

Ep #192: A Golden Thread to Follow When All Hope Seems Lost



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Leah Badertscher

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“I give you the end of a golden string, just wind it into a ball. It will lead you in at Heaven’s Gate, built in Jerusalem’s Wall,” William Blake. In today’s episode, I wanted to offer you a golden thread, something you can follow to create anything you want, from a poem, to a song, to a garden, to raising a family, to creating the life of your dreams. But also, a golden thread to follow when there is tragedy, when all hope seems lost, when it seems the way is entirely lost.

And while we each have our own sacred golden threads, there is also such power in doing this collectively. Such power in transforming the way we go about our lives, the way we go about healing and finding solutions, the way we go about creating a better tomorrow for ourselves and for everyone.

I want you to always remember that you have this golden thread. Each of us does. And I am so glad that you are here with me, so that we can follow it together.

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 to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. So much can change from week to week that I record these. Well, I should say so much can change, but unfortunately the events in the United States over July 4th are not a change in the direction that we would like.

I also happen to be home in Iowa for a long week, like 10 days, with my children, my husband, back visiting my parents in my childhood home on our family farm. And my siblings came with their families. My youngest

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brother also flew in from – well, he’s working both in Colorado and Salt Lake City. So, it was wonderful to have that time together.

And there was also so much heavy heartedness because of what’s happening in the world, the tragedies, losing the people who died in Texas, the migrant workers, shootings on the 4th of July, oh my god, everybody.

And there’s also – I don’t know if you experience this, how old you are listening, going home and seeing things change. Obviously, they do. And sometimes, I’m 43, maybe this is a typical thing in your 40s, or I think I’ve always been aware of this, but it’s just heightened, the feeling of loved ones aging and loved ones taking care of elderly loved ones who are aging and time running through your fingers and the kids being such a great age but it's going too fast.

I promise, this is not going to be an episode that brings you down, but rather gives you something to hang onto, literally, that golden thread. I just gave you some context, so that you know, I am human with a heart and that has felt the heaviness of these things. And I want to share with you, I don’t want to say something that works for me because that makes it sound like I’m fixing something about tragedy or the human condition. And I’m not.

What I’m offering you is a way, a way to navigate. And it’s a way that is also so powerful for creating anything. And I don’t want to present this in a way that makes it sound like, “Well, this is a method for creating and it will help you create...” you know, like a formulaic way of creating art, a reductionist way of creating art.

It is really a way to be capital C Creative in life and to not artificially segment those parts where you create because you’re an artist, whatever form that is, to not segment that off from, how do you create a meaningful well-lived life where your heart is open to the world and yet you are able to

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continue on when that open heart feels so heavy and when circumstances can feel so daunting.

I really believe that this creative work is transformative and it is transformative if you apply it to creating art. It will transform you as a person. It will transform your life. It's transformative if more and more of us do this collectively.

And guess what, everybody? We are. We are here doing this collectively. And I know, every time I get together with my Art School groups, the mastermind, which I'm so looking forward to being back with them next week, being in these gathered spaces where people are intending to live this way together. People are intending to create better and better futures, lives, worlds for themselves and for one another.

Oh gosh, that is such balm and it energizes my heart and soul, and I just want to share that with you so that you know you are reminded also, in case your heart feels heavy, that this is happening and we are doing this and we are rising and you do too have a golden thread to hang onto and follow it and follow it and follow it and it will lead you up and up and up and up.

Or, when necessary, through and through and through. And as with anything, it so helps to know that you are not alone. In fact, it helps so much to know that – and that was a painting that I created – it's still one of my favorites – long ago. And I think of that painting often because there was such an energy in the creation of it and in the end result that just reminds me, when I feel overwhelmed, that I am not alone.

So, I wanted to offer that message for you as well. You do have a golden thread and you are not alone, including by listening in here and being a part of this community.

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And come to think of it, you are not alone is so apropos for this episode because I feel like this episode is a guided, delivered one from some of my favorite teachers and mentors. I'm thinking of four in particular that have been in human form, only two of them I've met in person and the other two, I just feel a spiritual mentorship, kinship with.

The first one I want to mention, I've actually done an episode about him before, William Stafford. He is an American poet. He's since passed. And I was introduced to him by another of the mentors, teachers I had in mind. And he is someone I have met, and his name is Fran Quinn. I've mentioned him on several podcasts. He has been my poetry mentor for several years and he's introduced me to worlds of poetry that I didn't know existed, poets, and a way of approaching poetry and art and I am eternally grateful to him.

And one of the poets that I just fell in love with that he introduced me to was William Stafford. And I have done, as I mentioned, an episode on William Stafford, Bill Stafford, a year or two years maybe ago, and we'll link that up in the show notes.

I just love his poems. I love his voice. And I also love what he has left in the way of instruction about writing, about creativity. I think you can pick much of that up from the way he writes, the energy that's transmitted through the way he writes, the words, the language, the tone, the generosity. And then also, an amazing book, *Writing the Australian Crawl*.

I won't talk too much about that in this episode because again I talked about it at length in the episode about him and I would highly encourage you to check that out. I resonate so much with his very generous, gentle, deeply trusting, sacred, loving approach to creativity.

And there's a wonderful conversation between him, Bill Stafford, and another of my mentors, teachers, again, someone I haven't met but gained greater knowledge of through Fran Quinn.

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Fran and Robert were dear friends. And so, it's not just a tangent that I'm mentioning people by name and how I came to know about them. I also want to make clear that there's part of this following the golden thread that is, yes, it's individual to you, we'll talk about that in a moment. And then also, emphasize this aspect of a community, of allowing yourself to be supported, that that golden thread, that trust in the creative process will also lead you to people who will be so dear to your heart and soul. It is like they were meant to be connected with you and support you in this lifetime.

And your dear soul gets to be supported in this lifetime with teachers, with mentors, with those who love you dearly, with those that love your soul, love your creativity, believe in your divinity and your brilliance and see that in you over and over again until you also know that to be the truth of you.

And I want to emphasize this kind of communal energy because it is a different paradigm than many of us experienced on our paths to create anything, to create our lives.

We may have experienced so much judgment, so much shame, so much fear of being criticized and just normalized that that's the way, that's the gauntlet you pass through.

And I'm not saying that there aren't ways to take all of that and use it to your advantage. There are. And I am also here at this point in time to say it is also possible to have a community, to have an experience, to create for yourself as well this ecosystem where you relax and you love your expression into being. You relax and you open up as a channel for the divine, as a channel for capital C Creativity.

I want to give you an opportunity to know yourself in that way, to be relaxed and to experience what can come through you in that way. And I want to also give you examples of teachers who nurture and grow this way.

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So, there's also a delightful conversation between Bill Stafford and Robert Bly on the William Stafford website, and we'll link up to that in the show notes, or you can search for the Golden Thread William Stafford and Robert Bly and it will bring up this wonderful two-minute conversation that opens with the Blake quote that I opened the episode with, which I'll read for you again here.

"I give you the end of a golden string, just wind it into a ball. It will lead you in at Heaven's Gate, built in Jerusalem's Wall." So, William Blake. Here we have another mentor and teacher. And again, I want to offer that artists are always doing this, have always this capacity to be able to do this, to offer one another, to offer the world a golden thread, that by following it, will lead us all to Heaven's Gate.

I'm speaking metaphorically, of course here. And I think this applies whether it is a greater future, a greater society we are building, whether we are navigating legislation, policy, mass societal change, opinions, hearts converted. It also applies to the creative process, an experience of the process that is not like – I mean, I say I give you the end of a golden string, just wind it into a ball. He didn't say, "I'm giving you this huge, tangled cluster F of a thing, good luck with that," and then the harder you pull on the ends, the tighter the ball gets.

That anxiety kind of ridden process, that's not what he said at all. Although that is, again, understandably, we can feel and we're also taught to try to solve problems that way, from ourselves feeling like that tangled, knotted mess that we are trying to unravel, but that the harder we pull, just the more knotted and enmeshed and hopeless we feel.

And they speak in this video too about following the thread. Not yanking on the thread. Not pulling on the thread. But there is a gentleness and there is a calmer, relaxed, more still way of being as you follow the thread.

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And the thread is an image, a metaphor, a technique that comes up a lot in the Art School and in my coaching. It's actually a visceral experience I have when coaching sometimes. And I will say – Art Schoolers will be familiar with this. I'll say, "Okay, I'm going to ask a lot of different questions. I just want to hear you talk about something for a while," because what I'm doing is I'm feeling for threads. I'm feeling around for the golden thread.

And the thing is, I know there always, always is a golden thread. And if collectively we all trust and sink into that – and I have amazing client who at first if they were weirded out, they didn't let on. They just went along with it. But now, it's kind of par for the course, just to allow this meandering and allow whatever presents itself as a thread, even if it seems so irrelevant.

And they speak to that in the video, you know. If you see, in the conversation between Bill Stafford and Robert Bly, if you see a man walking on the sidewalk in the morning and that strikes you, as a poet, you would sit down and just begin writing, trusting that that captured your attention, there's a certain essence to the way that felt to you, and then you follow that thread, and you follow it, even if you can't see where it leads, you just trust that it is connected to Heaven's Gate, and following that process can be such a sacred process.

It can be – and it didn't say Hells' Gate. It didn't say torment. It said Heaven's Gate. And again, I don't want to dismiss attributes like strength and, I mean, I love tenacity, and for me, it has a particular flavor of being mixed with trust.

When you are trusting, when you are relying on faith, it is so much easier to channel a kind of tenacity because you know you are connected to something. You're not hoping. You're not grinding it out. You are hanging onto this thread, and sometimes you feel the knowing, and sometimes you don't, but it's cultivating a way of being where you get more and more acclimated to a way of life where you're trusting that thread.

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Because sometimes, I have conversations with people and they'll say, "Wow, you're so courageous. You're so brave." And I don't think so. I know how scared I feel sometimes, which I know, without fear there is no courage. But I also know what a golden thread feels like. And so, maybe the courage comes from, "I don't always know where it leads." But I do know the kind of life that you can live when you are following threads like this.

The other teacher that I wanted to mention as an inspiration for this episode is Martha Beck. And so think several months ago, I think I was – I know I was – in this very reflective phase, having been in this line of work, the coaching in particular, for over a decade. And it was over a decade ago when I met Martha for the first time, when I attended a few of her retreats.

And it was utterly magical and utterly life-changing. And she would say, "Is it magic, or is it science?" And you know, both. Or are they not distinct? It felt magical. I'm sure there's an utterly scientific explanation for it. And completely life-changing.

So, I fell in love with the possibilities that I saw open up again before me then. I fell in love with how it transformed my approach to the creative process and also aligned with it so much. It felt so much like things that I had been intuiting and were affirmed and I also fell in love with Martha's approach to coaching and to creating a life.

And so, I was thinking a lot about her, beginning several months ago, and thinking, "Oh my gosh, I wish there were an opportunity to go on a retreat with her again or something like that," And that also is what prompted me to want to do my own retreat because I could hear her say, "Well, if you want it, if you're craving it, create it."

So, I thought, I'll create my own magical retreat experience, which we did have. Thank you to my magical client guests, when we gathered early June

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at Lake Michigan. And then also, I saw the opportunity to take an online course that she was offering.

And we've only had one class, but it's just so great to be in her energy and the community that she gathers. And she also brought to my attention, reminded me of two poems I really love. And one – I think I probably have actually used them both in prior episodes of this podcast. And I know I've used them both in the Art School. I want to share them again here with you. It's very relevant to this golden thread conversation, and the next one I'll share in coming weeks.

So, one of the poems she shared is a William Stafford poem, and it is one of my favorites. And even though she recorded this class, gave this class at the beginning of my trip back to Iowa, a week before July 4th, it was like my soul knew I would need to have that poem in hand.

And I want to also remind any of you out there who are like, "Oh, my words don't matter. My art doesn't matter," know it's the work of your soul and it's the way we keep extending one another, the golden threads, the mirrors of our own golden threads. It

It's the way we keep reminding each other that we do have this connection to something greater that's pulling us through that will help us create our art, that will help us create a new world.

The poem by William Stafford is entitled The Way It Is, "There is a thread you follow. It goes among things that change. But it doesn't change. People wonder about what you are pursuing. You have to explain about the thread. But it is hard for others to see. While you hold it, you can't get lost. Tragedies happen. People get hurt or die. And you suffer and get old. Nothing you can do can stop times unfolding. You don't ever let go of the thread."

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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, don't just listen passively and be entertained by the information, but take it, integrate it, think deeply about it, contemplate. Think about how you can make changes and shifts in your life, what it means to you.

Drop into your psyche in a way that you can't rationally analyze and know that when you take it in, in this active way, and work with it, that's how you make this transformational.

What I want to invite you to for this coach with me segment is that you spend some time getting in touch with that thread. It's not something you analyze. It's something you drop into and feel and sense.

Martha brought the poem up, Martha Beck, in the class because she said people often ask her how she navigates through life, through adversity, through challenge, through creating anything.

And she was explaining that she's felt like kind of from her heart center, maybe her solar plexus, that there is this thread and she follows that. And then that person said, "Oh my gosh, have you heard this poem by William Stafford? I just memorized it."

And so, what I want to say about this is that don't just stay in your head about this, that the thread isn't an abstract concept. It is and it is also so much more than that. It is, but it is not.

There is a visceral sense you can get and I can feel it when speaking with my clients, and then they can feel it too. Once your attention is willing to be open enough to leave room for the belief that it's there and can be felt, then you often tend to be able to find it.

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And letting go of any belief that you're doing something wrong, if you can't, the thread is there. It wants to be found and felt. And sometimes, all you need to do for a while is just tell yourself, it is there, I do feel it, and bypass those thoughts that tell you you're kidding yourself. Use the Byron Katie, approach, who would I be without these thoughts that I can't find this golden thread?

And it might be glaringly apparent. It might be so subtle. But it's there. If you have a dream or a goal or a desire for your life, or if you have something that is distressing you and is moving you into a different direction, there is a thread within any and all of those things.

You don't have to extract it like squeezing blood from a stone. You don't have to focus hard and you get that constipated feeling, like you're trying to get something out. You don't have to force yourself to come up with it. But relax into it. Open up. Trust that the thread is there.

Use, again, I think even just the energetic teaching, not to mention the words that are exchanged in the golden thread conversation between Bill Stafford and Robert Bly is incredibly generous in the way it can help you shift into finding the golden thread and following that, which is a very different approach than trying to figure something out or fearing that there's no thread there and that you have to weave it yourself.

This episode, I hope so many episodes of this podcast also help you shift mind, body, and spirit into this way of being where you can trust the golden threads that run through your life, you can trust yourself deeply to follow them, and you can know that it goes among the things that change, but it doesn't change. And you can remember, don't ever let go of the thread.

And I also want to say though, the thread also has you. So, part of this is remembering that, remembering that attachment and waking up to that. I

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think when he says don't let go of the thread, it could also be said that it is a reawakening to the thread that has always will always be there.

Thank you so much for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. I love having you as part of this community and I deeply appreciate your support, whether that comes in the form of going to iTunes and leaving a review, subscribing, sharing this episode and others with friends, colleagues, allies.

And I also love the connections made on Instagram when you tag me, @leahcb1, #theartschool, #theartschoolpodcast, it really informs my own creativity. That helps me know what's connecting with you, what's useful for you, what uplifts you and helps you move the needle in your creativity and in your life in the most meaningful and profound of ways for you.

And whether you just want to stay connected or be sure to hear about upcoming Art School events, whether it's the classic signature Art School, whether it's mastermind, whether they're one-day popups, retreats. Actually, I'm doing a retreat and a talk coming up in October with the platform Revel11. So, more news of that will be coming out soon.

The best way to stay connected and not miss a thing is to sign up for my newsletter. You can do that by going to www.leahcb.com. You can also follow the link in the show notes, or go to my Instagram account and the Link Tree will have a link to take you there.

To close today, I wanted to share again those lines from William Blake, "I give you the end of a golden string, just wind it into a ball. It will lead you in at Heaven's Gate, built in Jerusalem's Wall."

So, here's a mini coach with me. You could take a poem like that and you could realize that, at some level, it resonates so profoundly, so powerfully

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with you and then you move about your life, or you could spend some more time with it.

How would your life actually be different if you believed there was a golden string leading you to Heaven's Gate? How would that level of deep trust change your life? How loved would you have to believe you are in order for that to be true? And how would knowing that you were that loved, how would knowing that change everything about life, about creativity?

This would be such a wonderful poem to memorize, and more than memorize, it would be an epic poem to know by heart, to take in with every fiber of your being. "I give you the end of a golden string, just wind it into a ball. It will lead you in at Heaven's Gate, built in Jerusalem's Wall."

You each have that golden thread. You are that loved, that precious, that known, guided, and held. Have a beautiful week, everyone. I love you so much. Thank you for being here and I look forward to talking with you next time.