

# Ep #195: Creature Mode: How to Stop Playing Safe



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Leah Badertscher**

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One way I have of describing the Art School – and this is kind of a tongue-in-cheek way – is calling it the ultimate, epic make and take. You know those workshops or classes that you went to where you would learn how to make something and then you take it home with you.

Well, in the Art School, it's not just a single class or a single workshop. It's an ongoing process, container, anywhere from – we do two-week programs, to 12-week, to six-month. And part of the design of that process is that you do have something that you are making, that you are creating. And here is why.

The creative process is meant to engage your creature self. You see how those words share a root. In the modern world, too often we are taught that the creative process is something that just happens in our heads, and we kind of deny that the rest of us is involved. Or we begrudgingly use it or are dismissive, or just take it for granted, rather than access the power of something that I call creature mode.

I'm going to give you a brief introduction into what I mean by creature mode today. But more than that, I'm going to let you in on a little experiment that I am doing myself, a little experiential process. And then, I'll share with you what I learned from that process. Not from thinking about it, but from doing, from taking action, from engaging my whole self, my creature self in the creation of something new, and the creation of a brand-new way.

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.

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Hi, everyone. Leah here. I have a quick message for you before we dive into the podcast today. I wanted to let you know about a special event coming up, a workshop that I am cohosting with the organization RevelEleven. They're amazing. If you haven't checked them out yet, be sure to do that. But this free workshop takes place Thursday, August 18th from 8AM to 9AM Pacific Standard Time. So, for those of us on the East Coast, that's 11 to noon Eastern Standard Time. And it's titled Finding Your Creative Compass: An Introduction.

And the reason that it is an introduction is that I will be doing an in-depth talk out in Seattle this October, the evening of October 19th, to be exact, and then Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, I will be coleading a retreat with RevelEleven at their beautiful retreat center outside of Seattle.

But again, first I wanted to make sure to invite the entire Art School listening community to this free workshop happening Thursday, August 18th. There will be links to sign up at my website, in the show notes, and also by going to the RevelEleven site. You can Google them or also find links in the show notes.

So, just a little bit about what you can expect from this conversation on the 18th, August 18th. I'm going to be introducing the topic of something I call – a tool I call – the creative compass. But more than a tool, it's something, an inner gift, a phenomenon we all possess. Unlike a traditional compass, which helps you chart a course in a predetermined reality that you can't change and don't seem to have much power to influence, the creative compass is creative, internally creative by nature, and it is one of those rare things in life that changes everything, first by changing how you see yourself, and your life.

I can also promise you a joy-filled, beautiful, generative, creative conversation with so much great energy. Joni Parsons, one of the

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cofounders of RevelEleven, will be interviewing me. That will be the format of this workshop. And every conversation that I ever have with Joni, I leave feeling inspired and uplifted. And we want to share that energy with you. So, again, I want to invite you to this workshop with RevelEleven, Finding Your Creative Compass: An Introduction, Thursday, August 18th.

I would love for you to join us. It would be amazing to have a great contingent of this special Art School community there for this special event.

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Hello, everyone, and welcome to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. So, I told you that today, I'm going to give you an introduction to something that, for years, I have referred to as creature mode. It came to me first, I thought it was my secret mindset psychological go-to when I was a competitive triathlete. And then, I found it is also my way in for creative work, and many other aspects of life as well. So, more on that for a minute.

But my creature self, I have to say, is really loving summer. And I wanted to let you in on some of the things that my creature self is loving, the ways I'm nourishing all aspects of my creative self, in case it inspires something similar for you. Because it's not only about what we make and the results. It's about the life that we're living.

And so, life changes with the seasons, and my creature self is loving getting up with the sun and not rushing to either work out or even meditate first thing, but listening to what I am drawn to. And lately, what I have been drawn to is to take a walk outside, with or without my coffee, visit my flowers, visit the wildflowers, see the sun rising at that angle, walk with my bare feet in the grass, and then go sit on the back patio which faces east, and take in that first sun.

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Cannot tell you how nourishing that sun food feels. And swims, letting my creature self love swims. All of this, so many other things, and it calls to mind the lines from Mary Oliver's poem Wild Geese, "You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your knees for 100 miles through the desert repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves."

To know, though, what the soft animal of your body loves, you have to remember that you have that soft animal of your body aspect to you. You have to remember that you too are nature, you too are a creature. And it's no mistake that the root of creature and the root of creative are one and the same.

So, why aren't we taught more to lead with the soft animal of our body? Why aren't we taught more to lead with what it loves? Fear, I'm guessing. And I don't want to go too far down into that rabbit hole in this episode because I really wanted to keep the words, the language of this episode short, and instead let this be a place where I'm leading by example and sharing what my actual experience is.

So, here's my thought. In the next week, I have a thought that I would love – this creature body would love – just to paint and paint and paint. I mean, I feel like I've got dozens of paintings in me. Can I do that in a week? I don't know. Probably focused, if that's what I let myself love and do for an entire week, yes. So, I'm going to have at it.

So, this is not like an accountability goal. It's a different kind of experiment. And I'm going to rely on creature mode. And so, here's my introduction explanation of creature mode. When I was a competitive triathlete, I was finding that I was having the same roadblocks as I'd often have in other areas of my life, mainly being my own worst enemy, quote unquote. I wouldn't use that language now. Getting in my own way, same thing.

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And this was really heartbreaking, frustrating to me. I felt like that held me back as an athlete when I was in high school as well. And I often heard, “Oh, you’re overthinking, you’re overthinking.”

And so, those of you who have seen the Top Gun Maverick movie will recall the line where he says, “Don’t think... do.” I do think that comes naturally to me. I do think I’d conditioned it and conditioned it out of myself.

And so, along the lines of my triathlon training, it’s so meditative, it’s the long-form art of a sport. You have a lot of time to meditate. You have a lot of time to get familiar with the inner workings of yourself and to watch the inner workings of your mind, if that’s what you’re drawn to do.

And I noticed that there were actually two – to make it very simple – two aspects of me. I noticed that I didn’t need to think all the time, in the certain way where I’m thinking and analyzing and keeping a running narrative in my head and planning and strategizing and problem solving.

I learned that that could go silent and I could drop into my body and be in closer contact with this deep and profound animal. It felt like animal intelligence within me. And from that place, I was able to increase my times. I wasn’t competing with self-defeating thoughts. I was just in like an animal self that wanted to move, that wanted to race, that wanted to feel the way I felt when you would probably hear it described as being in flow.

But I felt like I could access that flow by reminding myself of what creature mode is. And it was actually from repeated experiences of this, long bike rides, long swims, long runs, that I started to feel this other energy rising in me and I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I was an artist. I could feel paintings within me. I could feel stories. I could feel so much rising energy that the closest I could do then to put language on it on the other side was, “It’s art, I’m an artist.”

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And at this time, no, I was not. I was a law student with no prospect as a creative and as an artist. But it was in these long meditative times and in creature mode where what I'm going to call my left brain was silent and I was just in my body, that I was not only able to go past my previous limitations, what I thought were my limitations physically and athletically, because I was just training my body without also simultaneously having to compete with self-defeating thoughts and that running narrative in my mind, which I realized then had been such an energy drain, but I had just tolerated as who I was.

I then had this distance, like, "Oh, that's not me." And it's also optional. It wouldn't be until a few years later when I learned things, like what the Buddha said, "You are not your thoughts." And you don't have to believe everything you think.

But it was in those moments, in movement, in what I called creature mode because that's what it felt like to me – I felt an animal and spiritual self. I felt this other self. It was in those places that I think a space was made and this other energy could be channeled through the pure creative self. And this other energy that just, to me, was like paintings, I felt like I had paintings in me and I just needed to dance them out, get them out.

It's what my body wanted to do. It's what something within me through my body also wanted to do. And it felt more like me, even though it felt also so new, than anything that I thought I was, any idea I had about who I thought I was. Even though I also had no external validation for this as who I was.

So, what does this have to do with the experiential part I referred to in today's episode? Well, I'm going to do a bit of an experiment because every week for the last – I don't know, I think we're nearing 200 episodes – I have created a podcast for you. Every week, a podcast has come out.

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And with each time, I work more and more while also using language to move more into that creature mode, that comfortable creature mode as I do so, being a more clear channel for what I most care about in terms of you as the audience, and what I most care about is whatever is within you that wants to rise up, that that does, that you get to experience you unleashed, you get to experience the profound purity.

I'm not speaking morally, but it's the pure essence of your creative spirit. I care about your evolution and I believe so deeply that creativity, which we all have, is an aspect that will aide in our personal evolution and our collective evolution. And what can get in our way is overthinking. Where does that stem from? Habit. And also fear, feeling we need to protect ourselves.

So, my experiment this week is to go into full on creature mode in terms of creating paintings, creating art, to drop the thinking, drop the narrative about how I need to judge, how good it needs to be, and to just let it unleash and pour out.

I am not promising you any promises because I think it can be one of those scenarios where expectation creates limitation. I'm going to be my own guinea pig for you here in this experiment. And also, I know any time I've done something like this in the past, it's through creativity, through the act of making that I come to know myself more, that I build my soul out I the world, and whatever I'm building continues to build me. And it doesn't just stay with me. There are vast ripple effects, especially for those of you listening who are like, "Yes that's what's speaking to me too," to create what wants to happen through me knowing that as I do so, what I'm building out in the world is also building me.

I'm here for that. I'm here for my evolution. I'm here to see what's inside me, these worlds inside of me. It only recently dawned on me – I think I



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knew this, but it just dawned on me on a different level. I was looking back – as I was cleaning out my studio – over years of paintings, and there are so many of my paintings that are the ones that are less abstract and have maybe more figures in them, where these figures have worlds, and worlds within worlds within them.

And I knew I knew that. I didn't do that on purpose. I'd observed it before, but it just hit me on a different level. One of the things that I love about this creative work is that discovery of the infinite that lives inside you. There's no end to it.

One of my favorite things to hear a client say is, "I didn't even know that was in me. I didn't even know I could do that. What else is in me?" It's this profound feeling of aliveness and awe, which we all get to have; awe and wonder at you and at being alive.

I recently shared on IG this quote I love from Thich Nhat Hanh, and he said, "Because you are alive, everything is possible." So, this week is going to be about an explanation of that. What is possible for us?

And so, that 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. What have you been overthinking, trying to keep yourself safe, trying to plan, strategize, trying to be smart, when you could use maybe what feels reckless, maybe what feels like freedom?

You could just use letting it rip, letting yourself move into creature mode, play with that, and letting things pour through you. Let yourself warm up. It's okay if it doesn't happen right away. But where are you overthinking and where can you just dive in and start swimming?

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Another athletic metaphor that I love – because I’ve been going to the pool a lot lately and I have been loving swimming since I changed my relationship to it. We talked about that many episodes back, but revolutionized my relationship with swimming to learn to love to swim. And yet still, when I go to the pool on the hottest of days, when I know I will love the swim, after that first lap, something about just getting in the water, my body seizes up a bit and it wants to be timid and it wants to toe-in.

And I notice myself taking time getting over to the edge, taking time, dinking around with my goggles. And I’m like, “Oh god, get over it already. Just get in the pool. Jump in, like a kid does.” And so, when I move from being back on my heels to being more of that forward cannonball into the pool energy, it reminds me to be aware of where I’m doing that in the rest of my life.

Where am I back on my heels? And where could I use more of that forward delight, I know it’s going to be cold and I love it, kid cannonballing energy? So, I invite you to think about that metaphor too if that suits you.

Where are you holding back, back on your heels, overthinking? And where do you just need to dive in and start doing, start making? Action creates clarity. The actual work of creating something, not intellectualizing it, not planning for it, but the actual doing of it, that creates clarity. That also builds something within yourself that over time you will get to know as who you really are. And the more you do that, then it’s going to be that self that you see expressed out in the world and you’ll be like, “Oh, that’s what I’ve been longing to see.”

That experience of when you create something and you’re like, “Oh my god, that was in me.” And you also see it in recognition, even though it’s mysterious, even though it’s different of how you’ve thought about yourself,

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you also know it to be one of your deep, complex, magnificent cosmic truths.

So, your coach with me, experiment with the creature mode, dive into the pool, look at where you're overthinking, and again, cannonball anyway. Create along with me this week. I'd love to see what you are actually making too. Tag me on Instagram. I'm @leahcb1. You can also #theartschoolpodcast, join in the free Facebook group, the Art School Facebook group, and we can have a collective sharing creature mode party in there.

But whatever you do, again, jump on in. Just start swimming. Just keep swimming. Just keep making. But jump on in. You will be so glad that you did.

Thank you for listening to another episode of *The Art School Podcast*. If you have enjoyed this podcast. If these episodes have helped you move the needle in your life, I'm so glad. That is what I am here for. And if you want to spread this message and this energy and be a part of the changing paradigm, this rising tide of thriving creative energy, the best way to do that is to share the podcast, is to subscribe. You can also go to iTunes and leave a review.

If you want to stay in closer connection with this community, make sure you are on my email list. One of the reasons you'll want to is because I'm going to be sharing opportunities to work with me for free, individually and in a group setting, and also at significant, significant discounts.

As I said in the episode today, I am so in love with these words from Thit Nhat Hanh, "Because you are alive, everything is possible." I want you to know how true that is for you. So, there are many opportunities to be in the environment of this energy and these kinds of teachings and supported

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coaching in an extraordinary community just by signing up for my free emails. It's my newsletter, the Art School newsletter. Just by being in the free Art School Facebook group.

And if you want to deep dive, if there are specific big goals and creative dreams that you're like, "I am not waiting anymore. I am not holding back anymore. I am not playing small anymore. I want to embody this energy of because I am alive, everything is possible," then I highly encourage you to apply for the Art School Mastermind.

Doing this work of becoming the person, the artist, the creative that you are meant to be, that work requires the kind of conditioning that I've likened to Olympic training. Of course, you have to have the vision first. But then, you have to show up and train for it because this is literally about rewiring your mind and reconditioning your body and spirit to become more yourself than ever, releasing anything that's not you so that that pure potential can shine through, just like as an Olympic athlete, you couldn't watch one on TV through the Olympic Games or read a book about one and be like, "Yes, I get it now. I understand them. Now I'm an Olympic athlete."

No, if that's what you really wanted, you would train. And the best athletes in the world have the best coaches and support community. Why shouldn't artists and people with an entirely new creative vision for their life and for their world be any different? Give yourself the best support, the best coaching, and an extraordinary community that is absolutely life-changing. I can't overstate that.

Just this week, on our group coaching call, I had the following comments posted. Well, this one was posted to our Slack forum, "Dare I say it, best class I've ever taken." And this is from someone who is a seasoned veteran and has done incredible, epic things in her life.

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Another client messaged me and said – because I opened playing the soundtrack, the Danger Zone, from the Maverick soundtrack. And she said, “How about superhighway to the mind-blown zone?” And another client wrote that it was, “Profound.” Another said, “Alchemical and life-altering magic.”

And that all happened just on a Tuesday, everybody, in an hour on a Tuesday. And sometimes, we laugh and say, “Does anybody know what’s going on in here and the rest of the world when there’s all of this mind-blowing magic happening in these parts that we call the Art School and the Art School Mastermind?”

And something else that came up in our call this week was recognizing where you’re telling yourself, “I can’t.” So, if you’ve ever heard yourself say, “I’d like to be in the Art School or the Art School Mastermind, but I can’t,” replace that with, “I would like to be, and right now I’m choosing not to be. Right now, I’d like to be, but I won’t because I am not willing to...” X, Y, or Z, put myself out there, bet on myself, take a chance on my dream, on giving myself the best possible ecosystem for my success.

The power in switching, “I can’t,” to, “I’m choosing not to,” or, “I won’t because,” it gives you all of your power back. It gives you the power of choice back. So, this is a bonus coach with me for you here. For those of you that are like, “No, I can, and I will, and I am ready for the best of everything, I am ready for that energy of because I’m alive, everything is possible,” then you are ready to be in this group, and soar. Submit your application. I would love to read it. And I would love to see you on the inside of one of our upcoming calls.

So, to close today, I have a little story for you, another experiential story. One of my clients that was on the call on Tuesday realized that a place where she was saying, “I can’t,” was she thought it was just a set rule that

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you had to have a certain amount of time and space to create a painting. And she realized, that was a place where she was telling herself, “I can’t because I don’t have enough time.”

But if we remove that, because that was the instruction, remove, “I can’t,” from your vocabulary, and what are you left with? What do you see differently? How do you see differently? What resources and choices are then available to you when you take, “I can’t,” off the table?

And for her, she saw she could paint with the time that was there, even though she didn’t have her typical setup and didn’t have as much time as she thought she needed. And what arose from that session was profound. The painting that she shared, to me, exhibited new levels of her as an artist coming through, things that have been there all along, but her essence shimmering through in brand new ways, not to mention the barriers broken in the mind around rigid rules, around how much time one needs for painting and how it must be done.

So, I rerecorded the end of this podcast when I saw her also post this in Slack because I said, “Oh my god, we have another psychic in the group.” No surprise because this is just what I was speaking about in recording the podcast episode today.

So, what she wrote that was one of her takeaways from this experience was, “It’s a good example on how taking action got me further than, quotes, trying to figure it out, unquote. I got there in the end.”

For all of you, that is my wish for you, that you have the joy – because she also wrote she was on such a big high, the best kind of high for the rest of the day after that experience. Life can be like that. You get to experience things within yourself flowing through you. You get to realize places that

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you thought were hard and fast rules actually don't have to apply to you when you decide you're no longer choosing them.

You don't have to choose your limitations. You can choose everything is possible for you when you are alive. That's what I want for you. And also, giving yourself plenty of opportunities over and over and over again. Practice it, practice it as in make it a practice. Because you are a creative being cultivating an extraordinarily creative and an extraordinary way of life.

Practice taking action, creating, and how that does get you there, gets you so much further than staying on the edge of the pool, dipping your toes in, trying to figure it out. Jump on in, my friends. Enjoy some creative cannonballing this week. And again, share. I would love, love, love to see it. Don't leave me hanging here. Join me in this experiment because I am a vulnerable creature too, even in my creature mode. Actually, not so much when I'm in my creature mode. I don't actually notice, to tell you the truth.

But then, I come out of my creature mode and I'm like, "Oh, feeling a little vulnerable." So, join me. Join me in cannonballing creatively. I'd love to hear about it. Instagram message me, Pony Express, whatever you've got, and have a beautiful week. I look forward to talking with you and reporting back to you on my painting experiment with creature mode next time.