

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors



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Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

The artist, Pink, in her song Perfect sings, “Change the voices in your head. Make them like you instead.” Changing our inner dialogue, elevating our inner dialogue so that it is one that’s marked by great self-respect, compassion, and love for ourselves and others is an essential part of creating the extraordinary way of being that creates extraordinary results in your life.

And today, I have this really fun, fascinating, and very powerful tool, the imaginary board of directors, that’s going to help you change those voices in your head so that not only do they like you, but they become truly your biggest fans.

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.

Happy May, everybody. Happy May. When you were a kid, did you ever do or celebrate May Day? Well we would make all these little cups, Styrofoam cups with popcorn or candies and peanuts and stuff in them, back before we were worried about allergies all the time anyway, and you’d put those little felt loops over them or those fuzzy – I can’t think of the name now.

But you’d make little baskets and then drop them off randomly – not randomly, but at neighbors’ homes or friends’ homes, kind of anonymously. Or we’d gather up really tiny bouquets of those violets that grow out in the yard or bluebells and put them in soup can vases on people’s doorsteps. And I have always felt that May should be this month where we celebrate like that all month long.

It’s a month of creation and rebirth and, in this hemisphere, in this part of the world anyway, we’re celebrating springtime. It’s a month that celebrates

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

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

the feminine and the divine feminine. And I just want to make it really intentional this month to celebrate that.

My podcast for this month, I am creating with that celebration theme in mind and with a gift in mind, like how can I help you to really celebrate this month and also so that you have the best summer ever, if you are in this part of the world. So I also know we have listeners, hello New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong. So whatever season it is there too, you're going to celebrate right along with us.

So, in-keeping with that, I have special episodes planned for this month and I also will be talking about this in my newsletter. So if you're not on my newsletter list, you can go over to my website www.leahcb.com and just share your email address. I do not send too much, trust me. But I really send meaningful things.

So I've got some great posts and surprises planned for this month, and also, great news here, May 1st, so you're hearing this a week later, but on May 1st, we signed the contract with a builder. So we will be getting the permits and breaking ground on our house soon. So everything is designed, it's beautiful. I'm so excited. I have loved this design process and I'm looking forward to the rest of it as the rest of these months unfold.

So I'll also be sharing some – if you love that sort of thing as I do – design and building and homes, it's architecture, interior décor, art, all of that, I just think it's so fun. So I'll be sharing some behind the scenes pictures of that, and it also too just always revs up my mind for the great metaphors there are in any sort of creative process; building a home, building a business, raising a family, building a career as an entrepreneur, creating art.

There are so many creative metaphors that span across all of those contexts. So that's really got my juices flowing and my imagination off and running.

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

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

So before I get started with today's podcast, I wanted to give a shout-out to somebody whose handle on iTunes is Terrisunflowery, because she just left the most sunflowery lovely review and says that she loves the podcast, and that in particular she loves the lean in section. So thank you so much, Terri and everyone who has left a review. And, Terri, if you love the lean in part, you're going to love today because today's podcast is going to be very heavy on the lean in workshop part.

We have been talking the last few weeks about cultivating your creative ecosystem, we've talked about creating that extraordinary intentional creative community. I've been telling you about *The Art School*, which is a living example of that. And today is our last class, everybody, and it is a blessing and a gift to have coaching because I could be very sad about this being our last class, and there's been so much to be grateful for and so much to celebrate with these incredible gifted talented people who are doing incredible things, writing books, finishing books, building their careers, making art, making money, making a lot more money, carving new paths, being thought leaders.

Here's where my self-coaching was this week and this is why I get caught up on my words a little bit, because I realized, like, why do I have this underlying tension about this? This is really just something I should be so proud and thankful and grateful, and I am. And then once I did do my deep dive into my journaling and self-coaching, I realized that I thought, oh my gosh, this was too early to peak.

This has been so extraordinary, how am I ever going to accomplish this again and find these kinds of people again and how is it ever going to measure up again? And then I realized, every experience is going to be uniquely its own and need not be compared, and that also I learn so much from every single session with an individual, from every single class that I teach, from every single workshop in which the participants contribute.

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

I learn so much from them, my coaching only gets better and better and they only get better and better in terms of the clarity of their questions and really the extraordinariness of their mindset, and then also how their goals elevate as they kind of settle into their power. So don't worry, I blew that thought out of the water. It's going to be, how good am I willing to let it get? And it can only get better and better.

And that is also not a comparison because this group has been so extraordinary and special and I've been really grateful. And if you want to be part of that next group, which is also going to be extraordinary and special in its own very unique individual manifestation and expression of that, we are already enrolling for the fall. Both classes have limited availability.

I have probably five more spots in the masterclass, and in the open class, we still have quite a few openings. So if you're interested in that, check out my website or sign up for a discovery consult and you can start thinking about *Art School* fall 2019.

So, into today's topic – because we have been talking so much about cultivating that creative ecosystem and your community, and if you remember from my prior episodes when I've mentioned this idea that you are the average of the five people that you wares with the most, that Jim Rohn quote, well today, I want to expound on that.

And I'm so excited to share this tool with you. As I mentioned in the intro, it is so fun. It is fascinating, and if you use it and really get into it, it is quite revolutionary and profound. So this is the concept of the imaginary board of directors. And I first learned this concept when I read, years ago, that one of those seminal self-help books – some of the language is a little archaic – Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*.

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

And he talked in there about this tool that he used called the imaginary board of directors, where essentially in his mind he has a board of directors, and certain people fill those posts. So I think that book was written in 1912, I'm not sure, I'll have to check. So at that time, he had, on his board of directors, for example, Abraham Lincoln or Andrew Carnegie.

And so, in his book, he shared about how he would hold these meetings with his board of directors in his mind about life, about his questions in life when he was thinking through concepts in his own business, in his work and in his writing. He would consult these great minds and great leaders who were on his board of directors.

And then he talked about how an interesting thing that kind of scared him at first started to happen after a while where it would seem that they would talk back spontaneously. He was no longer feeling that he had to expend so much effort in imagining what they would think, but it was more that he was listening and Abe Lincoln was sitting across from him just speaking.

So, this is a concept that I love, and not only because yes, I was one of those children with imaginary friends. So maybe I've had a squad or a team ever since then. But now I love it for all of my clients. I use it for my clients who are CEOs and running multi-million-dollar operations. And I use it for my artist clients. I use it for entrepreneurs who are just starting out.

And this is why; because we know that our inner dialogue drives so much of our success or our failure in life, and a lot of our inner dialogue is up there not because we have intentionally chosen the thoughts, but we've just let our mind be open to the influence of whoever and whatever in our world, including people that we really love and care about or who were authority figures in our life.

But then, once you become adult, maybe you haven't reexamined who if behind the voice that speaks in your head, or who are the people behind

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

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

the voices that are speaking in your head. So what I want to do today is jump right into the coach with me segment. So maybe listen through to this once and then come back and do this in earnest.

Don't just think through it. Really do these physical aspects and think through this and then return to it in your imagination over and over again and return to writing about it and revisiting it over and over again. So this is the portion of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to lean in and really take this information and make it transformational. I want you to coach with me.

So, this is what we're going to do. When I do this exercise in *The Art School*, we start by first seeing who is on our current board of directors. So, when you're about to make any decision in your life, whether it's you go to an event and you're going to pick out one outfit but then you hear the voices of the people who you're going to see that night and they're saying, well that's a little racy for a professional event or a fundraiser, or red lipstick, really, to the school PTA meeting? You hear the voices of the other moms.

That kind of decision, just about what you're going to wear, or it could be a decision about your business, it could be a decision about when you're painting, do you have the voice of a mentor from way back who was really hard on you? Is it the voice of – maybe you've never painted since fourth grade when your art teacher told you, actually, Sally, give it up because look at Ben over here, Ben has got natural drawing skills, you not so much.

So I want you to take a moment here and think about the big areas of your life, the things that you really want to do, those big dreams. And then also think about daily things where you feel yourself holding back or you feel yourself not expressing yourself as uniquely or fully or with just as much enjoyment and ease and relaxation as you could, and who is speaking to you in that moment? And dig around a little bit.

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

I want you to make a list of who those people are, that whenever you think about stepping out in a bigger way, taking a risk – again, it can be about what you wear or it could be about investing a big chunk of change in the next phase of your life, like, whose voice do you hear? Write those people down.

And now, the next question I want you to ask yourself is, are those people living the life that you envision for yourself when you're letting yourself dream as big as possible, when you're allowing yourself to embrace this idea of yes it can be that good? Do those people embody living from this place where they are walking examples of being an extraordinary way of being and creating extraordinary results? Are they living examples of that? Are they living examples of how you want to be in the world?

And again, this is not from a place of judging them. And there might be certain things about them that you decide, you know what, in this one area, I love how great she is, you know, in conversation. She's a great listener, or she's got great style, or wow, she is just a boss when it comes to her career, I really admire that, or him, he's a great father. Like, there might be aspects of that, so it's not about throwing the baby out with the bathwater or judging or condemning anyone, but just looking in general, this voice that's controlling so much of your life and either directing or inhibiting so much of your life, is that voice coming from a source that you want to emulate?

So just think about that and answer that, and then here's what we're going to do. What I have found is that most people really need to clear house of their board of directors. You think about a lot of times when a company has been taken over, they clear out a lot of the prior leadership and management. So oftentimes, on this imaginary board of directors, you do have to clear house.

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

And let me preface that by saying, once again, this is not a condemnation or an act of hostility or judgment or rejection to anyone that you love or care about in your life. It's just that, let's say for instance if you are an artist who also has great financial goals and wants to continue her career and yet your neighbor down the street who is also a dear friend is sitting on your board of directors and saying, oh I don't know, like, can't you just be grateful? Being a mom, we have great kids. That is not the best person to have on your board.

You then need somebody on your board, like me for instance, who is going to say, you can be a mom, you can be an amazing mom and an amazing artist and an amazing mother. It could be the best thing you do ever for your children and I'm not going to paint you this Pollyannaish picture and say, put on some rose-colored glasses. I'm going to tell you how you can do it. you can do it.

So you don't need to have me be on your board, but that kind of energy, somebody who is not going to help you argue for your limitations. However, you do want people on your board that are going to challenge you in constructive positive ways. So here is one suggestion I have my clients when it comes to now selecting their new board of directors, once they've cleared out anybody that is really not an extraordinary match and in alignment with where they want to go, in very high vibration.

You want a high caliber board. And again, that doesn't necessarily mean that these are famous people, not at all, but just the highest quality individual. They might be famous. They might be uber rich. It might be, you know, your next-door neighbor who is 85 and he's just wise and gentle and has so much wisdom for you. But just be intentional about that energy that you put on the board because the caliber of that conversation that you're imagining among those people and the caliber of the wisdom and also just the good energy that they would send to you, you want to raise your standards for yourself and have it be as high as possible.

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

Have people on that board who are wild about you and wild about your dreams, even if you also intentionally put people there who are going to challenge you. So, that's coming back to this next guideline suggestion I have is that you choose some people for your board that are both what I call the dark shadow and the golden shadow.

And I'll do a podcast in the future more in depth about shadow work, but suffice it to say for today that a dark shadow could be somebody that really grabs your attention. You find yourself maybe really irritated by them, maybe you don't like them, but you find yourself, like, they captivate you for some reason. Those are important people to pay attention to. They have so much to teach you.

So, putting someone on your board, let's say you're a writer and there is an author out there who just makes you want to come out of your skin every time you see their book on the shelf or their title on another bestseller list. So whether it's jealousy or whether you think that they don't deserve to be there, that could be a very good person for your board because, I promise you, if they captivate your attention and take up that much of your emotional real estate already, they've got something to teach you. So they might be a great person to have on that board, a-la Abraham Lincoln's team of rivals.

You don't want people that are always just going to affirm and question. And see how I'm talking about these individuals as if they're not imaginary but real, because this is how I want you to think of this conversation. It's a real tool and it is directing your mind to think in higher and higher and more focused ways, more productive ways.

So then also choose some golden shadow or a golden shadow representative, and that could be somebody who is living your dream and you just love what they're doing, you love the way in which they're doing it. You could also have people on your board like that. The next suggestion

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

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

that I have for people is that they notice in their mind currently what the shape and the layout of the table is.

So just notice what that is for you because it says a lot maybe about how you feel about being an authority in your life and how you feel in conversation with other remarkable individuals who could arguably be said to be authorities. Because the great opportunity with the imaginary board of directors' exercise is to elevate your own seat at that table.

And one suggestion, and I'll trust you to trust your own deepest wisdom on this, but one suggestion I make to my clients and I'd invite you to consider as well is that you imagine a table that's round and flat, because a lot of my clients go into this exercise and they put amazing people around the table, but they forget to give themselves a seat, which is really telling and a great inroad and an opportunity for growth and coaching. Or they imagine their conversations and they feel like the very junior person, or even a kid, or they're fawning over these people.

So notice that, notice what your first orientation is to these people that you really admire and respect and would love to have advise you on some of the greatest aspects, the most significant decision, but then also the small things, like should I wear lipstick to the PTA meeting?

Now, having that table round and flat then means that you are an equal and a peer with these people. So, for example, recently Michelle Obama is at many of my clients' imaginary board of directors, and understandably so. She is amazing. And an important shift for this client was, as we were talking about her and why this woman so admires Michelle, it was clear that in her conversation, she wasn't thinking of herself as a peer. She was thinking of herself as just grateful to be in Michelle's presence.

So I want to challenge you to think of, like, how would you show up and how do you ask questions and how would you listen and how would you

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

also think of yourself as even possibly contributing to this other person as an equal, as a peer? Because we all are. We all are humans, equally dignified.

We all have something to contribute. And just doing this imaginary exercise is a way of practicing that. It's like in yoga, you practice on the mat so you can practice out in life. So in this example, you're practicing thinking of yourself as neither higher nor lower than anyone, but as a peer, as an equal, as somebody who doesn't have to be the guru but who also has a seat at the table and can contribute.

So, I have a few more suggestions for how to use this exercise to really enhance your life and help you cultivate that extraordinary way of being from the inside out, that's going to help you get those extraordinary results. So, my next specific instruction is that you read the bios of these people so that you become very familiar with them and then do this as a meditation.

Meditation means to become familiar with, so in this meditation, it's like a visualization where you're watching a movie, you're asking these people specific questions like, should I do a launch this summer if my goal is two million in a year in the next three years, or should I focus on my novel? Ask them specific questions, listen, try it in your journal as well. Maybe you're somebody for whom writing helps you tap into your imagination and intuition better because I do think this is a way of elevating your ability to tap into your own deepest wisdom via imagining what these other wise and wonderful human beings would say.

Also, you can write letters back and forth is another technique that some of my clients love, asking again for specific advice. And you also might have like a shifting board of directors for different projects. So, for example, one I have is Robert Redford and Reese Witherspoon are on my board of directors for writing my novel, which I envision being on screen someday too.

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

And here is why I mention that and here is the power in this work. If I'm talking to them, I'm realizing, if I am not just playing a game, but if I'm thinking, okay tomorrow I'm meeting with Robert and Reese and they're going to ask me what I'm working on, that completely changes my orientation to my work.

It's not, oh this is just something I'm doing and no one may ever look at it. I'm thinking that these are powerhouses and I really need to bring my best game and I really need to make the best use of their time. And they have these remarkable and very varied careers, and so my questions need to be on point. And I also want to show my best side.

So it helps me, when I go back to the page, I'm a different thinker. My game is at a different level. So I would invite you to try that as well. In other areas of my life, like, I love Chip and Joanna Gaines; the Fixer Uppers. I love the dynamic between the husband and wife. I love the family. I love before and after transformations, and since we started this podcast talking about how I'm so excited to build our farmhouse, I will just say that is one of my guilty pleasures, Fixer Upper.

But I also like their dynamic. They are a family, as a unit that's a very creative family and so in the spotlight now that, for me, it helps me think about ways in which my husband and I can work well together as a team and the ways that we bring different strengths to creative projects and the ways in which he and I are growing in our own careers and together and along with our family. It doesn't have to be something that takes away from our family, but we can include our family as they seem to work really well together as a tribe. So they're on my family board of directors.

The poet Denise Levertov is a beloved mentor of mine, even though I've never met her and even though she's long gone, she is one of my poetry and writing and creative mentors.

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

Ashley Longshore is one of my artistic and creative entrepreneur directors. She tells me just to get back to work and to love doing it and get out of my own way. So she's a force of nature on that board of directors.

So, like I said, this is a fun exercise. This is fascinating, and it is really creatively empowering because we want to say – you might want to say – it's delusional. But the thing is, we open our minds to like whatever in the world and let whatever in. You can watch any kind of TV. We are so not vigilant about whose thoughts and opinions are able to take a seat at the table in our mind, and so this is a way of taking your power back, cleaning house, and being very intentional about who does have a seat at my table, who does get to help me decide and think about how to know who I am and do it on purpose?

So if you were looking for help and this feeling that you're supported in not doing it alone, this is one where you can do that. If you're looking to change the creative script in your life, this is a way that you can do that. and if you come up with your own dream team, your imaginary board of directors, I would love to hear about it.

You can post about it. You can write to me. You can hashtag #theartschoolpodcast and I will look for that and cheer you on. Thank you so much for listening to this episode of *The Art School Podcast*. I hope you enjoyed this episode. And if you love this content and love this work and you want to take it further and deeper, I have a really special opportunity coming up this summer.

It's *The Art School* Summer Workshop Series. There will be a workshop once a month every month, May, June, July, and August. It will be a 90-minute workshop with a special topic workshop portion where I'm going to help you take the information and I will coach you to see how can you implement this in your life. And there will also be an open coaching, a group coaching session, where you can ask me anything and you are

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

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

guaranteed to be coached personally by me. And I will stay on that call until each and every person has had their questions answered and has had the attention they need and the answers they have been looking for.

So, if you would like to join the Summer Workshop series, you can do all four courses or you can do a single course. It's \$247 a workshop. You can email me, leah@leahcb.com with workshop series in the subject line, and I'll get you the information. Or you can go to the show notes on my website and learn more.

Our first class is May 14th, that's a Tuesday, at 11am Eastern to 12:30pm Eastern, or as long as I need to go to answer everyone's questions. And the classes, all the workshops, will be recorded, so if you can't make it live, you'll receive a link to the recording and you'll be able to download it. Or you can just download it if you've been there and you want to watch it again.

So, if you've been looking for a way to move your creativity forward, to move your career forward, to move your life forward, if you're stuck in any place or actually you just want to give yourself an extraordinary gift, I highly recommend these workshops. I am pouring the best of what I know into each of these classes to make sure that they're high value and you'll walk away with tremendous insights and you'll hit the ground running. You'll really move the needle on the outside and you'll have some tremendous inner shifts.

It's also a great way, if you've been thinking about coaching or thinking about *The Art School*, it's a great way to just test the waters and I think you'll be more than happily surprised. You're going to love these. They're going to be amazing and I'd love to see you there.

Ep #26: Your Imaginary Board of Directors

So, the closing thought I have for you today is this; and this has been what I have decided is the mantra for the Month of May-yay. And that is, I love you and there is nothing you can do about it.

So I want to challenge you to use that as often as you can this month. Use it towards yourself. Use it towards your loved ones. Use it towards people you have some problems with. You can say it silently in your own head, think it as you check out at the grocery store, as people pass you by, as you drop your kids off at school. But use it over and over again this month and I dare you to try and not be blown away by the changes in your life. I love you and there's nothing you can do about it, and have an awesome week. I'll see you next time.