must be the part of my journey where I practice and I cultivate commitment and love by showing up for myself and believing in my work, thinking greater than I am sometimes feeling and knowing that that's part of creating my beautiful life that I have envisioned for myself.

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 really take this information, make some art babies please with this information, show me pictures, and lean in and work with me and coach with me. So this is actually the spring equinox when I'm recording this, even though it won't come out until next week.

It's March 20th when I'm recording this, so spring is a wonderful time to celebrate creativity. I don't know a time that's not, but I particularly like to use this seminal time of the year as a way to mark the letting go of one thing and then the allowing and the birth of another. So the death of winter and now what are we planting, what are we growing, and what are we intending. And also, if it's been a fallow period for you, where it feels like things haven't been happening, at least on the surface, here is the time when you can begin to nurture things and have them sprout.

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So along those lines, I want to just remind you of the resource that's available in the podcast, about writing the script about who you want to become. There is a great resource and worksheets for your creative scripting there and that whole podcast is very much aligned with the energy of this time of year about who you are becoming. And some people have asked me, isn't that inauthentic?

And short answer, no because it's about letting go of what is not you to allow the truest most fullest expression of you to come through to allow what is actually most natural for you and of you to come through because even if it's most natural to us, if we have spent a lifetime being conditioned otherwise, it can feel unnatural even though it's not. It's just unfamiliar. So please use those resources.

The other tool and practice I wanted to share with you today comes from my creative fairy godmother Julia Cameron in her book, *The Sound of Paper*. So she's got a practice called good husbandry. It's essentially about caring for yourself and self-care for creatives, and it aligns very much with the creative scripting exercise that I've given you before.

And I think too it's a beautiful way to ease into creativity, to lean into that right side of your brain and take action, empowered action in the world, and that will engage you with the kind of creativity that then heals you. It's both from the inside out and then it's from the outside in. It's this synergistic dance where then you just gain momentum and feel healthier and stronger in all areas of your life.

So here is what she calls an exercise - she calls filling in a form. It's under a section called good husbandry. She wants you to list three tiny benevolent changes you would make in the following areas. So many a listin these areas. Three tiny benevolent changes you would make in your bathroom, your bedroom, your living room, your kitchen, your car, your wardrobe, from the shoulders to the top of the head, your wardrobe from the shoulders to

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the waist, your wardrobe from the waist to the knees, and your wardrobe from knees to floor.

So I've done variations on this kind of exercise of making small and benevolent shifts in your external environment or your physical appearance, your style with clients and it's always a favorite and people are always amazed at what these small shifts, the energy that that infuses their life with. Don't just listen to that. Please do that. And if you do do that, I would love to hear about what your results are and what your experience is.

And the next exercise I have for you, I'm also going to use another of Julia Cameron's quotes to introduce it because it's very on point for this. "The goal is to connect to a world outside of us, to lose the obsessive self-focus of self-exploration and simply explore. One quickly notes that when the mind is on other, the self often comes into far more accurate focus."

So I may have shared that one before, but it's alright because it's a great one and again, very appropriate for this next exercise, which is something that I call heart tracing. This, all you need is a piece of paper and maybe a stack of it, preferably, and a journal, something to draw from life or a photograph and a pencil or a pen, and I like to use a timer too.

So this - you need no drawing skills whatsoever. If you can write your name, I promise you, you can do this exercise. It's a meditative drawing exercise that I use both to develop my ability to really see and to keep my hand warm and my eyes warm, but also because it's an amazing meditation for slipping into that wordless space and slipping into that right side of the brain and for cultivating that way of being where you're being creative but sans judgment, sans that incessant inner critic voice.

And this is all that it is. So for instance, I would take a bouquet of flowers or maybe a single flower or a photograph and I would put it in front of me and

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I'd set a timer for five minutes, and for those five minutes, my first intention is just to look at the thing in front of me and in the words of Degas, to truly see is to forget the name of that what you see.

So for instance, when I am seeing a flower, I'm not seeing oh there's a daisy and there's a rose and there's a tulip. I'm seeing line down, line up, a little curve in, it goes this way, it goes that way, and now there's a little spike. Sometimes I do this exercise where I don't look at the paper at all because the point is not to make a realistic rendering. The point is to really see, to forget that what you're seeing so that you can really see and just to allow your eye to take it in and I feel like it filters through your heart and then my hand just traces what my eye and my heart are taking in without judging it.

And one way we semi judge things is by labeling it and calling it a flower, calling it a daisy. But when you just forget that, when you just go by the line goes a little bit here and it goes a little bit down and it goes a little around, I know I'm in a good space creatively when that's kind of a sophisticated as the words in my head become. In, out, down this way, a little bit over that way. It's just a very close paying attention and exploring of the world I see in front of me.

And the other thing I will just do, I will not have music on and I will have it be quiet so that I'm aware of the judging voices that want to come in and be like, that is a terrible drawing because that's not the purpose. The purpose is just to see and just to let me eye, my heart, my hand be coordinated and trace. So what I'm trying to develop there too, it's almost like the filter is not quite the right word, but it's almost this ability to bypass that part of my brain that thinks it needs to think about everything and judge everything every two seconds.

So my only job is eyes see, feel it in my heart, goes to my hands, hands on the page, hand moves. And judgment is absolutely - has no place in this

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exercise at all. So I'll do a drawing for five minutes and then maybe I'll tell myself I'm going to do this, I'm going to do six drawings, or I'm going to do an hour of these. And it is like a meditation and it is a very heart filling meditation because what I stumbled into with this is that I discovered you can't sit with something like this and pay attention to it. You can't connect to something outside of yourself like this and just be present with its essence and just try to trace its essence without thinking on the page, without falling in love with the world outside of you.

So it's this kind of crazy phenomenon where I'd be drawing trees or flowers and I'd feel this great affection all of a sudden for a pinecone. But then you do this with people and I think if you draw people, whether from photographs or from life, it's impossible to just sit with something and not judge it, sit with a person and not judge and to just draw and not be blown away with love for just through the sheer act of paying attention in this way to the essence of whatever you're sitting with.

So that's my exercise called heart tracing. And it is a wonderful meditation for slipping into that right side of the brain, which to me also feels like - I call it creature mode. It's my flow mode, it's what I have felt too as an athlete, that part of me that knows so much without having to think so much. So those are the two exercises I wanted to share with you today and also remind you to look back to that exercise on creative scripting.

And to celebrate the spring equinox, this is the last thing. So there's really like, three or four things I had. Like I said, art babies. Spring is the time of year for babies. So if you have something that's been calling to you, entertain it for a while. What if I did do that? And then I really am hoping and intending that some of you take the next step and do the thing.

If you do nothing else actually from this podcast, take the next step. Enroll in the course, call somebody about it, whatever you need to do. And also if you want to email me to say hey I'm going to do this thing, I just need to let

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somebody in the universe know, I would love to hear from you. You can email me at leah@leahcb.com.

So I would love to hear from you and I'm just going to set the intention right now. This spring, we're planting lots of seeds, lots of beginnings, and however many months from now that gestation period is, I'm hoping to get pictures of your plays, your books, your paintings, whatever is calling to you from your creative heart and spirit.

Thank you so much for listening to this episode of *The Art School Podcast*. I love knowing that you are out there and listening and I love it, love it, love it when I hear from you, whether that's on a review or you email me. So I would love it if you would take the time to leave a review, also to share this podcast because I would love to have this mission of empowering creative powerhouses around the world spread. You can help me do that.

So thank you so very much in advance. Also, I wanted to let you know that coming up this spring, I will have a couple openings for private clients. I only take a handful of private clients a year and the rest of my practice I really focus on Art School and my Art School clients and my own creative practice because I want to remain in integrity and to be not somebody teaching about creativity but somebody who is living the creative life and then has things to offer from that place.

So I do have a couple openings coming up for private clients, so if you're interested in that, you can email me at leah@leahcb.com and my assistant and I will talk to you about further details and we can set up a discovery consult to see if I'm the right fit for your big creative dream, for your next greatest version of yourself and your own creative revolution.

So the closing bookend thought I have for you today is a question. If you have a creative dream calling to you, if you knew it could turn out

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amazingly, would you do it? What would you do? When would you do it?
And when will you get started?

Thank you so much everyone for joining me. I can't wait to talk to you next week and in the meantime, have a beautiful week.