

Ep #103: When Creative Genius Meets Surrender



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With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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I wanted to create for you an episode on the relationship between genius, creative genius, staying in your zone of genius, and surrender. That turned out to be an impossible task, to contain that entire exploration into the relationship in a single episode. It has been the ongoing conversation we've been having throughout each Art School and on the forum and conversations in group coaching, with so many of my clients.

But today, I wanted to at least share with you a glimpse into that conversation, just one aspect; certainly not exhaustive. So, I wanted to start with a quote from a creative genius on surrender, "There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action. And because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how valuable, nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open." Martha Graham.

So, join us. Listen in to today's episode as we explore the relationship between surrender and unleashing your creative genius.

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, and welcome to *The Art School Podcast*. So, this conversation has so many different ways of approaching it. When I first started to outline all of those possible talking points, themes, exploring the relationship between

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surrender and creative genius, and then I'd go deeper into my own thought process about it, it quickly was going to get out of hand.

It would be hard to do a masterclass episode on this topic. So, what I am deciding to do today is to surrender and trust that what's mine to do today is to give you this glimpse into a conversation that we've been having.

And one of the ways that this came up recently within our Art School community is that one of my brilliant creative geniuses in the mastermind said, "Okay, I just have to say, a sticking point for me with declaring, like owning myself as this creative authority, creative powerhouse is that I come from a long line, and it's deeply embedded in me and I believe in a power higher than myself."

And that is an awesome question. And I'm so glad she presented it that way because I know that was a major obstacle for me as well. And it's something that comes up with clients. And so, I don't think it's any stretch of the imagination to assume that some of you have that same thought, that seems like you just come to an impasse, "Well, I can't be in creative control of my destiny when I believe in God or the universe or something higher than myself."

So, I'm going to say something that sounds contradictory, but there is truth in this paradox. I think when we are truly surrendering, and surrendering not in the sense of submitting and defeat, giving up, resigning, but surrendering in a more spiritual sense, which I take to be owning why you are here and who you are. And I do think those dreams and visions that are sacred to us, that don't seem to leave us, that have either been with us for as long as we can remember, or have arrived later in life but with such an energy, the vitality, the life force, the quickening that Martha Graham spoke

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of, that those are clues into who you are and what you are capable of and the work you are meant to do and what you were built for.

So, it's surrendering to that. So, there also then is an assumption that you didn't think you were just put on this planet to make peace with defeat, that you have this desire, this sacred dream or vision implanted in you, only to be constantly thwarted and frustrated. That assumes a sort of either indifference or sick sense of humor on the part of the creator, the universe, whatever that higher force is that you believe in.

Surrender is, "Gosh, I can't seem to quit thinking about this thing, even when I try to quit thinking about this thing, even when I try to repress it, even when I try to make myself really busy and distracted, even with creating great success in other areas. Which is where I want to weave in the topic too of zone of genius.

So, zone of genius, zone of competence, zone of excellence, that's something that I want to go into greater depth in on another episode. But just weave it in here to say that we can be high-functioning in those zones of competence and excellence. And that that perhaps, if we are, that's taking up a great part of the pie of our life and resources. Then that leaves little left for our zone of genius.

So, that's one way that's like the antithesis of surrender. And it doesn't look like anything's gone awry, especially if you're getting results in life that you like. And yet, there is something else that still calls you and doesn't go away.

So, one of the ways that I've been talking about surrender and being in your zone of genius with my clients in the Art School and in the mastermind has been by talking about revision and revising. So, re, in Latin is to call

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back. So, we're calling back the vision. Because everyone in this community has a vision. And everyone in this community is truly extraordinary and has already built and created phenomenal things, admirable respectable amazing beautiful meaningful things in their lives.

So, they are accustomed to creating. They're accustomed to taking action. And too, life-long learners and wanting to be here to continue to refine and grow and see what genius they still have in them and see how they can take their creativity deeper and higher and what kind of expansion is available for them to experience and from which to create and contribute I this life.

So, as we go through life, as we go through our creative process, things change. We evolve. We get more information. Action is clarifying and purifying. We have a clearer sense of who we are and so it is important to keep calling the vision back. And this is where zone of genius comes in. Because there may be parts of our journey where we are doing things necessarily and that benefit us in our learning process that are in our zone of competence and in our zone of excellence and also maybe some in our zone of genius as well.

And if you're not familiar with these terms, I will do a podcast on them. But in the meantime, easily Googleable as well, although that's not easy to say... So, that will be coming later.

But again, as you move along your journey and you evolve, there comes a time to call the vision back. And we know this, like if you are involved in any sort of creative pursuit, whether you're building a house and you revise plans, you're writing a poem and it goes through – Yates had a certain poem. I can't remember which one now. But there are at least 180 known

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versions of that poem before he landed upon the final one. And that, they think, is probably still conservative.

You know, music undergoes this process as well. And so does too us creating our lives and who we know ourselves to be. And again, getting a clearer sense of what is our genius and why we are here in the process.

So, this brings me to a very simple and profound practice for surrender. And Martha Graham pointed to it with the quote I shared in the intro. And so, this more quickly brings us today 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.

So, this is a practice I use often and it works if I am in a funk, I am experiencing a block, if I'm feeling like really offended or negative or just not impressed with my internal reaction to some external circumstance in life. And I share this with clients as well as it's a way to help you move past those barriers, upper-limit problems, bottlenecks, sticky points and difficult, treacherous, adversity-littered areas in this journey and adventure that we call life. And that is a practice of surrender that involves two questions.

I love to settle myself in, in a quiet place if possible, and put my hand on my heart and ask myself these two questions. What is mine here? What is not mine? What here is mine? And what here is not mine?

And then, I weave in a third question. Is there something here that is not mine that I am thinking, assuming, attempting to make mine? And usually, that process, those two questions and then weaving in that third reveals something that has been the obstacle, the instigator for the suffering that I'm feeling in that moment. I can't think of a time yet when this has failed me in illuminating what was causing a hitch in my get-along or some

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unnecessary suffering. Even if it was a painful circumstance, where was I heaping on needless suffering on top of that, just directly experiencing- the pain of the experience?

We can even heap suffering on top of good experiences. So, this works just as well there and is also why I like to weave it into my coaching practice when working with someone experiencing an upper-limit problem. Because you can create so much success and then start to fear that it's all going to go away or that it was all an accident or all a fluke or you have to work so hard to keep it up. And so, using this inquiry practice can really help you find relief in that sacred solid ground again.

Also, there's so much to be said about surrender versus perfectionism and being in that creative flow that at first it might not look anything like genius. Or other people might not recognize it as so. But that genius has an innate intelligence and it needs to flow, just as Martha Graham's quote said.

This brings me to something that I really want to emphasize in this podcast. This surrender and this practice of asking yourself what is mine and not mine, what is not yours is to judge how good or how valuable your work is, or how it compares with other expressions.

I have heard another story about Martha Graham, and I wasn't able to find it so that I could properly credit, source, or give attribution for this. But I remember at one point reading a story about Martha Graham earlier in her career. And she was dancing and had kind of hit this plateau or was going through a slump or a difficult stage.

And her teacher, her ballet teacher at that time basically said, "You are not doing your job. It is my job to judge, to teach, to tell you what to do, what

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not to do, to correct your form and so on. It is your job to dance. Your only job is to dance.”

So, judging our own work, particularly when we are such unreliable judges of our own work, we have this internal narrator that is very unreliable about us and our work, that’s a place where surrendering to what is yours, surrendering to what is yours to do in terms of channeling your creative genius, where you can lighten the load, like that’s not yours and if you try to take it on as yours, just be very well advised that you’re a poor judge and it’s not your job, again, to begin with.

Another place where I see that we think we’re not stepping into the role of God, but we are, is when we give a lot of power to gatekeepers, a lot of power to external circumstances. Like, if I get chosen in this audition, if I get picked for this role, if my book gets picked up, if my podcast gets picked up, then... handing over our creative destiny to someone else.

And this is where people will say, “Isn’t then you taking your power back, isn’t that actually taking power from God?” But no. Because notice what just happened there. you weren’t giving power to God actually, in that scenario. You were trying to give God’s power to gatekeepers, to the critics or people that seemed like they hold the key to your destiny. It’s not God, also, and not you.

So, surrendering is, you know, what is mine and what is not mine? And also including in that, what is not mine? A tendency to take on the higher power role, the role – and attribute that higher power role to someone like a gatekeeper. Also, we can give away what is ours, it’s the opposite of surrender to think, “Well, I will entitle myself to be relaxed and trust that I’m good and worthy and I can spend my life doing this work, when I get paid.” But that is also making money God or replacing money as your higher

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authority, rather than surrendering to the Creative Genius, capital C, capital G, that wants to flow through you, that vitality, that life force, that energy, that quickening translated through you into action. So, again, what is yours – as Martha said, it is yours to keep, your business to keep yours open clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.

Finally, a lot of people will ask, “Well, how do I know the difference between surrendering and giving up?” So, again, I want to use the Martha Graham example. She continued to dance. She surrendered to dancing. What she gave up was trying to control how good the dancing was, how others perceived her dancing. This podcast, creating this, is an act of surrender for me.

It is definitely something I feel compelled to do, like that there is an energy happening through me. And it was for sure a conversation I had with myself where I really wanted to be, first, the best podcaster in the world before I would actually share an episode.

But I was far enough along in life that I’m like, that’s not going to happen. I don’t want to go back to school. That’s not the way for me. That’s not my creative path. So, I surrendered, you know, those over-analytical hyper-vigilant defensive thoughts about being imperfect and doing this imperfectly. I surrendered the thought that, “Oh, gosh, I should listen to the best podcasters for a while and try to copy them or imitate them and be, quote unquote polished.”

And then also, I discerned through this practice, when I did what is mine and not mine, I’m like, that is not mine. And what is mine feels very vulnerable. It is speaking, offering, creating from my heart, knowing that there are places where it is imperfect, knowing too, part of surrendering to what is mine is the giving up of what is not mine, which is trying to contort

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myself into some sort of impossible position so that none of you out there listening at any time will ever have a single negative thought or judgment about me.

That's where I have to give that up and surrender to what is just mine to do. Create the podcast and let anyone think what they're going to think. Also, giving up an unkind practice to myself of thinking bad thoughts about my own podcast.

I've shared in other episodes the mental discipline and protocol I have for myself in terms of what I get to think, not think about creating this. So, I want to come back and share those three questions the surrender practice with you.

Take a deep breath and exhale. Surrendering is such an exhale. It is not a giving up. There is so much relief and relaxing into who you are meant to be. That doesn't mean that it's not hard work. I still show up, for instance, and create this podcast every week. But it is such a relief to let go of what's not yours.

And you place your hand on your heart and you ask, what is mine? What is mine here? What is not mine here? And what is not mine that I am attempting to make mine? What is not mine that I'm attempting to overreach or interfere with?

I hope this brings you so much relief and also helps liberate your creative genius. We certainly do not want to be in a world where that is lost.

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. I love having you here. And I'm always grateful just to know you are out there listening. And if you have enjoyed these podcasts, if they have been

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useful, inspiring, meaningful to you and you would like to pay it forward, the best thing you can do is to share, is to spread the word, subscribe, and go to iTunes and leave a review.

I greatly appreciate, again listening, and then all you do to share the podcast and help me reach more people and help this movement grow. When you are ready to take this work deeper and you want to be immersed in the work an immersed in this extraordinary community, there are a few different ways to do that.

You can join the free Facebook group. It's closed, but it's open and free to join. You just ask to join the group and there is just a question to answer, and then you'll be approved and admitted. You can join along and follow and connect on Instagram. My handle is @leahcb1 and I'm showing up there regularly, sharing things from Art School, all things relevant to the Art School community and unleashing your creative genius.

And then also, make sure you are signed up for my newsletter. Go to my website www.leahcb.com, get on my email list. And then you'll be the first to hear about upcoming Art Schools, upcoming free group coaching classes, other free trainings I offer.

The next round of the full Art School will be next winter, meaning 2021, early 2021, as well as the next round of Art School. But we will be opening for enrolment with some very good reasons to join early and take advantage of the limited space that's available for either the Art School Mastermind or the classic edition of the Art School, the 12-week edition.

So, to close this episode, I wanted to say again that surrender in the way that I am using it is not the surrender that we think of when we're talking

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about defeat, quitting, resignation, submitting to something that feels like it makes us and our life smaller or diminished.

And this poem from David White came to mind to illustrate this point. And it conveys the feeling and the energy, the experience that I'm speaking about when I'm talking about how surrendering to your creative genius and what your life is meant to be, how liberating that is, how life-giving that is.

So, he writes, "You must learn one thing; the learn was made to be free in. Give up all other worlds, except the one to which you belong. Sometimes, it takes darkness and the sweet confinement of your aloneness to learn. Anything or anyone that does not bring you alive is too small for you."

So, my friends, give up all the other worlds, except the one to which you belong. Ask yourself, "What is mine here? What is not mine? Where am I creating needless suffering for myself by trying to take on what is not mine?" And come back to what is yours. Come back to the world to which you belong. Come back home. Settle into your creative genius. Have a beautiful week, everyone and I look forward to talking with you next time.