

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity



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Leah Badertscher

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Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

“Simplicity is nature’s first step, and the last of art,” Philip James Bailey. In today’s episode, we are going to continue the conversation we’ve been having over the last few episodes. Today, we are going to talk about how simplicity plays a key role in fueling your success and supporting the momentum of your continued creative revolution.

You are listening to *The Art School Podcast*, a show for artists and creatives who want to become the next greatest version of themselves. Learn how to cultivate an extraordinary way of being and take the mystery out of making money, and the struggle out of making art. Here is your host, master certified life coach, artist, and former lawyer, Leah Badertscher.

Hello, everyone, and welcome back. How are you all? As I’m writing to you, there’s a beautiful snow-flurry outside and I actually got to run in it just right before I came back in to record this and talk with all of you. And I love this kind of weather. It’s so cozy. I have the woodstove going. And I also love it for running in.

It’s very refreshing and something about being outside when there are huge snowflakes rolling about and it’s kind of windy, I like the wildness of it all. It feels, again, just really refreshing and settling, invigorating. And it just helps me settle into this season and this time of year.

If you celebrate the holidays around this time of year, I know this can be a very busy season. So that’s one of the reasons I wanted to include this particular episode at this time about simplicity. I also wanted to include it because it fits right in beautifully with this ongoing conversation we’ve had about being a steward of your energy and this concept of cultivating a way of being that makes your results inevitable, about nourishing this idea of a wind horse and what that means.

And for me, the more I’m able to simplify, the more powerful I become and the more I’m able to kind of dwell from a place of simplicity. And I’ll talk a

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

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

little bit more about what that means. That doesn't just mean minimalism, as you've seen it touted across the media and in magazines. But to me, it really means getting clear on what I really, really want.

And sometimes, for instance, I want to run a high-end luxury retreat at one of the best resorts and spas in the world. That, to me, is finding simplicity. And to other people, that might not be their definition of simplicity, but that's where I'm coming from is simplicity is being very clear on what your core desire is, on who, at the core, you are.

And again, I wanted to share this episode at this time because I know this is such a powerful concept for fueling your creative revolution, your growth, your financial success, your career, no matter what your medium, art is. But also, because, if you have a family and relationships of any sort that you're nurturing and you have a desire to really sink into your life and enjoy it in a way that is authentic and meaningful to you, this is a life-changing practice.

And I use the word practice there and not concept because it is an ongoing practice, to continue to develop and deepen this relationship with yourself so that you do know what your heart and soul are craving and you do believe in your ability to go out and create that and give that to yourself, or contribute that to the world, or experience that.

So, for me, we have three children and they are all in many wonderful activities and we're involved in their school, and my husband has a very full career and job with ever-growing responsibilities, and my career has just skyrocketed in amazing ways in the last couple of years, and even more so. And we have 40 acres of farm. We have chickens. We now also have a cat; not such a big deal. We're building a home in the midst of all those decisions.

So, like many of you listening, very full lives. And it can be really easy to miss living your life in the midst of doing your life. You know, I want to make

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

sure that we are so present for this fleeting time that we have with our kids when they're at this age and I've got believers in my house and, you know, the energy of magic and miracles abounds and I want to honor that.

And I know that it's not going to be achieved by doing all the things. So throughout today's episode, maybe you'll want to toggle back and forth between thinking about how you can apply this concept to your career, to your art, to your business, but also to your relationships and your own experience of life so that you simplify, you do get clear on what you really want, and you get really clear on the most powerful way to create that, because this is also my take on the law of least effort.

And I'm also going to talk about the Pareto principle, you know, the 80-20 principle that I think we have all heard by now, and also maybe some different takes I have on that, or different places, maybe unexpected places that I go with that. And then, of course, as always, I'm going to ask you to coach with me and to find the ways to take what I'm presenting and make it really applicable to your life so that you can take it and make a meaningful difference in your life.

So I wanted to start by sharing a little story about simplicity. It's one of the words that I chose at the beginning of last year at this time as a guiding word for 2019. And I'm going to choose it again because it has taught me so much. Using simplicity as the most simple guidepost and way of navigating myself through a lot of growth and change this last year has yielded so many lessons and has really been something by which I've learned to grow my belief in myself and my personal power, and also the results that I'm able to get from other people.

I chose this word, or it chose me, as one of the guide words for my year. But then again, this summer, I was revisiting it because I was in the midst, again, of a lot of growth. And it was midsummer, so all my kids home, and I had a huge month, like so much more than I had been anticipating, which

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

was awesome. And I was also trying to figure out how to do everything while honoring my decision to constrain my worktime, again, because honoring this value of simplicity, what do I really want?

Yes, it's to have a robust creative career and coaching career, the financial results that come with that, and also to have such abundant time with my family, lots of quality time and lots of white space. So constraint for me is, it's got to be done within so many hours a week because that moon shot goal that I'm working towards is a moon shot goal where I am not working in my business more than 18 hours a week. That was a goal that simplicity helps me to facilitate the birth of because it makes me really get clear on how I can become efficient at creating value.

And that's another great lesson that simplicity has yielded, that using simplicity as a constraint, is that I can't turn to overcomplication of business systems, I can't turn to just overworking or working more, but I have to figure out how to become more powerful and leverage the time that I do have, and then therefore be continuously asking myself to look for. And here's where I'm going to talk about the Pareto principle – what are those 20% of things that yield that 80% of value?

Also, simplicity is something that evolves with you, so what simplicity means for you, when you haven't gotten to 100K yet, when you haven't broken into six figures as an entrepreneur, simplicity is going to look a lot different. And your decisions, because of simplicity, will look a lot different than they will look when you're making 250K and wanting to scale to multiple or seven figures.

Simplicity when you have three children under the age of five and you're also an entrepreneur looks a lot different than when you are an entrepreneur and all of those babies are off to school. So simplicity is an organic thing. Always asking yourself, you know, what are the last three things that worked for me, is always a powerful practice, and I like to marry

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

that though by making sure I'm also asking my imagination for, now what are the three things that I think will create the more impact going forward?

Because it's not always the case that what's served you in the past is what's going to serve you going forward. Sometimes, yes, you want to continue working with what's working, and other times, what got you here is not going to be what gets you there. What helped me get babies from infant to kindergarten are not going to be the same skillset as a mother that I need to go from kindergarten and now to preadolescence.

And the same as going from never having created art before to making my first pieces then was not the same skillset that I needed when I went from making my first pieces to moving towards that sense I had, but couldn't quite articulate, of the art I was capable of making. And then it was another skillset to begin to sell my art.

So as you evolve, keep this concept of simplicity alive as an organic thing. It's not just something that you decide once and you're like, now I know what simplicity mean, but it's a way of thinking and a way of training your brain at all times to be more and more efficient at looking for where are the money moves, where are the power points? Where is the place I can do the least work and create the most impact?

So, to tie this in with our conversation about the wind horse, so this practice of cultivating the energy that's necessary to fuel your rise, to fuel your journey towards accomplishing your goals, your journey through the good times and the bad, simplicity is absolutely one of your wind horse's best friends because, if you think of this energetic story you have, which is not just a set onetime limited resource, but it is a living organic thing too, you want to think of the things that feed it, that are generative of energy, and you also want to be mindful of the energy that goes out.

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

And if you have any tendencies towards perfectionism, if you're a recovering perfectionist, it's just good to know because perfectionism is a lose-lose for your energetic wind horse. Perfectionism is going to require that your standards always be just beyond your ken. You're always going to have this feeling of forcing, of needing to be better than what you currently are, of never being good enough.

And at the same time then, you're going to put so much effort into that and mental and emotional strain, it's going to require so much energy from your wind horse. And here is the other thing too; your wind horse is fed by sharing your work with the world and getting traction. There is something so soul-satisfying about putting your work out into the world and completing something and then celebrating that, and then doing your part to honor what you've done, trusting that it's enough, that trust is going to create traction, and then you generating, on purpose, the feelings of pride, satisfaction, completion, and being successful.

I think I started to tell you earlier how I was revisiting this concept of simplicity, even part way through the year, when business had grown a lot. So this is an example of, again, using it as an organic practice. I'd gone for a long run and then for a long walk on the beach and was thinking about all of these things and wanting to stay in integrity with myself and enjoying this growth with the business and also wanting to make sure that I was honoring all aspects of my life.

So I just got quiet and I was thinking about the big goals I had left and was thinking, gosh, I know what it's taking for me to do everything now. How am I going to create even more than this? And I got still, and it was one of those things where I can feel a very high-quality very powerful answer coming through before I can even hear it.

And it was, well, you'll do everything you have been doing, but with such grater deeper ease. And to me, that is also, like, that message of simplicity.

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

And I have been using that going forward. Continuing to ask myself the same questions, that question Tim Ferriss made popular, if this were easy, what would it look like? Add that to your list of power questions. I am always waking myself that when my brain wants to go right to overcomplicating something, just because I've never done it before or it seems like this audaciously big dream, I always ask myself, if this were easy, what would it look like? If this were fun, what would it look like? If this were simple, what would it look like?

So add those three questions to your arsenal, what it means to feel deeply at ease and relaxed, and that the more you can practice that, first become familiar with it, meditate upon it when you're not faced with something that triggers you into survival mode. So familiarize and strengthen your ability to generate a feeling of deep ease and deep relaxation when you're not in the midst of doing something that challenges or triggers you, and then bring that cultivated energy with you into places where you are in a situation where you're doing something and are often triggered.

And don't make it mean you've failed if you still get triggered, but just make it a practice. I think this is another aspect of simplicity, this energetic aspect. Yes, there is the mental aspect. You can train your brain to think more clearly and more powerfully. You can have intentions, like you can springboard off the one I shared that I have, of making my mind very efficient at finding the most powerful impactful solutions for people, making my mind very efficient at being highly wildly creative, making my mind very efficient at creating massive value for the people I serve and for myself.

Intentions like that will really cut through the fog, and then help you to cut away that 80% of extraneous stuff that is only creating a marginal return for you anyway.

So this is something I put into practice with my art, because I think I knew from just the conditioning I had through higher education, there was a lot of

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

study, study, study, and a lot of busywork, all leading up to one paper with this kind of ideal perfection driving all of that hamster wheel nonsense and busyness.

Whereas right now, I find one of the simplest models is to be this more quick iterative process. And it doesn't mean though I'm in hustle mode and just churning things out. For instance, I do this one podcast right now every week, and for the past year, I have focused on that. I don't have an intention to grow massively with social media.

I am going to, this next year, be writing more and sharing more of that with my newsletter. But for this last year, what simplicity guided me to do was focus on the podcast. And when I back it up even further than that and I ask myself, you know, what do I really want, what does my most simplified business model look like, it always come back to integrity and alignment for me, that I am being an example of my own process and my own beliefs, that I am being an example of what is possible by focusing first on cultivating my own extraordinary way of being in mind, body, and spirit, and that from what I am truly doing and truly learning, then what flows downstream from that are things that flow downstream naturally and simply for me, like the Art School, like this podcast, like my own art, like my own writing.

If I want to simplify things, if I ever get into that mode where I feel like I am lost and hustling and overcomplicating and everything is too hard, I ask myself, what does simple look like? Simplify, simplify, simplify, and what does that look like? And it looks like a return to that model where I'm honoring my own core concept, I'm living it, I'm breathing it, and that everything I do flows powerfully downstream from that.

To me, that's how I feed the wind horse and that's how when I can feel in the flow of things, rather than swimming upstream. I have applied this practice of simplicity into coming up with ideas as well, for the podcast, for

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

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

how I want to coach my clients. I learned, I was conditioned, through the way I was educated is that the way to work is to sit down at your desk and to write and write and write until you get it right. And I had to learn that that's not what my most powerful creative process is.

If I'm living by the 80-20 rule, I know that my best ideas come to me in a flash on a run, or when I'm up and putting my studio in order. I know that about myself. So part, for you, of learning how to employ the 80-20 rule is to ask yourself, what are those 20% of places that create that 80% of result for me?

Because again, I can come up with an insight on a run and then I can come back and I can write three classes based on that, a newsletter, a podcast, or maybe that's when the flash of an inspiration for a painting comes to me. And that feels so much more powerful than if I'm just trying to grind things out by putting in, you know, eight hours in my studio. So it is this balance and practice of figuring out, okay, what is the commitment you make and the time and showing up and doing the quantity of work, and then also asking yourself and being curious about where and when do the most powerful points of inspiration come through to me?

If you have a business, you know, what is it that makes people sign up, like, in a heartbeat? What are those times when things flow and it's simple, easy, and fun? Sometimes they're not, but also know you don't have to make it harder than it is, and that by employing the Pareto principle, this practice of simplicity, you can harness the power of that 20% to unleash that 80% of results that are available to you. That is also, in turn, going to generate more momentum and fuel your wind horse going forward.

So this brings me to the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. Don't just take this information in and be entertained by it. Use it, integrate it into your life, apply it, make it transformational. So this is

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

the part of the podcast where I want you to do more than just listen. I want you to lean in and really work with me and coach with me.

So today, I want to share with you an assignment that I have shared with certain of my private clients who feel like they are always on this hamster wheel and never though quite ending up where they want to be. So if you feel like you're always working, working, working but have very little to show for it, please try this practice. I want you to set the intention that you are going to become masterful.

Do this for a year and you will improve so much you're going to become masterful at knowing what the power moves are for you, knowing what the money moves are for you. So this is simply called the three things list, because something – I learned this first for myself – because I love to make lists.

I love the brainstorming process of making lists. I love dumping out everything in my mind that's going on up there onto paper, where I can see it and, like, wrap my mind around it. But then, the lists were something that got away from me and were things, again these lists of goals too, were something I was using against myself. Because for every single day, I would have this list and I'd be like, yes, it's going to be awesome to get this done. But there was no possible way a mortal human being could ever finish all of this.

So I'd go through the day and I would have worked hard, but I never felt satisfied or complete or proud. I never felt successful and like I was getting traction. And that was also showing up in my results line. I was always working so hard and I was creating some results, but it seemed to disproportionate for the amount of work and energy that I was putting in.

And part of that, what was at play, was what I shared with you in the wind horse podcast, as that my energy was undernourished and depleted, to I

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

needed to set about rectifying that problem. And part of that problem too was so exacerbated by having this forever long never-ending infinite to-do list. And I thought, well why am I choosing this? Why do I continually set myself up for failure, when what I am most craving at the end of the day is to feel satisfied and proud and like I've done something to move the needle and get closer to my dreams?

So, after a lot of trial and error, what I came up with was I choose one to three things a day that are going to move me forward. And I trust that these are the right one to three things. And it doesn't matter if they seem tiny in relationship to what that great big goal is, remember, what I talked to you about in the last podcast about taking that very next step close in. Don't discount that. It's the only step you have to take.

So it made me do a few things. I got more clear on what are the power moves, and I eliminated what is that 80% of busywork that I just thought I should be doing. It made me better, employing the law of least effort. And it also made me realize how much I needed to generate feelings of success and completion and satisfaction with my mind first and with my own energy and not rely on a checked off to-do list and not rely on my actions and my results to give me that feeling.

And it sounds, to somebody who's addicted to long to-do lists and perfectionism, it sounds like you're just going to be lazy and it sounds so irresponsible and reckless. But I tell you what, it was a game-changer.

It helped me cut through the fog and realize I really did know what was that next step close in, the step that I didn't want to take, and that really taking those steps, one to three of them a day, day after day after day did add up and did start to create this compound effect for me. And the other thing that was so useful for me throughout this process was it made me realize how much kinder I needed to be to myself, how I was withholding kindness from myself and approval and satisfaction and the feeling of success until I had

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

proved myself by completing all these actions and achieving all these results.

And so I saw that that was kind of what was underlying this nagging sense of not being successful, and from this nagging sense of not being successful, that's why I was creating these impossible to-do lists and why was I making them subconsciously impossible was because I didn't think that I just deserved to feel successful.

And so it sounds so backwards, but I took my own advice and began at the end and thought, okay this future self I see, what's it like to be her? What's it like to be in her mind, her body, her heart her spirit, her world? What is she focusing on?

And she wasn't focusing on this obsessive need to get through and endless to-do list to catch up. She wasn't addicted to this cycle of do, do, do and then get this momentary relief of, now I can feel good about myself because I've done all the things and checked all the boxes. She didn't have that emotional rollercoaster going on. She was present and flowing the work in her life.

And I think this was the same message that the water was giving to me when I asked, now with these next big dreams I have, how am I going to possibly do all of them? And it was saying again, what you're wanting comes from this deep state of being at home within yourself and flowing from there and trusting that what you're flowing in any moment is always the only thing you ever need.

So try it. If you're celebrating the holiday season, pick three things that you and maybe your family are going to focus on this holiday season, where you can do these three things and you can feel like you've had a deeply meaningful joyful blessed holiday season.

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

Pick three things a day that you're going to focus on doing that you know are going to move you closer every day to that moon shot goal and to being the person today who is the person who creates that moon shot goal brick by brick. Look at your home. What are three areas that you can focus on, just in the next week, that would make an 80% improvement in your daily life?

Finally, I've been doing a lot of my own deep dive coaching, preparing for 2020 and the decade beyond. So I want to offer that you pause for a moment, think about who you want to be 10 years from now, 2030. What were three things that you focused on? Just three things that you focused on in that last decade that got you there.

Thank you so much for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you've enjoyed this episode, please subscribe. And if you've already subscribed, the next best thing you can do to pay it forward is to go to iTunes and leave a review. And thank you so much to those of you that already have. I really am grateful for that.

I wanted to share another of those reviews this week. This one comes from Gaia326, "Loving these inspiring words. Leah's podcast is both a practical guide to upping your creative game and approach to it, and a spiritual journey into the possible." So, thank you so very much for the awesome review. And thank you to you all for listening.

If you want to up your own creative game, if you want to figure out what is the simplest way for you to become the next greatest version of yourself and take your life, your work to the next level, you'll want to come over and hop on my email list, www.leahcb.com. That's where you'll hear the latest on private coaching openings, offerings, upcoming retreats like the one I'm hosting in Miraval that comes with a small group intensive and also private coaching experience in January and February, and also upcoming news

Ep #58: The Value of Simplicity

about new iterations of The Art School and what's coming down the road with that.

So, to close today, I wanted to return to a question that is at the heart of simplicity. I want you to take some time and really reflect on this. Ask yourself, what do I really want? I think, when you become clear and honest with yourself about what you really want, life becomes so much more simple. And the more you can implement and the quicker you can implement what you really want, the faster you snap into flow. And that is something that I want for all of you. That is something that I know is possible for all of you.

Have a beautiful week, everyone, and I look forward to talking to you next time.