

The Art of Enough
Episode 5 – Directions to Enough

- Speaker 1: [00:07](#) The Art of Enough, with artist Jay Sullivan. Episode five: Directions to Enough.
- Jay Sullivan: [00:25](#) Welcome to The Art of Enough. Hi, I'm artist Jay Sullivan. This podcast, Directions to Enough, is an appendix of the previous four podcasts. It contains 20 simple guidelines that can help you in your life, your art practice, or in some cases both. This podcast is in two sections. Section one, good enough guidelines. For anyone, whether you're an artist or not who wants to feel like you've done enough, that you don't constantly have to do more. Section two, creative process guidelines are for those who are interested in creative process, and especially how it can facilitate psychological and emotional change.
- Jay Sullivan: [01:09](#) Note that this podcast has title chapters that can be accessed through the podcast player, so you may want to look at those first and jump to the places that most interest you.
- Jay Sullivan: [01:20](#) Section One: Good Enough Guidelines
- Jay Sullivan: [01:24](#) Again, for anyone, whether you're an artist or not who wants to slow down and feel like you've done enough.
- Jay Sullivan: [01:31](#) Good enough guideline one: Become aware of your limiting beliefs, and then change them.
- Jay Sullivan: [01:38](#) We all have limiting beliefs. Beliefs that we picked up during the course of our life that are getting in the way of what we really want out of life. If there is one thing that I hope people take away from these podcasts, is that everyone has experiences, most from early childhood, that significantly affect your personality, your general outlook, and your core beliefs. Most people spend their entire lives not understanding that these early experiences control much of their present emotions and behaviors, and therefore their happiness. Yes, I know biology and genetics come into play as well, but these early defining experience have a large impact on what we do and when we do it.
- Jay Sullivan: [02:20](#) The first step to slowing down and leading a more peaceful and enjoyable life is to become aware of the past experiences and beliefs that are driving your present behaviors. Then decide if they're serving you or not. During The Art of Enough, I identified two limiting beliefs connected to childhood experiences that were driving my compulsion to always climb the highest mountains. Number one, that my father's bipolar problems were my fault, and that I had to be the perfect kid in order to

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prevent it from happening again. The second belief was that no matter what I did, it would never be good enough.

- Jay Sullivan: [03:01](#) These two beliefs drove a lot of my life success, but they also caused great frustration, because no matter what I achieved, it was never good enough. I learned a process while attending many Tony Robbins seminars for changing limiting beliefs. It boils down to a set of questions. Number one: In what part of your life are you unhappy or wanting more? Number two: What beliefs do you have that are causing you from getting what you want? For example, in podcast four I spoke about an experience where I wanted to make more money, but I was limited by the belief that money is not that important.
- Jay Sullivan: [03:40](#) Number three: What will your life be like in five, 10, 20 years if you continue to live with this belief? The answer to this question should provide you with the motivation to change. Number four: What is a new, more empowering belief? I replaced "no matter what I do it will never be enough," to "no matter what I do, I will always be loved."
- Jay Sullivan: [04:08](#) This is a very simple outline of the Tony Robbins process for changing beliefs. The real work is in understanding the old beliefs that are driving the current behaviors and emotions, and then creating a creative process for instilling the new belief over time. It's a fairly lengthy process, but if this sounds interesting to you, I would suggest you either attend a Tony Robbins seminar, or get some of his CDs. I've listed his website on the podcast home page.
- Jay Sullivan: [04:37](#) Good enough guideline two: Experience life instead of achieving life.
- Jay Sullivan: [04:43](#) I've always been driven by getting to the end result, achieving the big goal, getting over the top of the mountain. During The Art of Enough, I tried to keep my focus on experiencing the moments of creating art instead of the end result. Here's what tactic I used. I set a strict time limit for my activities. For example, I wrote from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM, and then worked in the studio from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM.
- Jay Sullivan: [05:10](#) Instead of going to the studio with this idea that I had to get this, that, and the other thing done, a series of goals I had to achieve, I just focused on experiencing what I was doing in the moment. And, when the time allotted for that activity ended, I stopped working, whether it was in the middle of hanging a light, retouching an image, or writing a sentence. I just stopped.

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I played a little mind game by keeping all the clocks out of sight while doing it. This was very uncomfortable at first, but over time it was very freeing, and it helped me stay focused on experiencing life instead of achieving life.

- Jay Sullivan: [05:49](#) Good enough guideline number three: When feeling stressed, simplify the deliverable or change the delivery date.
- Jay Sullivan: [05:58](#) Usually when I'm working on a big project, the last two weeks come down to this mad anxiety fueled dash to completion. Good enough guideline three, when feeling stress simplify the deliverable or change the delivery date, helped me avoid all that. In the past while working on projects, I usually made the deliverable more complex the farther down the road I got to make it better, because I was afraid it wouldn't be good enough. Which, made it more stressful as the deadline came closer.
- Jay Sullivan: [06:29](#) Now, if I start to feel high levels of anxiety or stress about the project, I then look to simplify the deliverable. That's usually my first option. Or, then I think about changing the delivery date, if I can. I know this is easier said than done, but this good enough guideline has helped me in a lot of different situations over the last couple of years. If you're feeling stressed, try simplifying the deliverable or changing the delivery date.
- Jay Sullivan: [07:01](#) Good enough guideline four: Be content with your decisions.
- Jay Sullivan: [07:07](#) Are you always second guessing yourself? Do you develop a plan for a project, tell some others about it, and then before you even get back to your desk you're already onto the next plan? Do you decide on where to go to dinner, and then one minute later think of another option that's better for some reason? Do you pick a show on Netflix and then have second thoughts and start going through all the online reviews to find a better one?
- Jay Sullivan: [07:31](#) Granted, second guessing sometimes leads to a better result, the better experience. But, it can also lead to more work and more stress, not just for you but for those around you. Next time you have an impulse to second guess yourself to "make it better," try doing nothing and see how it works out.
- Jay Sullivan: [07:57](#) Good enough guideline five: Plan transition time.
- Jay Sullivan: [08:02](#) This keeps me jumping from one activity to another, and that's a habit of mine. Now when I finish one thing, I then spend 20 or 30 minutes transitioning to another activity. It makes finishing

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up one thing and then preparing for another a very pleasurable and stress free time. Planning transition time also provides a built in buffer in my schedule. If one activity goes too long, then I'm not rushing for the next.

- Jay Sullivan: [08:31](#) Good enough guideline six: Leave open time, open.
- Jay Sullivan: [08:37](#) Do you try to fill every moment of every day? And, once the schedule is filled, if something gets canceled do you feel compelled to fill it with something else? Try being aware of how much you cram into any given day or week, and experiment with not scheduling yourself so much. Leave open time open.
- Jay Sullivan: [09:02](#) Good enough guideline seven: Teach your brain to be happy with doing less.
- Jay Sullivan: [09:09](#) Most of us who are addicted to overachieving are doing, doing, doing because we believe something bad will happen if we don't. Once you start doing less and your life gets better instead of worse, you start to be comfortable doing less and you start to strengthen those connections in your brain.
- Jay Sullivan: [09:30](#) Good enough guideline eight: Avoid Humpty Dumpty.
- Jay Sullivan: [09:34](#) During The Art of Enough, I realized that I had spent a lot of my life trying to fix Humpty Dumpty, trying to fix that which was irrevocably broken. Changing this conditioned pattern behavior first meant realizing it was happening, becoming aware, and then second, replacing the pattern with a new one. I developed four questions to guide my behavior whenever I got the feeling that Humpty Dumpty was about the fall off the wall and I felt compelled to rush in and save him. Before I did that, I first asked these questions.
- Jay Sullivan: [10:12](#) Will I enjoy doing it? Will I be effective? How will my behavior affect my relationships with others? How will this choice affect me in the long term? These four questions allow me to avoid Humpty Dumpty, that which is irrevocably broken. But at the same time, I am open to new experiences and I am setting myself up for long term happiness.
- Jay Sullivan: [10:45](#) Good enough guideline number nine: Look for pleasurable experiences in ordinary moments.
- Jay Sullivan: [10:52](#) This bit of advice came from one of my mentors, Jean Claude in Italy. I adapted it to be, look for small surprises in ordinary moments, which has turned into an ongoing body of work

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where each day I look for small surprises and document them. This keeps my daily focus on experiencing small moments instead of chasing big experiences.

Jay Sullivan: [11:17](#) Good enough guideline number 10: The more you are enough, the more that others are enough.

Jay Sullivan: [11:25](#) This, I think, is more of a realization than a guideline, but during the creation of The Art of Enough, I came to the understanding that the more I felt that I had done enough, the more I felt that others had done enough. As I started to cut myself a break, I started to cut others a break as well. Being enough is, at its core, about self acceptance, which then has this ripple effect. If I can accept myself as I am, I can accept others as they are. I can accept the past the way it was. I can accept the present the way it is. It's all enough.

Jay Sullivan: [12:05](#) That's section one, good enough guidelines. Now section two, creative process guidelines. This is for those interested in creative process, and especially those who want to know how it can facilitate psychological and emotional change.

Jay Sullivan: [12:21](#) Creative process guideline one: Good creative process leads to good results.

Jay Sullivan: [12:29](#) I have found over my lifetime that if you create a good process, you will get good results. That's for any area of your life. If you identify the key steps to getting good results and then apply them consistently to various situations, at the end of the day, you end up in a good place. I've spent 30 years studying creative process, and almost 10 years evolving my current creative process, which combines art making and psychological change. It currently has four primary components.

Jay Sullivan: [13:03](#) Number one, become aware of a behavior or emotion I would like to change. Awareness is both the first step to change and is a facilitator of change in itself. It's both a means and an ends. This is a step that has been part of my process since my earliest creative work. Number two, conduct research which is both external, traditional research such as psychology and neuroscience and art, and internal research through meditations, psychotherapy and art making experiments. The research helps me understand the science of the behavior or emotion I'd like to change, and at the same time, the origins of my specific behavior or emotion.

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- Jay Sullivan: [13:45](#) Number three, create an art making process that helps me change the behaviors and result in a body of work. This is in two steps. Generally, I'm desensitizing myself to the emotional power of the old beliefs, and number two, I'm trying to use the creative process to help instill some new beliefs. Number four, engage in conversations. This has become more and more important to me over the last couple of years. I used to be an introvert. Think of the most introverted kid that you knew from high school, that was me. It's taken a lot of time and work to get over that, but over the last few years I've found that repeated conversations are critical to my work, both emotionally and artistically.
- Jay Sullivan: [14:34](#) This guideline, engage in conversations, also spurred me to reinvent the exhibition process for myself. One where I can have more intimate conversations with the attendees that come to the exhibits. While exhibiting one of the series from The Art of Enough called All The King's Horses, I set up a table and two chairs and a deck of custom made, what I call conversation cards. The cards had images of both preliminary and final artworks from the series.
- Jay Sullivan: [15:04](#) I sat in the gallery across from willing attendees and asked them to pick two cards that spoke to them or jumped out at them. Then I asked them a question. Why did you pick these two cards? From this simple starting point, a 20 or 30 minute conversation ensued. The conversations were wide ranging from my art to the creative process to personal history and to family issues. The last two were the most frequent, and there were times that we spoke for 20 or 30 minutes without discussing art at all.
- Jay Sullivan: [15:38](#) Creative process guideline two: Creative process is not linear.
- Jay Sullivan: [15:44](#) It's important to note that the four main components of my process; awareness, research, art making, and conversations, are not linear, nor are they restricted within their respective areas. It's very fluid. Each component infuses the other in a continuous back and forth as I gain awareness, conduct research, design a creative process, create art, and have conversations.
- Jay Sullivan: [16:09](#) For example, I have found it very beneficial for me to research as I am creating art. This ranges from traditional research methods like reading books, viewing lectures, and attending events related to psychology, neuroscience, and art, to participating in experiential workshops where I go deeper

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internally to learn more about myself. By continuing research while I create the art, the research informs the art and the art informs the research. I am always in this dynamic place, always learning, always evolving.

- Jay Sullivan: [16:47](#) Creative process guideline three: Access the subconscious.
- Jay Sullivan: [16:54](#) The subconscious is an important part of my artistic and psychological practice because the conscious brain can only hold six or seven pieces of information at any one time. Whereas, your subconscious brain holds a lifetime of memories, emotions, and behaviors. Accessing the subconscious increases my self knowledge and gives me more options for solving any given challenge. Which, I believe makes me more creative.
- Jay Sullivan: [17:21](#) During The Art of Enough, I identified different practices that helped me access the subconscious: breathing, singing, meditation, yoga, and psychotherapy. Then I integrated them into my regular routine in conjunction with my art making. This approach slowed me down, reduced my anxiety, increased my awareness, and increased my ability to access my subconscious and enter a state known as creative flow.
- Jay Sullivan: [17:50](#) When we are in flow state, two things happen that have a direct effect on our creativity and our sense of being enough. First, parts of the prefrontal cortex, the rational decision making part of our brain, temporarily shuts down. Specifically, the part of the brain that is responsible for self monitoring. Essentially, the part of the brain that gives rise to those negative inner voices or demons, including those that say, "You are not enough. You are not good enough." That part of your brain shuts down. Basically, you feel more enough because you don't have the ability to feel not enough. That part of your brain is shut off. And, because the self critic is shut off, you are freer to explore new ideas, new concepts, and be more creative.
- Jay Sullivan: [18:40](#) The second thing that happens when you're in flow is that the brain waves change from normal waking consciousness brain waves, which are fast moving, to slower brain waves, oscillating between the ones that occur when you're daydreaming and the ones that show up when you're actually dreaming while sleeping. Things slow down, and you're able to access the place where dreams come from, the subconscious. The place where past experiences and emotions are stored.
- Jay Sullivan: [19:10](#) Creative process guideline four: When the work becomes tedious, keep working until it's no longer tedious.

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- Jay Sullivan: [19:18](#) This bit of advice came from watching the TV show Comedians In Cars Having Coffee. Comedians Jerry Lewis and Jerry Seinfeld were discussing creative process, and it was either Jerry or Jerry, I don't remember who, but anyway, one of them said, "When the work becomes tedious, keep working until it's no longer tedious." This is a really great piece of advice. I found if you just keep going, instead of getting stuck something eventually pops and the work becomes more enjoyable and more productive, and you get back into flow.
- Jay Sullivan: [19:59](#) Creative process guideline five: Breathe.
- Jay Sullivan: [20:03](#) Proper breathing is an important creative tool because it can help us reduce anxiety and also help us access the subconscious. Most people do not breathe properly, having developed a habit of shallow upper chest breathing at some point in their childhood. If not shallow upper chest breathing, what is the correct way to breathe? Well, you would think it would be about taking in oxygen. The lungs take in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. You've undoubtedly heard the advice take a deep breath when you're stressed. But, the taking in or inhaling is not the part to really focus on. Proper breathing is all about the exhalation. It's about getting rid of the carbon dioxide, so your lungs can automatically take in the oxygen.
- Jay Sullivan: [20:55](#) Breathing properly is an important part of creative flow, because when you exhale properly, it access the part of your nervous system that calms you down and it allows you to tap into your subconscious and enter creative flow. One helpful technique is to practice long exhales. I do this on a daily basis. Just breathe in and let it out. It helps me get to a place where anxiety is reduced and my ability to tap into my subconscious is enhanced.
- Jay Sullivan: [21:32](#) Creative process guideline number six: Experiment, experiment, experiment.
- Jay Sullivan: [21:38](#) I used to ruminate over a lot of different artistic and creative approaches in my mind before I set off in a specific direction. I only started making work when I felt that I had a solid idea or I knew what I was doing artistically. Now, I make work while I'm exploring ideas and doing research. I do lots of experiments, and once I have something that I think will work, a video, maybe a few photographs, some writing, I stop and start another experiment. Most times, in a very different direction artistically.

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- Jay Sullivan: [22:10](#) For example, during The Art of Enough, I went from creating videos to video installations to photographs to assemblages to photographed assemblages, back to video and then back to still photographs and assemblages. I think the most important thing about this approach is that I am continually stretching myself and opening myself up to a variety of options. I'm learning new things, even if an experiment just turns out to be an experiment, something that I just eventually discard. The act of learning is vital to a healthy brain. Although I end up with many discarded experiments, I always learn something, and many times something I discarded in the past comes back to my work later on, so keep experimenting.
- Jay Sullivan: [22:55](#) Creative process guideline seven: Keep uncertainty alive as long as possible.
- Jay Sullivan: [23:01](#) I heard this piece of advice while watching a documentary about video artist William Kentridge. He argues that once things become certain, they become hardened and inflexible. Meaning, that you no longer are open to something new. Keeping uncertainty alive can mean staying open to what you are seeing in front of you, what you're experiencing in the moment, instead of trying to create something that you have in your head. Keep uncertainty alive allowed this project the freedom to evolve and mature to its organic final form.
- Jay Sullivan: [23:38](#) Creative process eight: Repeat, repeat, repeat.
- Jay Sullivan: [23:42](#) This is very specific to creating emotional and psychological change through an art process. In order to make significant changes in your life, you need to replace a habitual pattern of behavior with one that serves you better. As neuroscientists will say, the more you do something, the more you will do it because it creates a connection in the brain that gets stronger and stronger every time you do it. That's referred to as a habit. Changing an old behavior usually requires repeating the new behavior until it takes hold, and that connection is stronger than the old behavior. That's why I like using an art process to make changes in my life. It's relatively easy to build repetitive actions into an art process and I love making art.
- Jay Sullivan: [24:28](#) For example, my small surprises project where I document interesting ordinary experiences on a daily basis is an example of how a repetitive creative process can change behavior and emotions. I have been documenting small ordinary experiences repeatedly every day for over one year. This repetitive practice has helped me curb my impulse to chase these big intense

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experiences. You can see some of these small surprises on my Facebook and Twitter pages.

Jay Sullivan: [25:00](#) Creative process guideline nine: For a long time, when faced with a creative choice while making art or performing or participating in workshops, I tended to ask myself, "What option scares me the most," and then I'd choose that one.

Jay Sullivan: [25:17](#) The idea was, that if I choose the most risky path I would be able to overcome the anxiety and make it to the next level of my personal development. In many ways, that's definitely true. But, during this project I realized that it's not always true. I realized that sometimes the option that scares you the most is not just outside your comfort zone, it's way outside your comfort zone. Choosing that one can put me in overwhelming anxiety. So, I changed the question from what scares me the most to what serves me the most. It gives me the option to live outside my comfort zone, at the edge of my comfort zone, or firmly, comfortably inside my comfort zone depending upon what I think will serve me best in any given situation.

Jay Sullivan: [26:11](#) Creative process guideline 10: Create a support team.

Jay Sullivan: [26:16](#) Many times, I am working on deeply held emotional issues. It has become imperative for me that I have a strong support team. I'm continually interacting with a group that includes a therapist, meditation and breath work coaches, art colleagues and other resources throughout the creative and art making process. If you are going to start exploring past experiences and emotions in your art making process, or any process, I highly recommend that you work with a therapist, a coach, or an advisor, or all of the above. A strong support team will help you create a positive outcome for both you and for your art.

Jay Sullivan: [27:00](#) Final Thoughts

Jay Sullivan: [27:01](#) My mother made me laugh. My father showed me how things worked. The assemblages of All The Kings Men contained dozens and dozens of objects that represented my childhood. Some were repurposed from previous work, some were new. In the end, they all became entangled together in a big ball. A big ball of objects hanging from the ceiling of my studio. Black shoes, clown's masks, a baseball glove, razor blades. Those and many, many other items wound together in brown [inaudible 00:27:43] twine, fishing line, rope, and red and white polka dot material.

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- Jay Sullivan: [27:49](#) Then in a process resembling ritual, I cut away all the objects, letting them fall to the floor. Leaving one singular strand of brown [inaudible 00:28:01] twine. I looked through the objects, asking myself which ones I wanted to keep. I chose two objects, a clown's nose which I remember my mother wearing when I was a child, and a Zippo lighter, which I remember my father taking apart and showing me how it worked while we sat at the kitchen table. Two enjoyable parts of my mother and father had emerged from this ball of objects, this confused ball of memories and emotions as separate entities. Separate from each other, separate from myself, and separate from the pain of my childhood.
- Jay Sullivan: [28:45](#) Mess and confusion had turned to clarity and simplicity. The clown's nose and the lighter became the primary elements of the installation called My Mother Made Me Laugh, My Father Showed Me How Things Worked. For now, as I move forward from The Art of Enough, I move towards these three main guide posts: laughter, learning, and love. If I can laugh a little, learn a little, and love a lot, it will be more than enough. I'm artist Jay Sullivan. This has been The Art of Enough. Thank you for listening.