

Paula: Hello, and welcome to the Cosmic Business Salon, where we are talking about how you can build your ethical and equitable, spiritually aligned and financially successful business so that you can bankroll the change you wanna see in the world. I'm Paula Crossfield, your host, Ayurvedic astrologer and business coach, helping spirit-led entrepreneurs leverage their cosmic blueprint to make more money and impact and I'm here today with Liz Kimball, who is a creativity coach, writer, and speaker dedicated to helping the next generation of women creators produce the major creative works of their lifetime, Creator of the Creative 15 and the original source creativity incubator. Liz's work focuses on catalyzing individual and collective change through the magic of the creative process. Liz's work has been featured at TEDx, oprah.com, the Guggenheim, the New School, the Female Quotient, and at universities and institutions throughout the country. Welcome, Liz, Such a pleasure to be here with you.

Liz: It's a total delight to be here. I'm so excited for this conversation.

Paula: So let's jump in. You've said that our business is a creative act and even a container for your creative voice. Can you talk a little bit more about this?

Liz: Yeah. Okay so when I started my business, so first of all, I didn't plan on starting a business, I don't know if like, you know, I'd be so interested, like how many of us you know, this was like what we knew we were gonna do when I track back to what I really wanted to do as like a little girl being a CEO and an entrepreneur was always part of it but I forgot that for like several decades as most of us do and then I essentially started a business overnight kind of out of a need which is, you know I had a client list and I had to kind of like start this business so as a result, I sort of entered entrepreneurship through like the back door and I was in the middle of a career shift anyway, but like, my background is in the performing arts and I was a dancer and an actor and a director and so when I came into entrepreneurship and I'm like a major student, like I love to like really study everything that I do, like kind of sometimes do maybe too much but I was like diving into entrepreneurship and I kept bumping up against this like feeling inside of me. I was like, okay, I want, you know, like I'm here to do this. I know this is right for me and the way we're talking about business and entrepreneurship, which is often through like your job as a business, your job as an entrepreneur is to solve a problem. It just kept like bumping up against my soul and I was like I am not, like, there was, I'm just like, not a pro. Like, that's not my job. I'm not a problem solver. It's like, not what I do best in the world, and yet here I am I like know I'm meant to be doing this and so I just thought, you know, and I kept sort of figuring like, how am I gonna do this my way, like with myself and what really, you know, kind of the framework that I eventually developed that basically was just a way to help me show up every day you know, when you change the way you're looking at something, like how you show up changes and so I really think I came to this conclusion that I think that creators and thought leaders and entrepreneurs, and most of us are like wearing, you know, doing all three of those things. We are here we are people who've decided, you know, that we are going to cultivate the courage to ask the questions that will build a better world and I think that for me, the way I can think about entrepreneurship is that I am here to ask, you know, only the questions that I can ask, right. Each of us just have like our own curiosities and the business is founded really on, I think on our personal curiosity and I think, you know, our curiosity is really like our purpose in life following our curiosity. So it's like, even if our business is going to, you know, solve problems, I'm not saying that like all we're doing is asking questions that no one answers like, it's not like, you know, a vacuum cleaner company is gonna like, they're gonna be asking questions and then you know, buy the vacuum like on a question like you wanna know the vacuum's gonna solve your problem but even with something like that, like at the heart of a business, I think are just these like very unique to the founder questions about how to build a better world and changing my thought on that has really helped me be myself in my business. And I think that, you know, going back to business as a creative act like to for it to be a creative act, you must be yourself

in the business. If you're trying to run a business and hide parts of yourself, major parts of yourself, your business, I don't think can ever really flourish and so often, you know, as I evolved in my career as an entrepreneur and then like eventually helping other entrepreneurs, I found so many folks who are like, I know I'm here. Like, you know because also in that period after I launched my business, like everyone started launching a business and it's like, people really know this is what they're meant to be doing. They wanna be doing this and yet there's something about the way this is talked about, this is taught the books that, that like doesn't feel right to me and so often I think it's because it's sort of like eclipsing for many of us, like our creative selves and when we can decide that like, no, actually my business needs my fullest creative self. It doesn't need me to diminish my creative self which I think sometimes, especially if you come from a creative and arts background, you can feel that way. You're like, well, I need, I need to work on my business skills. You know, and we sort of separate them in these like very, like on polar, you know, kind of opposite sides when really like business, if it's like about sort of generating cash flow as one of its core objectives and creativity, like those are both, you know, the, it's the same thing. It comes from the same chakra. Like it's the same I think part of ourselves. So really, yeah, that's, I mean that's, I really think the business as a container for your creative voice is also what keeps us interested in running businesses sort of over time.

Paula: Yeah, I definitely agree with that. I mean, on the one hand it feels like an aspiration when you have a lot, like if you're hustling and you're trying to build a business but on the other hand, it seems absolutely essential to me anyway, to have creativity infused into the business not only to keep me interested, but also to be inspiring to other people, right. It's like, I don't want to build a business that's all about hustling and making money. I wanna build a business that actually is curious, open, creative, that is solving problems but like you said, they're coming from a place of the question, what if we lived in a different way or what if we had time, you know, space, whatever we needed to feel supported. Like what would that look like you know, some of the questions that intrigue me and I know the creative process and how it functions has also been a big part of your work and the way that you talk about it in my experience is so different from the old paradigm view of how creativity looks. Could you share a little bit more about how you see the creative process and how that, how it works?

Liz: Totally it's interesting, like the old paradigm view, you know, I think that when we talk about an old paradigm view of creativity as it relates to business, so much of it is just sort of tied to industrialism and sort of the, the framework of like, sort of us being unable to untangle creativity from productivity and so therefore, like the only goal of creativity being to produce and I think when we're, when that's the framework that's not nature. That's not really who we are and that's not I think, or from my experience and from my sort of empirical research, it's not what allows us as entrepreneurs and you know, hustling, right like we're all, you know, just like the number one thing, we're trying to keep the business alive. It's not what allows us to do it over time like we'll just get burnt out when it's just all about sort of the only goal of pre creativity being pro producing. So the model of the creative process that just has helped me and, and that I use there's four distinct phases and so I'm gonna say the four phases, I think, would that be helpful?

Paula: Sure, yeah. Go for it.

Liz: And then we can kind of unpack them and, and these parallel the seasons but the first stage being becoming, and so that kind of parallels the winter season creation, creation being that sort of spring season luminosity aligns with the summer season and integration aligns with the fall season and I go into like each one of these phases as sort of some micro phases, but these, I think these four phases can be really helpful when we're thinking about creativity, because really only one of them, the creation phase

is when we're actually kind of doing that hardcore producing becoming is that phase where like, it's that very early incubation conception phase where things are being seeded, but so much of it is underground. Like, so much of those, that kind of initial phase is less about doing and more about kind of just like, it's the fertile void place. It's sort of where it's the space before you know what you're doing and, and so it's not really until that creation phase where it's like, okay, now we're going to you know, now that I have and that I've gotten the becoming phase, I sort of have clarified what I'm doing in the creation phase. I'm really gonna bring it to life. I'm gonna bring, you know, actualize it, the luminosity phase being the time when you know, you as the ambassador of your creative work, whether your creative work is a business, a book, a TED X you know, even just like an article I'm gonna share it with the world and I am going to be the ambassador to this piece of work. So I'm both the creator of the work and in the luminosity phase, I have to let the work radiate out so that it can be the gift that it's meant to be for, you know, for its audience and then the integration phase being like the space that happens after the gift is released before, you know, you move on to the next thing and it's really important, like when we're talking about this, like it's never this clean, you know, all of us are in multiple creative processes at one time but I think that integration phase, I mean, just looking at that for a second, Paula, it's like, I didn't know that existed until a couple years ago. you know, it's like I come from a family of artists and I was have this background in performing and it's like, you are just churning it out. That's your job. You know, show after show after show, and like the second one thing is over, you're onto the next thing but the integration phase, sort of as I keep exploring it and another way to look at it would be sort of like a creative postpartum space is like that space between releasing and kind of moving on to the next thing is where you integrate the wisdom, you integrate the gifts that have been given back to you from giving your gift out and that's when the creative process is really a process of becoming, like each creative act we make in life, in the world becomes us. It should, if it's aligned, sort of take us to our next version of self and that integration is a time when you can just sort of like, yeah, take stock of that, be like, hey, who am I now, now that I've made this thing? Who am I? And that's the person you need for the next cycle of creativity, which is why if it's going well, it can really be this like, very regenerative process.

Paula: It's so good because I feel like this helps us to kind of decondition from that old paradigm of having productivity being at the center and I think so many of us in our businesses do not celebrate those moments when we have finished something and so that integration period, like you just pointed out, you know, it's, it's so important, like when we are planning to release an offering and then the offerings out there and we're in the launch, right and then like, we're really being the ambassador for our, our offering and then there's that period after where some of us, you know, haven't taken the time and space to just be like, in the void of like, wow, what just happened? How did that feel? You know, and doing the debrief of like, what went well, what didn't, what can we change to make it easier next time you know, so totally. I kind of see that being mirrored almost in the business itself. I don't know if you have, anything you wanna share about that.

Liz: Yes and like by the way, it's so important to just like not ever get too perfectionist about any of this. Like, I, this is the hardest part for me. It's the hardest part for most people that I work with. I think it's important to remember like if we kind of go back to nature for a second that fall into wintertime, like that integration phase, we, our bodies understand it. So there is a part of you that wants this, but I think that because the way we're taught about to think about business is so related to production, that we have an association and I'm just like this is by the way, like I don't have kind of the whole body of research to prove this yet. I would like to have one just because I think it would help us, our brain associates, like my business being successful with me producing all the time and that is a really, I think

unsustainable and unhealthy connection. So it's like, how can I unhook from that and what if, you know, if what if someone had taught me like actually my business is only as successful as the degree that I rest.

Paula: I love that.

Liz: And like, what then what kind of entrepreneurs would we be had that been our conditioning, so much of what we're doing is like unlearning this kind of industrial revolution model that is turning human beings into robots and if we are, you know, like I study this, like this is my job, like, help us remove the blocks that are in the way of our creative process. So much of our creative block, our pro, you know what, whatever kind of, whatever your creative challenge might be right now and we all kind of have one no matter what stage we're at. So much of it comes from trying to be in a phase of the process that we're not in. So like, you know, you're skipping the integration phase and trying to move on to the next thing, or you're like, you're supposed to be just kind of letting something seed or germinate and instead you're like obsessed with how it's gonna be marketed and it doesn't mean that's not, that's not something to think about, but sort of too much trying to jump a phase will not really let the work reach its full potential. So I think so much of our creative wellbeing really comes from letting ourselves just be in the, you know, in each stage of the creative process but in our culture it requires massive courage because nobody understands. I think specifically sort of the becoming and the integration phases or the darker sort of more shadowy sides of the process and like people are like what are you doing. What's your next, you know, immediately when you finish something they're like, well, what's your next thing?

Paula: Yeah, I think, another thing, well another thing is like, we're in this culture of constantly putting things out on social media and sometimes we need to just sit with them or digest them before we share and that's something I've heard you talk about, so I don't know if you have thoughts on that.

Liz: Oh yeah and to talk about social media, like I think it's so important, like the digital culture was not designed with our creative wellbeing in mind and I think that in 20 to 30 years we're, you know, we potentially will look back and really see the, the cost of it, but I think at, at this point, it's sort of up to us to take back our creative health from, because you're so, right, right, like, I think most of us as entrepreneurs we're like doing so many things. We're running the business. We have you know, most of us are sort of the main content creator for like social media and for the kind of ongoing editorial arms of the business and then most of us are, are working on some kind of a deep deeper work project. So I would think of that as like a book, a talk, a course, a set of ideas, a podcast like there's a larger work you're trying to release and all of those things require our creativity, but it can feel almost like they're competing with each other sometimes and I think that it's the hardest time to sort of stay in the creative cycle is in social media, but if you can think of it like in a mini way, like even just when you release a post, just giving yourself a little space after the post to feel whatever you feel. So I think that's the thing about this yeah, we keep talking about the integration phase, I think because it's really this, you know, it's, we don't have enough conversations about it, but like, it's a time when grief can come up. It's a time when sort you can feel a feeling of emptiness. Like when after I give birth to my kids, like there's emptiness there, after you release the creative work, there's emptiness and that's not you doing it wrong, that's you doing it, right, but that can show up sometimes as like all kinds of feelings that aren't necessarily like, I'm killing it and so yeah, I think it can sort of just even in a micro way, like on, you know, in your, on your platforms and on your channels, just being like, I'm gonna post this. I'm gonna do what I need to do to tend to the community after the post. And then I'm just gonna give myself a little bit of space because inside of this space that's when yeah, that's when like the magic happens.

Paula: So you've talked about creative wellbeing and I'm curious, what does it actually look like for a founder, so what does it look like to prioritize or schedule in creative wellbeing?

Liz: I love this question. I think, yeah, so like at, you know, at the heart of it, I think creative wellbeing really is just about the health of the relationship between you and your creativity and so this could be for a founder, right and if you're, especially if you're sort of running your organization or your business, you're, you're, it's kind of the, the one person doing it, but if you have a larger team, it would be sort of like the health of the relationship between all of the people and their creativity and I think that relationship is really comprised of sort of both like a mindset and a skillset that really helps the relationship to stay healthy and so we get this model in other ways, like we get prioritizing our physical health. I think there's even more and more conversations about sort of our financial health and like our relationship with money, but I have found, you know, I was like a artist and a creator for decades before I understood that I was in a relationship with my creativity and since creativity is a force that cannot be controlled, the only thing I can do is tend to the health of the relationship. That's literally the only thing I can do. So if we would, you know, I think a metaphor can be helpful of like, I think of creativity like a river. So it's like all of us have this river inside of us that is flowing and we don't have to do anything to make it flow. It is literally flowing because we're human. So creative wellbeing is in every single human being and every baby is born with it and there's nothing we have to do to make it happen but what happens is, like, you know stuff gets in the way. I wasn't sure if I was allowed to curse, but stuff gets in the way and so we can think of that, you know, like boulders get put in the river and like sticks and dirt and things start to gum up the flowing of the river and those can come from all, you know, all variety of sources, but when you are sort of creatively healthy, the river's just flowing and so our only job to tend to that creative wellbeing is just like removing the boulders, removing the sticks. It's not becoming a genius. It's not becoming sort of anybody other than exactly who you are because, you know, it's my belief the world really needs exactly the creative river that's flowing inside of you but there's so much the culture has done to kind of gum up the flow of the river that so much of our work is really just about like, how do we get that stuff outta your way so you can, you know, so you can flow.

Paula: I love that. So how do we remove those boulders. How do we remove those sticks. What do, what do you have to say like practically speaking that someone could do right now you know, to start opening up their creative process. I love this so much. Well, I think it can help to just ground us and like, so, you know, all of you are listening. It's like, what, what is a creative project right now that if I were able to just like, clear time in space on your calendar for you that you would just love to be working on, you know, what's the thing that can't wait another year you know, what's the project that you keep saying you want to make time for and that, you know, like somehow it's just sort of getting put on the back burner, which by the way is not your fault and by the way, is so common. I would sort of like, let's take a look at that project for a second and to be like, so what's, why am I not spending time on that you know, why am I not sort of able to give my focus to this project and so often the thing that I'll hear is like, I'm procrastinating, like I'm feeling imposter syndrome around this and I think it's just want to just give one sort of piece of context before we go into sort of removing blocks because the self-help industry is often saying, well, you're, you're in your own way, sort of, that's your problem. You have to get out of your own way but if we go back to the river boulder metaphor for a second, you're not the river and the boulder, so the boulder is not you. you're the river, the boulders come from outside. So I think what we'll say is like, oh, I'm just, you know, like I keep, like I'm trying to write my book for example, and I like put an appointment to write my book on the calendar, and I don't write it and be like, that's my fault. I got to get out in my own way, but if you are somebody who identifies as any kind of marginalized person we have a cultural conditioning, like sort of, it's just a cultural truth that all of us are taught. It's the water we're swimming in that anyone who's not sort of the most dominant voice is here to support the

creativity of the most dominant voices and that our most important job as anyone who feels marginalized and by the way, the more kind of marginalized identities you have, the more intense this is that our, our biggest job is to support and to respond to the people's, you know, the dominant voices whose creativity matters. So when we're trying to prioritize our creative work, our creative projects, and this can be as small as a social media post and as large as like a three book series, so often what we're coming up against underneath all of it is a culture that said, your voice is not as important as another voice and so the most important thing I think we can sort of do to flip this on its head and to revolutionize our relationship with our creativity which is a cultural revolution since it's, you know, it's been very unequal. The way we've sort of prioritized creative voices is to say that you know, my creative voice matters. It matters no matter what, doesn't matter more than anyone else's voice. It just matters because I'm a human being and I'm gonna do what I can to really cultivate trust with that, because that's something I can work on. We can work on trust. Trust can come from showing up. Trust can come from you know, working on how we're talking to ourselves and I can't control the results, but I can control that trust and even if the culture has not taught me to have that trust, we can start to reclaim it for ourselves.

Paula: I love that and just thinking, you know, how we started out by talking about the business you know, as a creative act, but actually having, I feel like having any kind of creative process, whether it has anything related to your business or not actually informs how you do your business. Does that make sense?

Liz: Yeah. I think so and I also think like everything helps, like every little thing helps. I think it, you know, to just put our creative wellbeing at the center of our priority list, both as you know, as an individual and also as an organization. I think what sort of tends to happen, creativity is like really popular to talk about in like in bigger sort of corporate environments. Everyone's like creativity and innovation but what happens is we're sort of demanding creativity and innovation and by the way, this happens to me all of the time. I find it often, you know, regularly happens in a small environment too. Like if you're the only person on your team that we're demanding it, but the river is so blocked that it's like, how could I possibly, you know, like that I'm so set up to fail because like every time I sit down there's a voice in my head that's like, your book doesn't deserve to be in the world. How could I possibly write those pages? Like how could I possibly launch that podcast if you know, each time I'm there it's like, well this isn't gonna produce cash flow or you know, there's sort of all kinds of, of sort of messages and the way we're talking ourselves to ourselves in our creative rooms. So I think any little thing we do to trust imagination, to trust our voices, to start, you know, exercising that muscle of trusting our vision to start to believe that we deserve play, you know, that we have permission to play in our businesses, in our creative work just any little thing we can do. So that's why I'm always like, can you give me 15 minutes you know, like, I don't need three hours can you give me and this might be an interesting exercise for anyone listening, like what would it look like to give 15 minutes a day to a creative space where you're not demanding an intense output. It doesn't mean you're not gonna create something, it just means you're not like the, you're not putting that pressure on yourself because pressure doesn't create pressure, actually it, it like contracts, it squeezes you so you can't, like we need heat to create, but we don't need pressure. So the heat would be me saying to you, could you give me 15 minutes. That's a little bit of heat. That's actually a catalyst for like, oh, maybe I could, but if you say, and in that 15 minutes, I better come up with a genius blog post that is gonna, you know, attract a publisher who's gonna give me a five, you know, six figure book deal or whatever. Yeah like that's when you're like of course I can't show up for that. You know, creativity doesn't need a lot, but she just needs gentle invitations. She needs space and she needs us to take the pressure off. Those are some of the things we can do to remove the boulder so that the water can flow. So anyway, that's sort of my question. Like to each of us is like, could you give me 15 minutes a day and if 15 minutes a day sounds overwhelming because I get it, I have like, I am an entrepreneur, it

can feel like we need three times the amount of time than we actually have. Could you give me 15 minutes one time this week and we can start sort of that small starting to prioritize just a little bit of creative space for the founder. I really do believe this is directly tied to the bottom line of the business.

Paula: Totally. I absolutely agree with you. So on that topic of 15 minutes do you wanna talk a little bit about, about the creative 15, which I mentioned in the intro which I've done, I've also been a part of your program, so I know that this stuff is very powerful. So can you talk a little bit about that?

Liz: Sure. Well I would love to ask you though, like what, what happened when you did the creative 15, what value, you know, did you find and in just creating, so what the creative 15 is, is it's just saying it's very simple folks. It's like 15 minutes of non- results driven creative space and time every day for 15 days. That's just sort of the invitation that I issue to folks and then there are some prompts and you know, you get an email every day to sort of just help you because that accountability can be helpful. But for you, like what, what does that do for you?

Paula: Well, I think one thing I teach my clients is rhythm, you know, having even the smallest pulse in your business, like, you know and that includes like nurturing a creative process you know, 15 minutes a day for 15 days really starts to create momentum in creating a rhythm of some kind. So I feel like that's the most powerful thing and then also just seeing how you allow yourself to play. How does that affect your mood, how does it affect, you know, maybe you have an idea that then evolves into something else, you know, that you end up spending time on, but like, just creating that space and, and the last time I did it, I was just writing a poem every day, just like silly, you know, playful thing in 15 minutes and it didn't even have to be done or whatever. It was just like playing and so inviting these kind of non-linear and you talk a lot about non-linear and maybe you can share a little bit about that before we close out but like, you know, inviting these like non-linear things into your space and what does that do you know, some of the, the people who I most enjoy following on social media are ones that are a little bit non-linear and they're like pulling from, you know different traditions and they care, you know, but they're also very creative like that's kind of the rubric for me and it feels like it's because they have space. It feels like they've you know, really prioritized this creative piece.

Liz: I love the idea of a pulse. I've never thought about it that way, but I love that so much sort of that the, founders creative health is a pulse of the business that is so rad. I love what you said because I've been thinking a lot specifically about play. So I noticed this trend. I started to notice this pattern in like so many of my clients and even colleagues as well, that so many of the folks I'm working with have some point in their history where like they lost their privilege and permission to play too early and really like, I think we should never lose it, but like, there's some aspect of our histories where like we didn't get the space to play that we needed to and that's part of sort of that like human health and I really think play is sort of like a human right, but again, the culture's not set up for so many folks to actually sort of be in a space of play. So I think that like you know, not only is sort of making space for play, like let's be straight up, right? It's gonna lead to more ideas. I, our ideas are like the number one currency in the world. You know, like it's going to, it's gonna lead to more profits, it's gonna lead to more those kinds of ideas that people are really attracted to because they're not attracted to an idea that's just like you know, recycling what somebody else did. Like they're gonna, they're people are attracted to truth. Truth is a winning strategy and you can't force it. All you can do is like give yourself space to like, let the truth come out and that just comes out and like when you are truthful people wanna listen. But I think also making space for that play, you know, this is where, and I know you talk about this in your work too, it's like actually there's a space here where we can experience healing. You know, like there's a healing here in the journey of entrepreneurship I think for so many of us.

Paula: Well Liz, thank you for your time today. I really appreciate you being here.

Liz: I've loved this conversation. Thank you all for listening and I think, you know, one thing I just wanted to say to everybody listening I don't think that we have visions unless we have sort of everything inside of us to be able to actualize them and so I think that sometimes it can feel like so many of us as entrepreneurs, we have a lot of creative visions and we're like, I see it all. Like I see you know, product line and the speaking platform and the you know, documentary film that's gonna be made and I think that you have everything. Like if, if you see it, you have it, you have what you need and you have what it takes and so that's why really all we need to do is create space and containers and that can be like, you know, that's sort of the revolution.

Paula: Awesome. So if you loved this talk, please do share it by sharing the link, cosmicbusinesssalon.com and make sure you sign up for the upgrade, which will allow you to keep lifetime access to these talks. There's so much goodness in here you know, you might wanna listen to them again and you'll also get a free integration call with me where we talk about what we learned in the summit and you can ask me questions. And a hundred percent of the profits go to Soul Fire Farm, which supports indigenous and black farmers. So what are you waiting for, the link is on this page to upgrade. You can also join us at the Cosmic Business Salon Facebook group, where there will be live discussions each day and a chance to win prizes. Thank you again, Liz, for being here and have a great day everyone.

Liz: Thank you.