

Ep #49: Embracing Your Self-Organizing Intelligence



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With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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In this week's podcast, I want to continue the conversation about letting your creativity flow. I've talked in that podcast about dropping judgment, that that then raises concerns for some that they're then going to drop their discernment and drop their wisdom.

But what I am talking about is not an annihilation of your critical thinking, but an ordering that allows this other source of wisdom to come through for you, that allows us to cultivate our consciousness in a way that does not destroy and break us down and does not annihilate critical thinking, but instead allows creativity, genius, consciousness, to flow with more power and at greater heights, and then also allows for this beautiful integration of the critical thinking to support that consciousness and that creativity.

So today, I'm going to be introducing you to a concept I call self-organizing intelligence. I'll talk about what I mean by this, how I came to define this for myself and use this in my life and my creative journey, and also with my clients to create art, to create healthier relationships, to cultivate my way of being in mind, body, and spirit and to help clients do the same, and also to cultivate material things like financial success.

So many people are worried that if they drop judgment, they will be putting their head in the sand. What I want to offer with this theory of self-organizing intelligence, with this practice of creating from and tuning to your self-organizing intelligence is not only is your head not in the sand, but you take your vision and your life to all new heights.

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.

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Hello, everyone. How are you doing today? It's a beautiful crisp fall morning here. I am recording this podcast for you, and then packing to go meet up with my business mastermind and amazing colleagues, friends, later today. And also, first though, teaching Art School. So I myself was having to plug into that place of self-organizing intelligence when thinking about making this episode because my rational mind was overwhelmed.

The topic is, to me, there's so many parts and it's so big and it's something I have a lot of thoughts about. So I was trying to think about how to best deliver something usable to you today. And as I mentioned in the intro, this is a continuation from the conversation last week about allowing your creativity to flow without judgment.

And I know, for a lot of people, that makes them very anxious and they think I'm suggesting that they drop all critical thought and that they really don't care about improving. And that's not it at all because I really believe that if you love your craft and you love your life and you are in love with your dream, that being in that energy, you will create something from that loving energy that is magnificent and true, whether it is raising a family, whether it is making a dinner, whether it is gardening, whether it's a novel, whether it's this huge glittering career, whether it's novel ideas and physics.

I think we are so conditioned to think that the way to succeed and the way to become masterful, the way to learn more about the world and ourselves must require oppression and struggle. And I am not one who will ever counsel anyone for avoiding work or effort. I believe that that can be intrinsically rewarding and satisfying.

I love things, for instance, like working outside and working out. I love creating things, like this podcast, every week and also even the spiritual evolution that has been for me to continue to work through perfectionism that shows up for me and other fears about being visible, using my voice, and also coming from my own innate self-organizing intelligence.

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And I think sometimes we have divorced ourselves from this innate organizing intelligence that has managed to order the cosmos against every improbability that that should happen. I've read that there were these 12 defining constraints, that if they had not been met, the universe in its infancy would just have blown apart, you know, in infinite directions, and nothing would be here.

And if you read about the process of what it takes just for a human life to form, it's unfathomable. And then we're like, okay, yep, I'll concede that and yet then we come to our day to day practical lives, it's like we divorce ourselves from that power in the universe and we rely on, granted, this really powerful prefrontal cortex we have to figure things out.

And I just can't help but suspect sometimes our overreliance on this critical thinking and the prefrontal cortex is eclipsing our ability to tap into this universal greater intelligence that seems to animate our lives without us trying to figure it out or over-think it every moment of the day. And again, this is not to annihilate critical thinking or villainize it, but I do think we are at a time when there is a reordering and there is more possibility.

And I see, on a micro level, I saw in my own life, I started to exhaust what I was able to do, just relying on my, what we currently refer to, as intelligence and effort and I now work with clients who are very successful and work with clients, many of whom are at the top of their game in their respective fields, and they too, the phenomenon is coming to a place where something in them wants to grow but they can no longer do it, relying on the paradigm of the past, of critical thinking and intelligence and relying on judgment and also being hyper critical of themselves to move forward and to evolve.

And there was a point years ago when I was in law school and having a hard time having my brain work well and excel in that environment, even though I'd done it before, I probably feel more naturally inclined to be

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creative and, you know, quote en quote right-brained. And I definitely trained myself in shoring up some weaknesses by getting a degree in finance and I graduated towards the top of my class and I managed to get accepted into law school.

There though, I could see, like, doing outlines and thinking in the way that it was proposed you think in order to do well in law school was just not working for me. And at the same time, I also didn't believe that I was dumb. I did feel like a connection to a greater wisdom and one that I wouldn't necessarily call my own even. It doesn't seem right to call it that.

And so I started to trust, through this combination of soul-searching and spiritual deep diving, but also out of just practical necessity and wanting to be a pragmatic person in the world and wanting to get good grades, I started to tap more into how does the intelligence within me work? And even long ago then, because I realized I had this voice in my head that was saying, you're just a disorganized thinker, you're all over the place and you just can't think logically and you can't sum things up and why don't you just get to the point?

And that felt violent to me and felt cruel and felt like it was not aiding whatever the potential was in me that wanted to get out. That whole voice was not helpful. And so instead, like in a quest moment, I, again, was doing some soul searching and I heard, there is a self-organizing intelligence within you. Go within, move from there, trust that, work from that.

And that has been one of my guiding principles. Ever since. It was my guiding principle in dramatically improving my grades in law school and getting a job, and it was also this process where one specific application, where I first started to see, like, hey this not only feels great and feels like truth spiritually, but it's actually working in the real world and in environments that are, seemingly, at first blush, not spiritually oriented environments. Although I think they all are.

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Anyway, I had a semester long clerkship with a federal judge, my second semester of my second year of law school. And the judge was amazing. His clerks were amazing. And I was starting to get some confidence that the way that my mind worked would actually be beneficial in law, and especially in this sort of setting where you are collaborating with other minds and it's sort of like my non-linear constellated way of thinking and my ability to associate many things that seem unrelated and to recall was useful.

So I started to get some confidence, and then several weeks in, the judge, judge Pratt, said, "Hey, I want to give you an assignment. I want to give you the opportunity to write the draft of this opinion." Which was a great honor and it was a subject that I was interested in. It was a constitutional law issue on disability.

And so I started to write, and then I immediately started to go down the rabbit hole of getting lost and trying to write this the way I had been taught you were supposed to write an opinion, or taught to write anything academically, you know, start with page one and work your way to the back. And then I would start with an outline and then I would start with note cards, and nothing was working for me. So I settled into that place of, okay, I believe I have a self-organizing intelligence.

If something can manage to keep my heart beating and my lungs breathing and this brain in my head doing a million things at one without me over-efforting and without me beating myself up or being hard on myself, surely there is a way to write, you know, a 30-40-page document. And so if I just trusted the way that I want to approach this, how does my being want to organize this or understand and create this?

So I just started to follow more from this – less from the critical thinking part, which to me feels so much like over-efforting, over-thinking. It has a very specific physical energy to it, and anxiety as well and tense tension in

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my body. Whereas trusting the self-organizing intelligence, my mind feels quiet.

And I think that is a key that I want to highlight right here; self-organizing intelligence, I think we miss a lot because it's not loud and it's not obnoxious and it's not dramatic, and it's not urgent, but it is very persistent and it's often quiet. And more than persistent, I would say it's constant. It's always there, but we discount it because the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

So I tapped into that and let my mind be quiet and let something else guide me, which is then a process I would use later in my art, I'd use later in my athletic endeavors, and that I use all the time now in coaching and in business, more a sense of being led by something that knows rather than being led by this incessant nervous and even very intelligent and well educated chatter in my head.

So, back to being in the clerkship, I locked the door to my office because I didn't want anyone to walk in on me, because what I did next was – don't worry, I didn't get naked or anything – I took all of these pages of the documents I had written up and any notes I had, and I laid them out on the floor, like in a constellation kind of pattern. And then I stood on my desk, which is why I didn't want anyone to walk in, with all my stuff over the floor and me standing on the desk.

So I could see everything at once, which to me was the way I was understanding the entire issue. Like, I knew there was something in me that already knew what the clincher was, the sentence in there that I really wanted to get, the point, even if I couldn't quite articulate it yet, even though, again, that chattering analytical brain was anxious about getting to the point and just doing things the right way.

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I let that be quiet and trusted this self that was like guiding and the sense that I knew something that my brain did not yet know, that something in me, I was sensing something that knew something here and understood something that my brain just couldn't wrap its mind around yet, just couldn't wrap reason and intellect or logic around yet.

So I needed to see everything at once, all the notes I had gathered. And I'm a spatial, visual, kinesthetic person, so that met all of those requirements to. So I laid it out on the floor so that it wasn't just confined to linear, how we're taught to read, right? Like, start here and then proceed through, but instead was honoring how something was occurring to me and something in me was actually understanding the entire issue was as a whole.

And what I realized was I had to come back to how the reality of how I was understanding the issue was as a whole. And then, from there, then I could figure out how to put that whole into a linear document and into IRAC form, application, rule, issue, conclusion. But I couldn't start from that small confining place and try to squeeze this understanding I had into that articulation before I had really allowed myself to steep in the understanding and start to see all the puzzle pieces at once.

And then I could also start with this bird's eye view, perched on top of my desk, I could also start to move things around in a way where I didn't lose my place by flipping back and forth between pages. So a very, maybe, idiosyncratic process, but what I think is universal about that and what is absolutely something that you can use and that m clients can use to tap into your greater creativity, wisdom, intuition, something that is, again, we're not going to toss your education or your critical thinking skills out the window. We are just opening the door to let you explore, what do you know that you're not even letting yourself know because you've never been told, you've never been taught that there is a way to access it.

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And I do think just even having somebody mention it as a possibility and then, for whatever reason, so many of us seem to need permission to explore that as legitimate, because I know I for sure thought, and how many times to I hear clients saying, I don't know, does this mean I'm crazy? To allow ourselves a knowing which no one has taught us.

No one taught me how to do that. And I for sure know a layer I had to pull away, for some reason I had to let myself know that I might know best how to let this intelligence, this creativity flow through me, even though I hadn't been taught it. I hadn't been read in a book.

And that's a really fundamental piece, I think, of our unlearning in order to come into our true nature and our potential is be on the lookout for those places where you're not allowing yourself to explore and know something because no one has ever told you that you were allowed to know those things or think about those things or explore those things.

And the reason I also wanted to share that writing of the legal opinion, which by the way, got published in its entirety how I wrote it, not a single edit, not even a grammatical correction, not a period was changed, was because I have a lot of people say, well that's all great, this is all spiritual and people will be dismissive by saying, woo-woo. And it might work well even in the arts, but it doesn't translate to the real world and it starts to break down – this is the argument from other people – when it comes to things like paying the bills and making money.

And that's why I wanted to share, of all the stories I have about how leaning into and opening to this quiet ever-constant voice of this self-organizing intelligence, why I wanted to use the law story was because I think that blows apart any of those arguments because what more analytical and, like, rubber meets the road, and then intellectually rigorous standard do you need to be judged by except for this opinion had to be okayed by a federal judge in order to become then part of the law.

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So it's very applicable. And I do also have stories of then myself and clients learning to apply this in areas, like making money, and areas that seem like they're beyond your control because they include other people, like relationships.

So there is an author, and I forget his name right now, but he talks about, when you're coming from this place, tapping into this infinite wisdom, this creativity with a capital C, this consciousness. And then you enter a knowing that's so big and so vast, you have to come back in. And putting it into words feels like trying to build the sky with sticks.

And sure, okay, he just said that so beautifully, that's our task then. And I think that's our task as creatives. We do it all the time. We sense something in the world. We are moved by the essence of something. We are moved by the ineffable and just because it is like trying to build the sky with sticks, something in us just wants to do it anyway, and we do that with words and poetry, we do that with music and songwriting. We do that with paint and imagery, we do that with movement, with performance.

And why do we think though that there's some areas of life that we can't use as a medium, such as money or building businesses or family? There's nothing special about those other areas that somehow means that, like, the laws of commerce are outside the laws of the universe, as a client of mine so eloquently stated and figured out for herself.

She was listening to a mentor who she greatly respected who had been successful in the arts and she was getting kind of discouraged and depressed by this mentor telling her how hard it is and what you have to do to make it in the art world. And then she just decided to take her power back, and even though she really respects and loves this mentor, at the same time, honoring herself and realizing, you know, her understanding of the laws of the art marketplace don't need to contradict what I know about

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the laws of creativity and universal laws, which to me is coming back to trusting that innate self-organizing intelligence.

Here again is something I really want to emphasize; this self-organizing intelligence does not need for us to be ever so hard on ourselves and second-guessing and holding up a measuring stick every five seconds. Creatives have leaned into this energy for time immemorial. And I know there's one poem, which many of you are familiar with. I'm sure I've even referenced this other times in different episodes.

And that is Dylan Thomas's *The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower*. So just listen to these lines, the first stanza. "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower drives my green age, that blast the roots of trees is my destroyer, and I am dumb to tell the crooked rose my youth is bent by the same wintery fever."

I know for sure most of us have heard that first line and thought, whoa, that's a wildly inspirational poem, the force that through the green fuse drives the flower. And many of us that are creatives instantly know what he means by that, connecting to that flow, to that creativity that we say is bigger than us and that flows through us and that we want to be a vessel too. And yet, somehow we, when we get lost and locked into that logical rational mind that things intelligence means being able to explain everything mechanically or dissect it or apply logic, is the rigorous test of reality for all things, although we all know, the moment, in order to dissect something, it must be dead.

The moment we try to deconstruct everything and explain it by its parts and explain it mechanically and explain it logically, that's when logic and mechanics fail. Because what is that life force? How do the parts of an animal, of a person, explain what it is to be a living person? The moment you try to dissect it down to something machine-like or its parts, that force, that force that through the green fuse drives the flower is gone.

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And even in science, they're talking about how cause and effect breaks down at the quantum level and also that at the quantum level, quantum physics is innately at odds with the idea that the foundational building block of all reality is some, like, infinitely small physical object. They're saying really it is an energy or it's a wave.

And when our idea of reality and how we create reality as humans, when we need to force that through a process that has to be logical or rational, to me that's like forcing life through a dissection process, then it's no longer real. We don't allow it in through that small filter.

The moment you try to understand it by logic and reason, that's the moment you're lost. That's the moment you kill it. You have to open yourself up to something that defies logic and reason and I think that's terrifying to us. But I also think it's exhilarating and that that is our opportunity.

And also, the reason I read that whole first stanza of the Dylan Thomas poem is because, again, I know many of us are familiar with that first line, which seems like the rest of the poem is going to be so beautiful and inspirational, and it's really this back and forth about life and death, that this force is a force that gives life and a force that destroys. And I love that first line, and then the rest of the poem, like, wow that is heavy and it is depressing.

Until, like, sitting with it and I realized something that had been there all along and that I hadn't seen was that if there is a force that is driving what we are calling life and death, at least that's how our rational logical minds are understanding what happens, the process of a baby being born is more a process of a body with a heart no longer beating and a mind no longer working is that we call death, but he's talking about the force that drives that process, birth and dying.

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That means that that force is outside of that process, that that force must transcend creation in terms of life and death, and that to me was something that was there all along but my rational mind didn't see right away, but I had to sit with it longer until something in me, I think, knew that all along and just needed time to let it rise to the surface. So I wanted to share that too with you in case you're familiar with that poem, and like me, found it depressing until, again, I saw what had been there all along, that that force is not bound by life or death, which totally messes with our rational logic-loving minds, which is why I wanted to bring it in and stir up the pot today.

So 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, really work with me, coach with me. what I want to offer you today is because I'm guessing that many of you listening have sensed this potential within you and have had maybe frustration in life, even on your way to tremendous success, but maybe a lot of self-violence, self-loathing, self-oppression, self-struggle, and maybe a lot of unnecessary failure too, trying to channel your greater creativity and an intelligence that is beyond and transcends logic and rational mind, you've been trying to fit that into a linear box and logical thinking.

And so what I want to offer you today is first, just think about this concept of self-organizing intelligence. If you can trust that there's a potential within you, and what if you really believed that? And if you thought, instead of trying to squeeze it out into the world in the ways that you've been taught, what if you allowed yourself more and more space to listen to that intelligence because it will guide you on how to unleash it, how to liberate it, how to be the best vessel for it that you can be.

And as you listen to it, as you tune in, here are some things to be aware of. Again, be aware that it doesn't scream and it doesn't shout and it often seems silent, but from that silence come knowings that don't always come in fully formed sentences, and for sure, often do not make sense. Like, the whole thing about scattering my papers on the floor and standing on my

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desk, there is a reason I locked my door. I did not want people walking in and thinking, whoa, what's going on with Leah?

So give yourself this space to apply that metaphor. What do you need to do to lock out the judgments of the rest of the world for a while, to lock out the judgment of your critical rational mind, the mind that has been taught about how you create in the world, how you do you in the world. And tune in.

Again, know that it most likely doesn't speak in full English sentences. It can often be just more of a knowing. The other thing to be aware of again is don't expect it to be rational or logical or make sense. If it says, you know, you say, well I know, you know, butt-in-seat is the way I need to finish this novel, but that voice in you says, actually, going surfing for like three days in a row is what's going to do it, that is the sort of thing that can be terrifying but learning to trust yourself and learning to trust the difference between procrastination and avoidance and going to the heart of things and going into the heart of wisdom, what wisdom really is for you, and relaxing into that and living from that place.

For me, for instance too, it says irrational things, like when everyone else is saying you need to have 70,000 followers on social media and at least this many thousand followers in your email list because you can make six figures, seven figures, and something in me is like, that's not what it's about, honey. You do these things so it gives very practical business advice sometimes as well. And that often sometimes will fly in the face of what other experts and moguls, even very successful ones, are telling you to do.

So again, it is that process of trusting. And it's also a practice of experimentation, which is what we're going to be talking about next week as we go more in depth with this subject next week. But for right now, I want you to think about how you can start to build a stronger relationship, a

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more intimate relationship where you really start to know and feel for how this self-organizing intelligence works in your own life.

And one exercise that can help with this, that I'll also leave you with, is to look back through your life. And you can make a list of meaningful events, things that you have most loved doing, achievements, and start to look for themes and patterns. And look at it like maybe at that time, you had no idea how that random job in college would be the thing that then led you to meeting the love of your life, or so on. Look for those events in life where it's like you could not have planned that with your logical rational mind and yet there was a design in it that you can see in retrospect that lets you see, maybe there has been something that has been guiding me all along. What would it be like if I trusted myself that this something within me really is infinitely wise and really does have my best interests at heart and does have my back?

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I so appreciate the time that that takes out of your day and it for sure helps me to bring this podcast to more people. And if you want to learn more about how to take this work and apply it to your life, go to my website and sign up for the newsletter. It's the Art Insider newsletter. I send it out occasionally, but it does talk about things that only are available to The Art School community, such as special coaching offers, private coaching, group coaching, and upcoming special events.

So, in closing, before I head off upstairs to organize what I'm taking on this trip for my mastermind and then get ready for my Art School class this afternoon, I have two closing inspirations and nuggets of wisdom to leave you with today on this topic of self-organizing intelligence.

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And these two come from the Spiritual Electricity chapter out of Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way*. When I first read this years ago, it lit something up in me and had me all alive and ticking because there was my, what I had arrived to, through trusting my own self-organizing intelligence was someone else talking about it on the page. So this comes from her 10 basic principles.

The first one I want to share with you is number two, "There is an underlying indwelling creative force infusing all of life, including ourselves." And then number seven, "When we open ourselves to exploring our creativity, we open ourselves to GOD, good orderly direction."

I hope you all have a beautiful week. Thank you so much for listening and I will talk to you next time.