

Ep #142: Finding the Answer: What Am I Doing Wrong?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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

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Things could be going great. They could be going great in your art, in your business, your relationships, your life. And yet, you find yourself feeling like some spark has gone out, that the magic just isn't there anymore, that things are great, but where's magic?

Or, you could be struggling. You could find yourself wrestling with the same trouble, problem, challenge, adversity that you thought you'd overcome in the past and yet here it is again.

In either of these scenarios, you may find yourself in this loop of thought, "What am I doing wrong?" That question, its answer, and how to move beyond that question is the topic of today's episode.

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 to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. I am coming to you from our screen porch. It's a lovely night, which is not why I'm out here, actually. The reason I'm out here is I had one technological snafu after the other today, which is funny considering the topic of today's episode, "What am I doing wrong?" I mean, that's not the title, but we're going to address that.

I haven't found the answer yet on the tech side. My desk computer, the one where I usually record podcasts in my office, in my studio, has locked me out. And so, I'm on my son's laptop recording this on the screen porch. And it is quite lovely. Fireflies are out. It's a beautiful summer's evening here in Michigan. And I am just cozying up with all of you.

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It would be a lot more fun if you were here in person. We could have a glass of something and a conversation and talk about, does this ever happen to you, this question, this thought loop, “What am I doing wrong?”

It doesn't have to be a non-productive question. But it can feel really maddening, especially when it's on a loop, like, “What am I doing wrong? What am I doing wrong?” And it seems like the answer always eludes you. It seems outside of you, and yet at the same time, if you've been on this path for a while, you've been doing this work of evolving your understanding of yourself and consciousness, you know. You know. You know, darn it, you have a role to play in it.

I don't always love the word self-sabotage, but you can sense that something along those lines is what's going on. Something in you as at odds. And despite all of your efforts and all of your best conscious intentions and thoughts and conscious beliefs and actions, you still aren't producing the result that you want, or you're not having the experience as you produce the result that you want.

And I get it. It can be very frustrating. And also, I want to say, there's no shame in this. Which is ironic – or maybe it's a paradox – because there is actually, likely, shame involved.

So, a personal recent story and one of the reasons why this is today's episode and not the other topic that I had planned, which we will get to in coming weeks. But I also had a sense of just tapping into, you know, whenever all of you out there in the world are listening, like feeling into what might you need to hear.

And maybe it's something that I also needed a reminder of. So, I also want to give a shoutout to my friend and extraordinary coach, and also human

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design expert Christie Inge, for her just general genius and illumination and conversations.

Because I was telling her that I was having this thought loop, “What am I doing wrong here? What am I doing wrong here?” And then, through meditating, through journaling, through just speaking it aloud to someone else and being open to getting coaching on it, to overcoming – I guess not overcoming my shame and the fact that I couldn’t figure this out myself... because shame keeps us hiding. And I don’t want to do that.

So, despite the shame, saying, “I have shame around this. Why can’t I figure this out?” And then the insight start to flow. And then, not surprisingly, there can be illumination and there can be a more clear scene. Because shame likes to keep things below the surface, where you can’t look at them with a clear awareness. And therefore those subconscious things continue to drive your life and control outcomes in ways mysterious to you, but that we call fate, to paraphrase Carl Jung.

So, it’s invaluable to have a safe place. And I know you’re also smart and I know you are also aware. And we are also human. And we are in this together.

By the way, the topic I had planned for tonight was legacy. And I think I have something different to say about that topic that will be of great interest to you and grab your heart, your mind, and your imagination in a way that maybe you’ve never thought about legacy before, and sharing some dear to me, close to my heart and soul thoughts and experiences on this topic. So, that’s coming.

But one of those things that I was going to share, it relates here. And I’m bringing this back around to shame and what are we doing wrong. And that

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is, with legacy, with shame work, with anything you're creating, the importance of remembering that you're not doing this alone.

I think I would love to do shame work alone. Because then I could not then actually have to feel it or experience it quite so acutely or share it with another and make yourself vulnerable. Actually, that the greatest healing – and I've experienced such great love and growth and wisdom and been able to receive wisdom from others and also feel it rise within myself during those times, the things when I'm like, "Oh god, I can't share this. anything but this..." and then that's what I share, the things that seem unsharable. It's such a gift.

So, give yourself that gift, by hook or by crook, find a place where you can do that. And that weaves into the legacy conversation that I wanted to have on another night with all of you too. Because I think again there, taking an approach to legacy in that it's not just you, it's not all on you. And in fact, legacy is very much a wholeness, we are all connected conversation.

But anyway, I digress. Back to this conversation about, what am I doing wrong? And I really wanted to emphasize that I feel shame around this topic. And then, we can feel shame about having shame. But if we think that we are ever going to arrive at a place – and this is what my friend Christie was so great at reminding me of – that's not the point.

Just in the same way that we know success is not the opposite of failure. I think you know this. If not, if you haven't listened to other episodes, revisit. I don't believe success is the opposite of failure. I believe failures help create our success. Therefore failure is actually success. And success is actually failure. You can't have success without failure.

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And similarly, if you think about anything that we're trying to create in life that we love, that is dear to us, that is meaningful to us, I at this point in my journey and looking around at humanity, I feel like experiencing shame, overcoming, healing it, understanding what's going on, moving through it, creating in spite of it, having compassion, having grace, being a channel of grace for ourselves and others, like what a dear gift. What a way to be a miracle to one another and ourselves. What a way to love one another and ourselves.

So, coming back to the context of this question, when we're asking ourselves on a loop and we're getting nowhere, just frustrated, what am I doing wrong here? So, one of the great opportunities here is to first remind yourself of what you want your relationship to yourself to be, what you want your relationship to yourself to be, no matter what. And then, what you want your relationship to your process to be.

Because you might be feeling shame, as I was, for not figuring out the thing that it seems like you should know how to do. And you can feel shame and experience that, but still decide that you want to have a loving, kind, and compassionate relationship with yourself.

And then, once that's established, then that liberates you to ask the kind of questions that could also include, "What am I doing wrong here?" from a vantage point that opens your mind to constructive answers. Because once I decided I am willing to feel shame because I know the greater context of the space that I'm going to hold for myself, then I could breathe again, then I could feel energy flow again. And then, I had new insights and inspiration and I could see pathways forward that I could not see before when I was stuck in just the shame loop of, "I'm doing something wrong, I should know better. I shouldn't do this. I'm ashamed. I don't want to look at it too closely because then I'll feel more shame."

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Once I decided what my relationship to myself was going to be, even if I was experiencing shame, then again there was liberation and there was freedom of thought. I could feel my heart open. And I could answers start to flow.

So, here's the ironic thing. Shame says, you know, when we are asking the question what am I doing wrong, we're really answering it with, "I am wrong. I am deeply flawed. There is something deeply wrong with me." So, the irony was, once I was willing to feel that and let it rise to the surface, then it dissipated. And instead, I could hear the question, what am I doing wrong, with a different filter.

I had a different perception of it when I heard the question, what am I doing wrong, instead of my mind hearing it as, "You are wrong," I could instead come up with productive answers such as – and there's irony and paradox all over the place in this one. But one of my answers was, "Well what I'm doing wrong is that I'm not doing enough wrong."

That was my huge epiphany and a-ha and insight, was that actually I was asking the question, what am I doing wrong, because I had created such a level of success but it wasn't feeling like success to perpetuate that or to sustain that. And then it made me realize, in my efforts to perpetuate or sustain it, what I was really doing was not going for success, but was just trying to avoid shame.

That is how trippy and tricky the subconscious and the ego can be. Because actually what I was doing wrong were things that before had been so right and been so right and been so right. But then, continuing to do these things that were quote unquote right and had sustained a level of success, what it was actually keeping me from doing was doing what was necessary to evolve to the next level.

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And here's what's necessary. To do some things wrong. To be willing to get more things wrong. So, as I mentioned earlier, I know that there is no success without failure, that failure, it's not just something you have to get through. It is part of cultivating success in my book. It is part of cultivating that extraordinary way of being that makes your extraordinary dreams inevitable. 1000% it is.

And cultivating the kind of relationship with yourself to be somebody that can move through failure and view it that way and feel the judgment of others and yourself and take risks, feel consequences, take chances, invest your life, your energy, your heart, your soul in things, put yourself out there, be willing to experience all things, including shame, when it doesn't work. That is part of success. And that is part of who I intentionally want to be, capital C Creative, courageous, genuine, authentic, innovative, tapped-in, leading, and pioneering.

And you don't get there by just repeating what you've done in the past. You don't get there without being willing to try a lot of things and without being willing to get lots of things wrong. And a note on getting things wrong. Sometimes, it might for sure feel like yes, I got that wrong.

I think there is also room for changing our relationship to that and then also changing the language and making it more open and nuanced. For instance, right now, I have been painting so much and loving it. and I'm also doing so many studies. More studies than I have ever, ever done before. Like, hundreds of fast ones.

And I guess I could look at each of those as, "Well, that's not it yet. I can see elements that I like. I feel yet though I still haven't found a match for what I'm feeling on the inside. I still haven't found whatever it is that I'm sensing. I haven't seen it externally, visually represented yet. I don't feel

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like I've hit the sweet spot yet, but I'm definitely learning along the way. I'm definitely seeing elements of things that I like along the way and I am expanding my range and changing things up and I am definitely enjoying it.

But I don't think of those studies as, well, those are 300 and some wrong attempts, or paintings, even though they're all meant to be things in and of themselves and I'm also using it as an exploratory tool with the intention that the things that I learn will end up in a larger piece, or larger piece or larger pieces or body of work.

So, that's just a sidenote on discerning for yourself the language that you want to use and the approach that you want to take. I think oftentimes, it isn't art. It is a nuanced line that we walk between calling something a study or getting it wrong. But what concerns me is when I hear artists or creatives or entrepreneurs, especially in early stages, say with a certain clenched fear intention, "I can't get this wrong. This has to work. This has to work." Because that's not the way you create success, by having things work.

If you're unwilling to have studies, to have things go wrong, if you're unwilling for trial and error, you are going to stunt your growth and it's going to be a very difficult process. And also, underlying that too to me signals that it's a great opportunity to return to what you want your relationship to yourself and to your process to be.

So, another element that I really wanted to highlight – and this was so helpful, again, for me to be reminded of, is that if there is a lesson that comes up again and it's something you've moved through before and then here it is again, shame will tell you that that's some kind of punishment and again that you are wrong.

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But again, if you can make a bigger space, once you make a bigger space for yourself so that illumination and insight and wisdom and grace are not eclipsed by shame, you create that vaster space, and then you can see there's another way of looking at this. There's another possibility.

And that is the one that I think is true. And that's that if you're learning this again, if this is coming to you to be learned again, it's because there is something that you haven't learned. There is something that you haven't integrated.

So, what I want to share with you in today's coach with me portion are some questions to help with integration. So, this does bring 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 this information and integrate it.

So, rather than just consume it and let it come in and flow out and be entertained, instead think about it. Contemplate it. Apply it to your life. Take it, integrate it, and make it transformational.

So, here are some questions that can help you move past the maddening, "What am I doing wrong? I don't know what I'm doing wrong. I can't figure this out. Why is this happening again," loop, and help you to integrate the wisdom that you're being invited to harvest and integrate.

And one of the questions is a favorite of mine and is from a Course in Miracles. And you can start with a statement actually, just saying. "I am willing to see this differently. I am willing to see this differently." And then asking the question, how can I see this differently?

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Along these same lines of, you know, when we change, the things that we look at change. Moving to that evolved level of consciousness, imagining yourself moving to that level of your evolution where this current problem, this current what am I doing wrong here no longer exists for you. It's dissolved. It's irrelevant.

So, you are this evolved version for whom it's simply irrelevant or you've overcome it. As that person, how do you show up? What are your thoughts about it? What energy? What charge or no charge do you feel around it?

And here's a question I love. If this thing were not a problem, what would you be giving your attention and energy to instead? For me, that is another way of approaching moving to your next evolved, next greatest self, your future self-consciousness. And I think a lot of times, the places where we get hung up on things, where we're not integrating lessons is because perhaps a part of us feels not ready or fearful of going all in on what we really want to focus on but are afraid to.

So, our subconscious devises all these clever ways to keep us immersed in this game of majoring in minor things. And when I say that, I don't mean to, like, demean the responsibilities we have of, let's say, if for you you're like, "Oh gosh, here I am again, I can't focus on writing my novel because I just need to keep up with paying the bills."

Well, that's a really awesome way for your subconscious to keep you from ever really getting to write the novel, is keep her consumed, keep him consumed with writing the bills and they'll just never get to it. So, again, it's why I love this question. If this were not a problem, what would you be focused on? What would you give your energy and attention to instead?

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And the final question that I want to offer you if you're facing a repetitive what am I doing wrong here, is to ask yourself to define what right is. Like, what's the opposite of wrong?

Let's say for you it's success. Well, define success. And then you might find, as I was doing, that success really isn't for me just a relief or an absence of shame. Success for me is so much more rich and nuanced than that.

Success for me is giving my attention and my energy to things I love and that are dear to me. Success for me is like a day like I had today, where I was able to be in the studio. I also had a piano lesson, which I love. When I needed a break, I got to walk through the prairie and really admire and take in the flowers. I had quiet time that was slow in my studio where I was doing studies and then I was also thinking, contemplating on some of these bigger topics. I then had time to wrap it up and go pick my daughter up from horse camp and go there early to see her and she showed me all of her favorite horses and make dinner with my family tonight.

There's an energy in all of those things. It's not just, I did this, I did this, I did this. But it's, again, that way of life and that way of being that I've been cultivating. And it's just a really useful reminder for me to immerse myself in that energy and to be clear on, well, if there's a part of my brain that's going to be so harsh about I'm getting certain things wrong, then it seems completely reasonable to have a conversation about what is right, and what does right mean?

And if it means success, then really defining that. And I think that's a question, an exercise that gets prescribed a lot. But rather than just doing it in a perfunctory, "Oh, success for me is time with my family and being able to be healthy..." like, really going into the embodiment of it. What does it

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feel like? What does that life taste like? What is the energy like? What is juicy about it? What makes you come alive in it? And really getting specific. Not just with words or labels or numbers or targets for goals, but with the energy, with what is the spirit that you radiate? What is the energy that you embody? Are you in love with your life?

What does that look like and feel like? So, if your brain, again, is going to harp on what am I doing wrong here, then really make sure that you know what the target for right is like.

I have so many other questions that I love on this topic. But rather than saturate and overwhelm, I will leave you with those to ponder and contemplate. So, the next time you find yourself in a loop of, “What am I doing wrong?” that you know you have the resources and you know you have the relationship with yourself to instead say, “I can see this differently. I’m willing to see this differently and I’m ready to, and I’m ready to integrate the lessons here. I’m ready to put this behind me and evolve and move to the next level.”

Thank you so much for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you’d like to learn more about this work, about the work that I do and the work we do together in the Art School, you can visit my website, www.leahcb.com.

And when you’re ready to take this work deeper, we’d love to have you join us for the Art School. We are currently enrolling for our fall Art School 2021. That session begins August 31st. I’m recording this late July 2021. That session is already half-full but we are still accepting applicants, still accepting enrolments. And if you have any questions about that at all, you can email us, support@leahcb.com and if you’d like, you can also set up a

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free exploratory call with a member of my team by emailing support@leahcb.com with exploratory call in the subject line.

So, to close, I have a few musings, a few parting thoughts, especially given that the next Art School starts in just a few weeks. And I've really been thinking about, you know, where is my greatest passion? What is the greatest use of my gifts, my attention, and my energy? And where can I have the greatest impact in people's lives?

And I really think it's when people are ready to move beyond this question of what am I doing wrong? And again, completely, I understand when we find ourselves there, I just did it myself again recently. So, I'm not saying that. But it's a willingness to say, I see that. I am willing though to see this differently because I'm willing to move on. I'm willing and I'm so eager and excited to see what's on the other side of this for me, and to create momentum, and to evolve my understanding and evolve my creativity.

And so, to close, I wanted to come back around and really emphasize this question. If this thing, this place where you may find yourself saying, you know, what am I doing wrong here? Why can't I get past this? Why can't I figure this out? If that were solved, or a moot point, a nonissue in your life, what instead would you be directing your precious creative attention, energy, and life force to?

I think there is such profound information. and whatever answer occurs to you and whatever energy comes back to you after that – and I sincerely hope that you give yourself the opportunity to sit with that and to contemplate that and to decide that, yes, that's where I'm going, that is where I am headed.

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Have a beautiful week, everyone. Thank you so much for being here and I look forward to talking with you next time.