

Ep #75: Expansive Emotion, Flow, and Social Entropy with Dr. Sasha Heinz



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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Sasha: And it's interesting that you said that thing of choice because, when we're working with people with trauma, the opposite of trauma is choice.

Leah: Oh my gosh, I love that.

Sasha: So, when people are responding and having a trauma response, they're having a trauma response because they feel like they have no choice. So, when someone's having their own trauma response – and, by the way, when you're activated from a five to a 10, you're probably having a trauma response. It's not about the thing. It's about something in the past. You can say to yourself, "I see you. I hear you. I'm with you. What choices do we have right now?"

Leah: You know what huge epiphany I had listening to you, was if choice is the opposite of trauma, to me, being creative is the ultimate choice. Like, exercising choice is, "Creativity with a capital C," exercising choice over your entire life; not just through your art or your medium. To me, creativity is so healing and is the kind of creativity that doesn't require you to be able to do a good self-portrait. A good self-portrait is the kind of creativity where you take back that authority to make choice. And so, if creativity is the opposite of trauma, that makes so much sense why it's healing.

Sasha: Yes, and if you think about it in that way, which I love, you can think about your thoughts also, there's creativity in choosing and, you know, having autonomy of, like, "Okay, I could think this or I could choose to think this." There's an enormous amount of creativity just in this cognitive process.

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That's a clip from my conversation with Dr. Sasha Heinz. Dr. Heinz is a developmental psychologist, life coach, and an expert in positive psychology, lasting behavioral change, and the science of getting unstuck.

We cover a lot of great ground in this conversation. But one of the main themes that emerges is how cultivating expansive emotion and creativity are critical keys to wellbeing. The practices and tools we talk about are invaluable resources always, and now more than ever.

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. I hope you are well I hope you are very, very well. Before I introduce you officially to Dr. Sasha Heinz – who also is a very dear friend and colleague of mine. We met last year in a mastermind and. As you'll see in our conversation, we geek out over many of the same things. And I am thrilled to share her and her brilliance with you here today. And I just love the direction that the conversation takes.

And I also can't wait to have her back because it's always what happens too, when I stop recording, where the conversation goes then that I think, I wish I were still recording. It goes so many interesting places. I will for sure have her back.

Today's conversation, we covered taking psychic entropy and making meaning and order from that and the relationship between chaos and creativity, and making order from chaos and the psychic entropy that

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happens on an individual level, but also is happening collectively all the time, but especially right now.

We talk about social contagion and we talk about then developing cognitive immunity. We talk about flow. We talk about – and this is awesome. Wait for this. This is a conversation we continued offline that even just got better and better. Oh my gosh, so juicy – trauma versus creativity.

This is something I am so passionate about. And it's not just concerning trauma in the very egregious sense, but many levels where, if you've experienced a sense of helplessness, like you don't have choice on any level, that, to me, is the antithesis of creativity. And that's why I am so passionate about the message that everyone has creativity, that creativity is agency. And we should, need to, exercise that agency if we want to thrive in all areas of our life. Whether that means healing from what we would view as a classic traumatic incident. Or whether that means healing from something like under-earning.

I know what it feels like to be an under-earner for years. I've also had more of the classic extreme trauma. I'm not saying it's the same thing. But I am saying that feeling of helplessness, when you want to earn more but you still aren't and you can tell you're the one in your own way but you just can't get out of it, that is one of my missions in life.

That's what I did for myself; choosing the result that I want to create in life. And then creating it. And then flexing those muscles, cultivating that way of being over and over again. And that's what I'm so passionate about instilling in my clients, that we aren't considering, "What if I don't make it?" We are just planning on the making, planning on creating what it is that we set our minds to, planning on becoming who we know we are capable of

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becoming, planning on expressing, to the fullest extent possible, our potential.

And speaking of creativity in the economic sense, speaking of overcoming under-earning, speaking of creating and living into your financial goals and financial freedom and wealth-creation, I have some podcast in the works. Actually, I was planning one for this week, and then the more I wrote into it, I realized, there's much more here than I could get into one podcast. It would do it justice for me to cover it more in a series.

And I'm also starting the Art School Immersion next week, which will be in the middle of the first wee – we will have had one class by the time this episode drops. And so, in that course too, we will obviously be covering money too. Money is a sacred topic. It's currency. It's another means of creative energy and energy transfer. So, I'll be diving into it deeply with all of the folks who are enrolled in the Art School Immersion, which is over half full and it hasn't even been open for more than a day, which is awesome. And it's shaping up to be an extraordinary community. I'm so excited to dive into that next week.

So, again, back to the money series, that will be coming later. I really want to lay this out well so that people can listen to the podcast and the series over and over again and really work on conditioning yourself to become more creatively powerful, making money, to condition yourself to become somebody who has a financially empowered mindset.

While I work on that series though, I am thrilled to be able to share this conversation with Sasha. I love talking with Sasha and I wish I could have bugged a lot of our conversations on runs because I know it was so illuminating to me, and just the energy of the exchange, I live for that.

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So, let me give you, before I dive into that conversation officially, let me give you her official bio. Sasha Heinz, Ph.D. and Masters of applied positive psychology is a developmental psychologist and a life coach, an expert in positive psychology, lasting behavioral change, and the science of getting unstuck. In her private coaching practice, she helps women cultivating greater psychological flexibility and mental fitness and live a life that lines up with their values.

She received her B.A. from Harvard, her Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Columbia, and her Masters in applied positive psychology from the university of Pennsylvania where she also served as a faculty member. Dr. Heinz has been featured in many remarkable media sources, Thrive Global, Vogue, Town and Country, Career Contessa, and Goop, and many, many more. And I am thrilled now to have her here also on *The Art School Podcast*. Enjoy.

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Leah: I am so excited to welcome to the podcast today my dear friend and colleague Dr. Sasha Heinz. And the only thing that could be better about this, I was thinking, was if we could record this while on a run.

Sasha: Totally, oh my gosh, this is my favorite thing in the world is to talk to my friends about the things that I geek out on. And I know you do too.

Leah: Yes, and I had the opportunity to spend last year with Sasha in a mastermind and one of my favorite parts of that was we would go on runs. And as we were talking about things on runs, I thought, I would love to have her on the podcast because she's not only brilliant, she also has just a unique take on what it is to be a mother and to be creative and to be a

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modern day entrepreneur and an academic. So, she brings so many different things to the table.

And we were just talking before we started recording about how important, especially in today's environment, it is to cultivate expansive emotion and especially for creatives. So, do you want to...

Sasha: Yeah, I mean, it's so funny because I think sometimes people think of this as being maybe Pollyannaish or positive emotion – I don't live to call it positive emotion. I call it expansive emotion because I think it's really important to recognize that the entire spectrum of emotion is really important. Emotions are information to guide your actions.

So, we have an emotional system and we feel emotions because we need to tell our bodies what to do. So, that's what emotions do. They prompt or generate our actions. But expansive emotion – so, if you think about – there's something core affect. The circumplex model of core affect – it's super geeky, but there's two dimensions of it. So, on the Y axis, you have activation. On the X axis, you have pleasantness.

So, anything that you are feeling is either going to be high or low pleasantness. So, joy is pleasant. Anger may be less pleasant. Or shame is certainly for me less pleasant. Or it could be agitation, irritation, sad, depressed, lonely, bored. Those are the low-pleasant. And then on the Y axis, you have activation. So, highly activated or low activation.

So, each quadrant, you know, you can think of them, like your upper – if you're doing it on paper, your upper left quadrant is going to be the red. Like, anger, rage, because it's high activation low pleasant. The lower level quadrant is going to be the blue quadrant; you're feeling blue. So, depressed, sad. And then towards more neutral could be, like, tired, you

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know, demotivated. So, the lower left is your blue quadrant. The upper right is like high pleasantness, high activation. So that's like zest, exuberance, joy, curiosity, very energetic and expansive pleasant feeling emotions or feelings. And then the lower right quadrant is going to be green – so that's the yellow. Yellow is high pleasant, high activation.

And then the lower right quadrant is going to be high pleasant, low activation, more like serenity, peace. It's the green quadrant. It's like, relaxed, but it's like blissful, calm. They feel really good but it doesn't feel very energetic, necessarily.

So, if you think about emotions in this sort of your emotional fluency or your ability – we call this interoception, your ability to articulate what you're actually feeling. It's a very important skill. And you can think about it – as a framework – you can think about these dimensions. So, I think it's very useful for people to think about, okay, basic question, am I activated or not? Is this pleasant or not?

If you have a hard time describing what you're feeling, which I certainly used to be like this, I'd be like, "I don't know... good. I feel bad..." like that's it. I didn't now how else to describe it. There's so much more nuance. And in the nuance, you get to know yourself so well. It's like you really begin to speak this other language.

But anyhow, so I digress, but that's why I think it's important not to say, like, positive and negative emotion. It creates this false dichotomy. Like, "There are good emotions to feel and there are bad emotions to feel." No.

Guilt can be very instructive and useful. Anger is so useful. There are lots of situations where I really do want to feel angry about something on purpose; injustice, anything that's happening to my kids that I think is

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wrong. Oh my, yeah, I want to feel angry. So, angry really helps us – it guides our actions in an important way. So, there's no emotion that's wrong or bad, they're all very important.

Expansive emotions do something very specific. So, negative emotion, it narrows our perspective and narrows our focus for very good reasons; for survival. So, if you are feeling angry, there's very few behavioral options when you're feeling angry. You are going to fight or flight or freeze. You're going to have a survival response.

Most people are going to fight in some way. They're going to fight back. So, they're feeling angry and they're going to fight. If you're feeling shame, there's not that many behavioral options. If you're feeling shame, you're going to do some variety of hiding. If you're feeling disgust, you're going to reject something.

This is what – we're designed to have what we call a narrowed behavioral repertoire. It's a fancy way of saying there's just not that many things you're going to do if you're feeling these emotions. So, if you think about people who are lawyers, they're trained to be pessimistic. That makes sense. They're trained to narrow their focus on what's not working.

Leah: And many of them adversarial too, right? So, if you're a litigator...

Sasha: Exactly, you're trained to be reacting in that more constrained – so that's what I mean. There's expansive emotions and then there's constrained emotions. So, these emotions, they constrain your behavior for very good reasons. It's not negative. It's important for survival. But nonetheless they do constrain your behaviors, or possible behaviors.

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And they also constrain your thinking. It just narrows your perspective. It narrows your focus. And it narrows your behavioral repertoire. Expansive emotions, like what we classically call positive emotions, but there's a much more wide variety of these emotions. The reason I call them expansive emotions is because they do the opposite.

So, interestingly, they didn't really know up until – really it was around 2000 and this research that was happening at the end of the last 1990s, but researchers on emotion, they wouldn't really study what we classically call positive emotion because they didn't understand, they didn't follow this model, which is there's a specific action tendency.

So, you are angry and your fight. That's a specific action tendency. That's what they thought emotions were for. Emotions would create a specific action tendency. But then you feel joy. What do you do when you're feeling joy? I don't know; lots of stuff, right? Or serenity – one could argue that serenity prompts you to do nothing sometimes.

Leah: So, were they not studying it because those expansive emotions don't lead to problems and it was more a pathology of emotions?

Sasha: They weren't studying it because they couldn't fit it into the model that they were using. This is science, guys. So, it's like the existing model didn't fit the actual reality of what expansive emotions seemed to do, so they just didn't study it. It's like it didn't exist.

So, a brilliant woman named Barbara Fredrickson – she's written two books that are really wonderful. I recommend them to everybody. Positivity, and then her second book is called Love 2.0. She is an expert on expansive emotions.

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And what she found was that there was an evolutionary reason for us to feel more expansive emotions. But instead of it being sort of a survival fight or flight response, it was, we feel expansive emotions – and what she calls the broaden and build theory of positive emotions.

It's that when we feel expansive emotions, they broaden our perspective, they expand this behavioral repertoire, and there's so much cool research that shows how it increases our creativity and it helps us to make connection with things that we wouldn't make connections – so all of the world that we've built, all of the beautiful things that humans have created, that's been generated by these expansive emotions.

So, think about practice. If you're going to get good at anything – and you work with people who are artists and creatives, they've honed this craft, this skill over years. But it's the reason they continue to practice their craft, because it feels fun. They love it. It's joyful.

So, if you watch kids when they're playing, they're learning. Their play is learning. And so, we are biologically hardwired that learning is fun, play is fun, we want to do more of it, ergo we practice it more and we get better at it.

Leah: And here's a question I have for you. And I know that you do a lot of transformational work with people who have been high-achieving perfectionist people-pleasers. Because I feel a lot of my work with creatives, even the very high-functioning, very successful ones, initially they were drawn to their craft or their art because of that joy and because of flow. But then also through their training process and their education, there have been several that independently have each individually said, "I have come to realize that I create too much from trauma, like the trauma of pressure and performance."

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And so, now, when they are thinking about ascending to the next level, like their next dream, it's almost that there's this internal pullback and the block is thinking, "Oh my gosh, it's going to be so much trauma," rather than being able to come from a place of flow. So, a lot of the work we do is coming back to what is that homeostatic creative state in mind, body, and spirit, so that you are essentially training your body to create from those expansive emotions. So, what does that – I would love to hear your perspective.

Sasha: Well, I think it's like, absolutely, we get in our own way. If you watch children – I mean, I have a nine and a six-year-old and so I watch them create all the time. They're just creation machines, whether it's building Legos and making amazing creations, like sculptures really, out of Legos, or they're drawing and making something creative for me and drawing me a beautiful picture or making an amazing outfit, or just pulling things together from the closet and creating something. It's just this constant flow of creativity.

Which is astounding to watch, but it's so remarkable when you think about it through this lens because I'm thinking, like, "Oh, can you see this creation is generated from all of this expansiveness?" They have no comparison. They're not comparing themselves to anybody. They have no pressure to perform. They have no sense of success or failure. They have no sense of any of that.

And I was at a friend's birthday party recently. It was such a fun weekend. And she had hired this art teacher who teaches her daughter – it was her daughter's art teacher. She brought her in to do a class with all of the adults. And she was so free. She held this incredible space for us. And afterwards, I said, what's so fascinating, from my perspective, what I do for a living, I was just paying attention to my brain.

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I mean, I've never believed that I'm very good at art. Like, I am horrible. I don't know how to draw anything. I remember going to my son's preschool parents' night and they asked us to do a self-portrait because the kids were doing self-portraits that year. They were like, "You do one and we'll show it to your kid." And I started doing it and my husband turned to me and he was like, "I'm embarrassed to be married to you right now."

And we were both laughing so hard because my drawing was – he was like, "I don't even know what that is." I was like, "I know." It is so terrible. So, I have this dialogue happening in my brain that's like, this is terrible, everyone's is better than yours. This is embarrassing. You're going to be embarrassing yourself. It was like, we're going to do these amazing – let yourself go, be free, and then we're going to put them all on the wall. I'm like, "Put them all up on the wall? I want to die."

And so, it was interesting, like, paying attention to my inner narrative, which all it was doing was shutting me down. There was no freedom. There was no playfulness, there was no exploration of color or texture of anything. I just was like, "Oh god, how can I make this good?"

That's not a creative question. That's just like so constrained and so much pressure. So anyway, afterwards, I went up to her and I was like, "It's so fascinating how I watch my kids, they would have just been delighted by this experience and had the best time. And that was kind of excruciating for me. That wasn't that fun. And it's not you. It was my brain that just made that quite painful."

And the stakes couldn't have been lower. There was no actual pressure. It was just an exploration and I could just watch my mind take me to this place where I was in my own little cognitive prison. So, I think the work that you're doing with your clients to help them just have some awareness, just

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starting with that awareness of their mind and the narrative in their head and these little sentences and how all of these little sentences in our brain or images in our brain – the image in our brain is also a thought – but how those create our emotions and those emotions matter. They matter because they're guiding my hand on the paper with my paintbrush.

Leah: Yes, or blocking or constricting it, right?

Sasha: Exactly. It's either allowing my hand to be free or it's like my hand just becomes this rigid, like this little claw that won't move anywhere. And it's not fun. It doesn't feel fun and it doesn't feel exciting. And I watch my kids and I think, "That's what creativity feels like."

Leah: So, with emotion – because when you're describing that narrative in your head and I'm not sure, well, I can think of a variety of emotions that would accompany, like, self-consciousness.

Sasha: That's exactly what it was. It was extreme unpleasant self-consciousness.

Leah: And to me, that feeling of self-consciousness is always the opposite of flow. Whereas, in flow, I feel more myself than ever but I'm thinking less about myself than I ever do. And I feel like when you're describing your children or I see my children, it's like they still live in that state and I hope to still cultivate an ability for that to be more the norm.

And I know you know all the research around flow and how connected it is and important for our wellbeing. And I'm really fascinated about how we can practice this sort of mental and emotional, even spiritual practices, this mastery of awareness, how then we can cultivate the ability to be in flow more often, not only because it will help us be more creative and then help

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us in our creative careers, but also because it's just connected to an amazing experience of being alive and now having this constant voice of, "Oh wait, that sucks, don't put that up on the wall," right?

Sasha: That's exactly right, what you just said, which is flow is the opposite of self-consciousness. So, flow is this very unique psychological state of total lack of self-consciousness. So, it's so fascinating because it feels incredible, but it almost feels like nothing.

So, it's an interesting state of being which is you're so fully merged with the object of your focus that you lose yourself. And I think that there's a spiritual kind of element to this which is, in the nothingness is the beauty, is the freedom, is the gloriousness of it all, the lack of, "Me." There's this ironic state of being where it's like you lose yourself, and in losing yourself, you find yourself.

So that's really what flow to me represents is this – whether it's in athletics, or for me, I feel it a lot while writing. I used to love scrapbooking, which is really fun and creative and also, for me, was a real flow state. So, flow is really where your skill and that challenge is quite equally matched. The challenge is just a smidge above your ability.

So, you're having to engage – because if your skill level is high and the challenge is low, you're bored. If the challenge is very high and your skill level isn't quite up there, it's going to feel stressful. You're going to feel stressed. So, flow is this beautiful sweet spot where your skill level is slightly beneath the challenge.

Which, if you think about it in terms of from an evolutionary perspective, why we have this is because flow helps us improve. We get better at what

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we do because we feel flow because the challenge is always slightly above what we're capable of. So, we're constantly improving our ability.

So, flow is actually really essential and that's what you see when children are very engrossed in what they're doing. They're in that state of flow. And what are they doing? Well, they're learning and they're practicing and they're developing skill. But they're not conscious of that, right?

So, that's flow. But you're so merged with. So, for an athlete, I might say, "I'm in the zone," either playing tennis, they're literally merged with the tennis ball. Like, where the tennis ball ends and they begin, there is no boundary.

So, it's this really incredible state of being where you almost have no sense of self and I think the other thing about flow that I think is so important is what flow does also is it manages what we call psychic entropy. So, psychic entropy is when you're feeling that sense of floating anxiety, that's psychic entropy. It's like psychic chaos.

So, we have ways of mitigating and managing psychic chaos because it feels terrible to be in that space. It's not feel-good. The brain loves order. So, we can set goals. Goals are a way that we manage our psychic entropy because you have an objective that you're going after, so it creates some focus. And getting into that state of flow – and by the way, to get into flow, there has to be an objective. Like, there's some objective that you have, whether that's you're working on something with an end objective.

It doesn't mean that it has to be – like if I'm writing, perfect is not the objective. It's just like, "Okay, I'm writing something. There's a purpose for what I'm doing. I'm trying to accomplish something." It could be people get into flow playing chess, people get into flow knitting. Cooking people get

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into flow. Scrapbooking, for me, I get into flow. But again, there's an end result. There's something I'm producing. I'm creating something.

Leah: So, do you think that need for an objective, is that because it requires us to focus?

Sasha: Yeah. It's a way of getting your brain to manage this psychic entropy. So, when we're in a state of flow, we don't have psychic entropy when we're in flow. It's the opposite of psychic entropy. That's why it feels so good to us.

So, it's like these long stretches where you lose time. And so there either is no psychic entropy, there's no awareness of your brain pinging to 1000 things, being a squirrel and your brain flitting from one thing to the next or you just cannot focus on one thing, that's the opposite of flow.

Leah: It's so fascinating because if you think about how a lot of great creatives have said variations of creating order from chaos is, if you're going to generalize an objective, that art can be that. You go into that space of the unknown so it's chaos. But then there's some sense of we want to, some innate desire to pull order from that chaos, but in a way that is innovative and new and fresh.

So, it's like, you couldn't have flow – so, too much of the chaos is not good. And then too much order, like having your whole, like, not being in the process but just being completely results-driven...

Sasha: Exactly right. It's this interesting, like, managing those two different – you have to give yourself the space and, in a way, allow yourself to have an objective, but for in that container, to give yourself the freedom to have no objective. It's a very counterintuitive space to be in.

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Leah: So, you need an objective, you need a container for the objective. What other criteria might need to be present to facilitate flow?

Sasha: Normally, it's also about you're developing or practicing some kind of specific skill. You're doing something specific. Again, you're not going into saying, like, I'm going to practice my specific brushstroke or something. But you're actually engaging in a skill, that you're doing something. And then also making sure that you have this balance between challenge and your skill level. That's a huge piece of it as well.

Competition, interestingly enough, that also helps people get into a state of flow. By the way, it's why people love watching cooking shows and competitions. My kids and I love watching these baking shows. You know, I live it because everybody's in flow.

You hear them all the time being like, "We only have 20 minutes left? How is that possible?" Because they're so in it. They're so in what they're doing because the environment is created to generate flow for them. But again, if you took me and put me in that – if you took this lady and you put her in a test kitchen and was like, "Hey, holiday baking championship, off you go," and they gave me this tiered cake to make, you would be watching a complete and total meltdown occur because I have no idea what I'm doing, I don't have those skills.

I have enough skill to make brownies. I don't have enough skill to make a very complicated cake. But you take all of these people who have a very high level of skill and you put them together and you say, "Okay, you're going to make this thing and go do it." And so, they're creating this environment that's actually a flow environment for them. The challenge level is slightly above their skill level.

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So then you see all of these people creating these amazing things in three hours. And interestingly, the constraint of time, if you have the skill, if you have the appropriate skills the constraint of the tie actually helps you enter into that state of flow because it helps focus your mind.

Leah: So, if we take that – and I'm going to bring it back to something we started talking about before we started recording, about how the timing of our conversation and things that are going on in the world, like, how could we provide something that provides stability, that there's a sense of stability, a sense of light, a way to take maybe the global psychic entropy that's happening all around us and what we can do to order that and gives us a sense of, again, not just being unmoored in the chaos?

So, in the final minutes we have remaining, what could you offer listeners in terms of tools, tips of how to take this metaphor of – even the cooking show, you start with all these random ingredients, and yet making order from the chaos that's happening in the world today?

Sasha: I think that's such a good point. There is, right now in the world, it's palpable. There's the psychic entropy right now of the planet, our entire – there's a collective sense of floating anxiety and vulnerability and helplessness that's in the air. And this is why learning the skill that you teach your clients is so critical, of really being able to pay attention to, "What are the thoughts in my mind that are generating the emotion that I'm feeling right now?"

Because when we begin to – this sort of social contagion of this anxiety, because thoughts are contagious, that's true. But you can develop the skill to be immune, to have an immunity, a cognitive immunity. Like, I'm going to decide on purpose. So, that is, to be able to manage your internal state, to be able to manage your internal state is so important because then you can

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create the internal environment that you have where you are calm enough to be able to focus. You're calm enough to be able to enter into that place.

So, learning the skill of being able to manage yourself is so essential. And ironically, it's so essential for creatives because you have to find that sweet spot of where you're able to feel calm enough to be able to actually enter into that state of flow, where you're so engaged with what you're doing and you're not, like, buzzing with anxiety or buzzing with a sense of pressure or stress or self-consciousness.

Leah: Yeah, and again, I'm so grateful that you were able to come on and talk about this now because I've mentioned at different times in the podcast, this Mary Oliver quote I love about how artists may or may not make the world go around, but we do make the world go forward.

And so, I think to realize that you can take back that creative authority and have the authority over your own internal environment, and also that that energy from which you create and offer to the world is contagious in an expansive way.

Sasha: The other way, which is so crazy, it's contagious four degrees out. So, that means there's social contagion theory, which is so interesting. So, that basically means my closest circle – I'm going to get the numbers slightly off, but it's something like 25% – there's a 25% impact. So, the way that I think has that contagion around the people that I'm with.

But interestingly enough, it also impacts my closest circle's other people, so one degree out, or two degrees out, up to four degrees. So, people that I don't know, I've affected their life, I think the statistic is something like 4% to 6%. Which doesn't sound like a lot, but it's enormous.

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Leah: It is enormous. If everybody has that affect, 4% to 6% out...

Sasha: Everybody does. So, it's not to put pressure on you, but it's to say that your energy, the way that you show up, the way that you manage your mind, the way that you manage psychic entropy actually matters. It matters globally. It has a huge effect. So, I mean, this is research that was done at Harvard and it's like, to me, it's just so interesting. When you learn the skills of managing your mind, you can do this on purpose. You can actually have some authority and be in the driver's seat. You're not at the whim, you're not being blown around in the collective wind, like whatever's happening.

Leah: Right, and again, like you said, in managing your mind, you retain the choice. Is that a burden or is that empowering?

Sasha: And it's interesting that you said that thing of choice because when we're working with people with trauma, the opposite of trauma is choice.

Leah: Oh my gosh, I love that.

Sasha: So, when people are responding and having a trauma response, they're having a trauma response because they feel like they have no choice. So, when someone's having their own trauma response – and by the way, when you're activated from a five to a 10, you're probably having a trauma response. It's not about the thing. It's about something in the past. You can say to yourself, like, "I see you, I hear you, I'm with you. What choices do we have right now?"

Leah: You know what huge epiphany I had listening to you, was if choice is the opposite of trauma, to me, being creative is the ultimate choice. Like, exercising choice is creativity with a Capital C, exercising choice over your entire life. Not just through your art or your medium. To me, creativity is so

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healing and is the kind of creativity that doesn't require you to be able to do a good self-portrait. A good self-portrait is the kind of creativity where you take back that authority to make choice. And so, if creativity is the opposite of trauma, that makes so much sense why it's healing.

Sasha: Yes, and if you think about it in that way, which I love, you can think about your thoughts also, there's creativity in choosing and, you know, having autonomy of, like, "Okay, I could think this or I could choose to think this." There's an enormous amount of creativity just in this cognitive process. Whereas trauma is like, you're stuck, you're ruminating, it's like there's one track on the record and you're stuck in it, you can't get out of it, right? That's what the trauma response is.

And we all know what that feels like, when you're in a loop and you just can't get out of that thought. So that's the lack of choice, and living in that space of creativity is absolutely right. It's about having infinite choices. It's like seeing the infinite possibilities of things. It's so much fun to talk about this stuff.

Leah: Yes, we're going to have to do it again because – okay, so Sasha Heinz, that 4% to 6% impact you have, it's a very lowball number in your case. I know your impact is so much more far-reaching.

Sasha: Oh my gosh, well my family and my whole family, I'm like, "Guys, I'm creating energy." And they're like, "Oh my gosh, mom, stop."

Leah: No, don't stop.

Sasha: I'm holding the energy in this house... Like, "Okay, you do that..."

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Leah: Yeah, you keep doing that. Thank you. And your brilliance and your light is so contagious. So, thank you for sharing that today.

Sasha: This is so much fun to be on here with you.

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I hope you enjoyed that conversation between Dr. Sasha Heinz and myself. And 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 work with me, coach with me. Take the things that you just heard in this conversation, in this episode, and think about how it applies to your life.

Think about what you can take away and try on in your own life, implement, experiment, make it your own, use it in a creative way. And by that, I mean not just as a consumer of information, but use it as the raw material of your life. Mix it with your own creativity, your own intelligence, your own life experience. Roll up your sleeves and just mix it in with the nitty-gritty of your life so that this doesn't remain just entertaining information so that you don't just remain a consumer, but so that you actually implement it so that it becomes transformational.

So, here is the exercise I have for you today. I want you to think of one goal or dream right now. Just start with one. You can do this process again later if you really go all the way through with just one. Write down specifically, as specifically as you can what it is that you most want to create. And think about that.

Think about too, now that you've written it down, are you holding back in any way? Maybe because you've been burned in the past and so you're just subtly pulling back and putting on this filter of, what's really possible

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now that I've been through the wringer numerous times? Don't look to the past for what you're capable of in the future. Again, write down, as specifically as you can, what it is that you most want to create right now.

For the second part, I want you to write down an exhaustive list of everything you think is required to create that. If you were required to create that result no matter what, within a certain reasonable deadline, write down everything that you would have to do in order to make that result inevitable.

Also include what you believe you might have to think, believe, feel, know, do, and also not think, not feel, and not do. How would you need to show up in the world and what would you need to release? What behaviors or energy would you have to release and upgrade?

Part three – and this will help you with part two if you find yourself at a loss – think about somebody who is already creating pretty close to that result that you want to create. It doesn't have to be exactly the same thing. But they're in the same league. They are playing and creating and getting results at a level where you desire to be.

And then do that same exercise for them. What are they thinking? What are they feeling? What are they doing? How are they showing up? And what are they not thinking? What are they not feeling? What are they not doing? Or how are they not showing up – to your best guess, since you may or may not personally know them – to create that result.

And so now, part four – this is a part for your contemplation. I want you to ponder this. I want you to take this for walks and contemplate this. Chew on this. I want you to journal about it. Meditate on it. talk to wise friends and

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counsellors about it. This is where I'm tying it into the conversation with Sasha.

Because in that conversation, we talked about the importance of cultivating expansive emotion and also the importance of cultivating expansive emotion, how important that is for your creativity because likely, to create the result you want to create, you've probably listed out a lot of very appropriate spot-on action steps. You probably can identify a plan, and then where do we so often fall short though is the energy that it takes to have the level of commitment to follow all the way through.

And so, this is where cultivating expansive emotion is about feeling amazing and is about your wellbeing, and it is also the fuel for your dreams. And it is so true that the better you feel, the more you do this, the more creative you're going to be, the more effective, efficacious you're going to be. Cultivating expansive emotion, cultivating a powerfully creative way of being is key to becoming someone who experiences self-actualization.

So, do this exercise. I would love to hear from you on Instagram, or email me. My Instagram is @leahcb1. I would love to hear what comes up for you when you do this exercise. I would love to hear what that number one thing you want to create right now is.

My mission this year with the lives that I touch, the people I work with is to really create some radically, amazing, extraordinary results with the people I work with. I mean like creating this little epicenter and nucleus with the people I work with where it's just like fireworks shooting out of this relatively small but growing community and movement.

And I would love to have you be a part of that. So please, do tell me, what is that number one thing you want to create. Tell me what the steps are to

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get there and then tell me what you think you need to have that level of energy you need so that you can fuel the level of commitment that you need so that it makes that dream inevitable.

Thank you so much for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you've enjoyed this episode, if this podcast has meant something to you, if it's been useful to you, if it's inspired you, motivated you, empowered you – and thank you, by the way, to so many of you who have been messaging me with photos or stories of the art babies that have been created because of listening to this podcast.

Even my son Elijah had one recently. I'll see if I can post a photo of that on my Instagram maybe and a little story behind that. But that means the world to me. And that is, again, something I hoped for and dreamed of back when it seemed very abstract. So, it's very surreal and I'll be honest, like, amazing to hear that that's happening.

So, please continue to write in and let me know. Please continue to leave reviews. That really helps this podcast to spread and it allows you to be a part of the community and a part of that collective rising energy. And like Sasha and I were talking today, thoughts are contagious.

There is this social contagion theory. It's why I choose to put myself in the room with coaches and in masterminds with successful, creative people. It's why part of what I'm working on right now behind the scenes is creating a mastermind for creative powerhouses, really extraordinary creatives who want to cultivate that extraordinary way of being, who want to be unapologetic about all of the extraordinary results that they want to create in their life.

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And maybe they have creative circles that are amazing, and yet also too, maybe there are aspects of old creative circles that aren't supporting – oftentimes it's not supporting their economic development, it's not supporting their career development or their philanthropic development, or they're just really ready to break through with their creativity, with their art, with their vision. I have a lot of creative people who are visionaries in community leadership and in the corporate sector as well as in the arts.

So, that's something that I am masterminding behind the scenes. And it's also one of the reasons, one of my main motivations for offering this Art School immersion right now. Because I love the power of private coaching and I also have seen at work this positive social contagion, how creativity is contagious, success is contagious, mental, emotional, spiritual, physical wellbeing is contagious, and truly, a rising tide lifts all ships.

I do have a waiting list for private clients. But if you would like to apply, you can email support@leahcb.com and we will take extraordinary care of you. And if you want to stay in the know about upcoming Art School events and offerings, the best way to do that is to go to my website and sign up for my free newsletter.

Not only will you stay in the know about private coaching and The Art School, but also, you'll be the first to know when I offer things like free group coaching calls, which I've been doing many of those lately. And it's been amazing. Thank you to everyone who has turned out and brought such great energy. So, I'm going to be doing more of those here in the near future. So, subscribe and stay connected and stay tuned.

In closing, I want to share just a few more insights, thoughts, reflections I've had since the conversation with Sasha. And we had this conversation

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several weeks ago. And I continue to think about a lot of it, including this part about creativity being the opposite of trauma.

Because if we can see how often someone engaging in the arts or in being creative has healed them, and I love that Carl Jung quote of “The hands will often solve a mystery with which the mind has struggled in vain.” And if we really again took something to heart, that creativity is not just this abstract concept, not just either a rare talent or a hobby. But if creativity were this life force available to us all and by engaging in creativity, whether it be being cognitively creative, as Sasha said, or whether it be getting your hands in the dirt to garden, whether it be rearranging your space, whether it be trying something that you’ve always wanted to try, whether it be saying yes to something you’ve always wanted to say yes to and saying no to something that just has always been a no and you’ve never yet exercised your agency to set a boundary and say no.

I think creativity too is about setting a new standard for your life. And I’ve seen it happen over and over in my life, not just with art, but the more creative I get, it’s like I get an energetic upgrade. It’s like this infusion of life force. And I see it in my clients’ lives too. So, just something to think about as you go about your week.

Thank you again for being a part of this community and listening. I love you guys. Your presence out there listening means so much to me. Please stay in touch, have a beautiful week, and I will talk to you next time.