Jeff Goins: Well Stephanie welcome to the show.

Stephanie: Thanks for having me.

Jeff Goins: You call yourself a motivational cartoonist.

Stephanie: That's right.

Jeff Goins: What does that mean?

Stephanie: You know, I'm a cartoonist and an author and a writer, and so those are all titles I use too, but I landed on motivational cartoonist one because I had a motivational speaker actually tell me that's what I do. He said, "Oh, you're like a motivational cartoonist." And I was like, "Yeah, that's actually a perfect way to describe what I do." And, why I love the phrase so much is because I've taken my medium of choice, my craft, which is drawing and writing, and I use it to inspire and infuse a little positivity in the world, and help people make, you know, make people feel better about where they are in life. That's where the phrase motivational cartoonist comes from.

Jeff Goins: Have you always been an artist, have you always been drawing, or is this something you came to later in life?

Stephanie: Yeah so, I would say that I was born to draw and then I lost it for like 20 years and then I came back to it. Yeah-

Jeff Goins: Oh wow.

Stephanie: If you would ask friends and family, and you know, anyone who was around me as a kid, I was meant to be a cartoonist. It was something I did as a little child I was illustrating and writing books even before I could properly write, and I would just, you know, write scribbly words. I wanted to grow up to be like a Loony Tunes animator or a Disney animator. Then, there was that kind of period of between time when I was probably starting in high school and then definitely in college when my mind shifted over to, "Okay, what do I practically really want to do in life and make money from?" And, art just really fell by the wayside, so there was a period in my life where I, you know, maybe like, I would say a year or two years in college when I wasn't actively drawing or creating any sort of artwork. Just because I was trying to figure things out, like what my career ladder was and my major, and so I picked up cartooning regularly maybe about two years ago.

Jeff Goins: Really?

Stephanie: Yeah, so it was a large piece of me that's missing for a while, and I'm really happy I got it back that's for sure.

Jeff Goins: I want to talk about this project arttoself.com, but before we talk about that, so this is a new thing, you know, being this motivational cartoonist. What did life and work look like before two years ago?

Stephanie: Yeah so, I had graduated from college, I had graduated with a lot of student debt, which is not very uncommon nowadays, and I ended up going into this field of financial literacy. I was working in a non-profit and I was helping teach
college students and low income families about ways to save money, and especially for college, so my career path really looked, it was involved in this kind of personal finance field. It was a topic I cared about a lot because I felt very personally affected by student loans, and I even started a blog around personal finance and my own kind of student loan pay off journey. So, my professional life, it was starting to make sense after college, I was putting pieces together and realized I was building this kind of unique skill-set in putting my career ladder up against the wall of financial literacy and personal finance, and a topic I sincerely cared about.

As I was blogging too about my student loan journey and personal finance journey, I could tell maybe, you know, four years after graduating, maybe even three, that something was kind of missing. It felt really good to be able to share my story with the world and I loved writing blog posts and being able to put them out there and know that even just friends and family were reading my point of view. But then, I had that kind of hunger for something else and I couldn't even name it, I think at the time I couldn't even tell you, you know, "Oh, it's cartoons." Or, "Oh, it's drawing." But, it just felt like that creative piece of me didn't have a place to go, and the writing was helping the blogging, but there was something else that was not quite syncing up with what I was doing, and it was when I was still in a 9 to 5 job that I took my personal finance blog and I actually started drawing cartoons on it. Because, there was something there that I thought would be interesting if I maybe drew about my student loan journey, and I started drawing this student loan debt monster and I, you know, drew myself as a superhero that was trying to pay off student loans.

That was the first little experiment of mine to find out, okay, what is my creative outlet that I really want? Drawing comes naturally, so what if I did the crazy thing of add this to my personal finance website and see where it goes, and that was the moment where, that moment of experimenting it kind of clicked into place where, I re-remembered that cartooning was that thing in my blood, and finding a place for it and putting it out into the world, even if it was about student debt or something like that, it started exercising that muscle again when, and something in me kind of came back to life that had been almost ignored and kind of atrophied for the better part of a decade and a half.

Jeff Goins: Isn't interesting that like, you know, you didn't realize you, like this was the thing that you're supposed to do until you did it, and then you were like, "Oh, yeah." Like, this has been here all along.

Stephanie: Yeah.

Jeff Goins: I love that, it's really interesting.

Stephanie: And it was so funny, I remember telling my mom I was like, "Hey mom, I'm going to start adding cartoons to my personal finance site." And she was like, "Oh, of course." And I was just like, "Excuse me?" And she's like, "Yeah, I mean, that's like what you're meant to do in life." And, I was like, "Oh God, I should've just asked my mom maybe a couple years ago and this search would've been so much easier."
Jeff Goins: Yeah, that’s hilarious. Writing was that way for me, where like I wouldn’t have said, “Yeah, like I’m meant to be a writer,” when I was you know, 16 or 21 or whatever. In fact I wanted to be a rockstar. But like at whatever it was, 27, 28, when I started writing, I was like, “Oh, yeah.” I mean, I guess it’s like that Steven Jobs speech that everybody quotes about connecting the dots and you look back and you go, “Oh yeah, totally makes sense.” But, it’s fascinating.

Personal finance blog, you and I ran into each other I think we’ve seen each other twice now at FinCon, which is a financial blogging conference, and like just like the craziest party I’ve [crosstalk 00:07:13][inaudible 00:07:14] seen.

Stephanie: That’s right.

Jeff Goins: It’s just wild.

Stephanie: Fun group of people, yeah.

Jeff Goins: It is, and you’ve got people that are like arguing about which, you know, credit cards give you the best cash back bonus or whatever.

Stephanie: That’s right, yeah.

Jeff Goins: And then there’s like a dance party, and all things in between. When you were doing this financial blogging thing, like what was life like at that point, were you a full-time blogger, was this something that you were doing on the side while doing the non-profit thing? Help me better understand that.

Stephanie: Yeah, so I had had my blog for about two years, and once I started adding cartoons to it a funny thing started happening. So, at the time I added cartoons to my personal finance blog which was about two years ago, I was working at a startup that was focused on financial literacy and as I started adding the cartoons, it started building this confidence inside me that I had something of value to offer to the world that was beyond whatever job I had. I could just really, you know, I could map out the trajectory which is like, the frequency in which Steph draws cartoons like the higher her self-confidence is, and at that point I started shifting mentally to really thinking about venturing out on my own.

Not just from the cartoon perspective, but I had built this unique skill-set around financial literacy, curriculum development, and I was drawing cartoons about financial literacy and personal finance, so I took that, kind of that combination of confidence and then unique kind of skill-set, and I started shopping it around to see what life might be like if I decided to quit my job. I asked an old employer of mine, I asked some potential freelance clients, and just to see if I ended up stepping out on my own what would be the, you know, appetite for some of the work that I do?

I got some responses from the non-profit world who were like, “Yeah, come work on a project about personal finance with us.” I got responses from other people who were like, “We want you to be a freelance writer, we’d love to add cartoons to our site.” So, it was a, the transition away from my 9 to 5 job wasn’t jumping directly into, “I am a full-blown, you know, motivational cartoonist and cartoons what I do and that’s everything.” It was the kind of next iteration of that, which is I’m now going to work for myself but it’s still going to
be around this financial literacy skill-set, and at the same time now that I have the space and time to draw more and think about what I want to do in life, I'm going to explore my art a little bit more.

Jeff Goins: Yeah, that's cool. Tell me about this project arttoself.com, these are daily motivational drawings?

Stephanie: Yeah, so I, Art To Self is just, it's one of the best things that I've done with my life which is commit to drawing cartoons every day and sharing them with the world. On one side the coin it's a very selfish project that holds me accountable to doing art, and then at the same time it's just been amazing to see how people have connected with my cartoons, because these cartoon notes as I call them, they're motivational in the sense that there's a funny doodle with a quote, you know, something that's inspirational or something to help you deal with the low days, especially if you're trying to start your own business, and something to like keep you going on the high moments.

It's also a place for me to share really vulnerably about the moments that I'm experiencing both as an entrepreneur and as a creative person, because that self-doubt and that self-criticism comes up very frequently and I don't think it ever goes away. Being able to share that with the world and do it in a kind of light-hearted way with cartoons has been so important to me personally, but it's also just been fantastic to see the number of people who've responded who really resonate with the same things that I'm going through and really appreciate that I've turned into something light-hearted like a cartoon.

Jeff Goins: Yeah, no it's great, I mean I'm looking at one right now you know, and it's cool there's these little drawings and then you've got these little notes associated with these drawings that's just about your process, you know. People say, "Oh, I don't have enough time." You've got this little doodle that says, "You make time." Then there's this little sort of note from yourself to yourself-

Stephanie: Mm-hmm (affirmative), exactly.

Jeff Goins: I love that. There's just something powerful it seems to me about not being a guru, at least this day and age with social media and the internet. I saw somebody, Facebook this like tongue-and-cheek thing and it was like, "You know what Snapchat needs more of is people giving life and career advice."

Stephanie: Yeah.

Jeff Goins: I was like, "Yeah, I just wish somebody would tell me to hustle more."

Stephanie: Right, yeah.

Jeff Goins: I mean, I think it's really refreshing when you're just like sharing your own journey and saying, "Here's where I'm at, here's what I need right now." It's just a little bit less, I don't know, arrogant I think.

Stephanie: Yeah and I mean that's the reason I started Art To Self which was, you know it came off, it was a spin-off the phrase, "Note to self." I needed sticky notes in my room that were like, "Note to self: stop beating yourself up." You know, "Note to self: like, you're doing okay, you'll get there." So yeah, it really is the
messages that I need to hear, and it's not the Instagram sunset with a person doing yoga on the beach that's like, "Keep going."

Because, for me what was, the two parts that are so important is one a cartoon and a visual light-hearted that kind of makes you laugh at yourself or the situation a bit, and the second is me writing the notes and they're shorter notes, they're like 150 words, but to say, "Yeah, keep going, but here's what I'm going through because I hit a wall and I didn't feel like drawing today." And, here's the kind of reality and vulnerability behind it because I, you know, like you were just saying, I don't want to contribute to any sort of false guru-dom that's out there and kind of show myself as someone who has it all together because everyday I'm learning and growing and there are many days when I have imposter-syndrome and don't feel like I have it all together, and I think that can be almost more valuable to people who are dealing with those kind of struggles or moments, just to be able to relate and connect on that.

Jeff Goins: Yeah, yeah, do you ever look at your own notes and go, "Oh yeah, I need to remember that."

Stephanie: Yes, oh my gosh. Funny story was a couple months ago, so last December, I came out with my first book because the beauty of doing something every single day is, you know, halfway through the year last year I was like, "Oh my gosh, I have so many cartoons and notes, I'm going to make this a book." And everyone was asking for a book. Even though the book content was done putting together a book and putting it out in the world is still a scary process and it was a learning process because there's a lot of, you know, formatting, technical stuff, especially if you're trying to self publish. So, I'd be sitting in my book, editing it, and working on a cartoon. The two cartoons that just kept coming up all the time to me was love the process, and I'd be sitting there editing the note called love the process and I'm like, "Okay, fine, I'll love the process."

Or, I have a note that, it says, "What if it's already perfect," and it's a bunch of scribbles and erase marks and stuff, and I would just be editing it and I'm like, "Oh, what if this note is already perfect. Okay Art To Self I get it, you know, what if it's already perfect." So, my notes definitely come back around to me and I, you know, I'm not alone I'm sure in having to like re-learn the same lesson in life over and over again, so I definitely revisit the old ones.

Jeff Goins: Yeah, the reason I ask that question is looking at your website, looking at the book, you've got arttoself.com/book, there's a picture of Steph reading her own book looking quite amused, and I was like, "I would probably do that, I'd go back and go oh, yeah." It's interesting as a writer, I mean I think people take for granted that like you remember that stuff that you put in books and people are always like, not always but occasionally saying, "Hey, I liked it when you said this thing." And I'm like, "What, I said that? That's pretty good."

Stephanie: Yeah, that was pretty smart of me, yeah.

Jeff Goins: Well I think-

Stephanie: The other thing-

Jeff Goins: Yeah, yeah, go ahead.
Stephanie: The other thing too that’s so funny is I’ve had people read the book and tell me how much, you know, like, "I loved the cartoon that you, you know, you wrote about you know taking the leap to a new adventure." And, I was like, "I have not written a cartoon about that, I am so happy you got the message you needed out of my book but you made something up." I’m glad, I love when people take the book and make it their own and I also just have to laugh when someone tells me about a cartoon they love that I actually haven’t drawn, but they apparently got the message they needed somehow out of the work that I was doing.

Jeff Goins: It's like a subconscious thing, it's a very meta thing if you think about you're doing these art notes to yourself, and then somebody reads it and they subconsciously get the message and then they do a note to themselves without realizing that you didn't write that.

Stephanie: Exactly, yeah, it can get like a very, it's a very meta process sometimes, especially Art To Self it gets, there's so many layers.

Jeff Goins: Yeah, well I love it, I love the four sections of this book. "You are here." "You are enough." "Embrace the messiness." And, "Love bolder." Let's fast forward to present and we're talking about starting, you know, these different projects and most recently Art To Self and like talking with a real live cartoonist, I was thinking motivational cartoonist, I don't know if you ever done a cartoon about that, but I just envision Chris Farley, you know motivational speaker living in a van down by the river.

Stephanie: That's right, yeah, how do you get your life back on the right track, yeah, exactly.

Jeff Goins: So, if you haven't done that yet you should probably do that. A picture of a van and a river.

Stephanie: That's a good one, I love that, I love it.

Jeff Goins: Anyway, so, I'll own the copyright to that but you're welcome, I'll license it to you. No, let's talk about business, let's talk about money and marketing and these things that, you know, a lot of artists are uncomfortable with. I recall a conversation that we were having back in Portland during World Domination Summit over, almost a year ago, and we were talking about this. We were talking about the tension between having an entrepreneurial mind or an awareness of the fact that you've, like if you want to work for yourself you've got to pay bills and manage financial things, which I've never loved but realize is kind of an important thing to being a human being. And yet, art in someways just kind of feels like a gift. It feels like Art To Self is a gift.

Every day you get up and you draw something and you share it with people for free, it is a gift, and in fact like, you could just go look at all the cartoons, you know, someone doesn't have to buy the book, and yet I bet that many people who have read your blog and signed up for your news letter out of appreciation for your work said, "No, I want to do this, I want to support this." It's an interesting dichotomy and I'm just curious like where you do sit on that spectrum, like are you comfortable with the business stuff, I mean you did the financial blogging thing, like what does it feel like to be an artist and also to be an entrepreneur.
Stephanie: Yeah, and I would say the spectrum is starting to shift especially in the last couple months, and it's a pendulum swing for sure but for me I think there were two specific mind-sets that I needed to be okay with. It's a very recent, let's say in the last six months almost the mind-set for me. One is the idea that if you give you are allowed to receive, and it seems to obvious but like you said, Art To Self is a very giving brand. I'm saying, "Hey, free cartoons and motivation in your inbox every day, all you have to do is sign up and I'm gonna just give, give, give, give, give."

The first year I did it it was really hard to monetize that or to add any sort of request of my audience on top of it because it felt altruistic, it felt like asking for money would be out of integrity, so it was a slow process to shift over to asking for things like, for example, I ask for donations and I say Art To Self is an act of love and if it resonates with you, I would love support to keep this newsletter running." And, the number of people who have donated either, you know, the quantity of people has been amazing and the monetary amount has been amazing, you know people have done monthly subscriptions or one-time donations that have just blown me away, and so offering that outlet was a big step for me.

Now shifting to product mode, and now I'm creating, you know, I have Art To Self the book, I just came out with a children's book last week, and I'm going to be creating a coloring book and a, you know, cartoon mindfulness guide. I'm realizing that because I have this brand that's giving, and I'm sharing my work all the time, people want that tangible thing they can hold onto and whenever I release a product now it's like every ones celebrating with me and it's just a wonderful, wonderful feeling. That giving, receiving mindset what I think was the first piece, and the second big mindset that I had to take on was being okay with making money in a different capacity while I built up Art To Self.

I still have a couple financial literacy clients, I do some cartoon and animation work for them, but there is a part of me that is still like 100% pure money making business over here, while Art To Self can take the time it needs to develop products and continue to grow my audience, and so it can grow into an income stream that I'm not forcing to be the end-all be-all money maker at the moment.

Actually, it was very helpful to read Elizabeth Gilbert's book Big Magic in which she describes, "I would go home and write and then I would waitress, you know, and those two lives were separate until writing, you know, until it didn't have to be." Not putting that pressure on my brand, as impatient as I was to get Art To Self to the place where this is my like full-time money maker, I don't want to put any sort of undue pressure on the brand and while I'm still working to build it and offer products that people love and continue to make money. This is the year of Art To Self in which I'm going to do that, where it becomes that full-time thing and at the same time it's just my job to exercise patience and make sure that I've got some money coming in from other things in the mean time so that I can support this growth.

Jeff Goins: Do you subscribe to the idea that if you make money off of a passion it can kill the passion? What do you think about that.

Stephanie: You know, I use to think that. I think that was the first struggle I had again about that giving and receiving. I do remember moments of impatience and
frustration about, you know, nine months into Art To Self I had this amazing audience that I’d build and it had been that giving and giving brand, and I just got so angry like, “Art To Self why are you not making money? Like where is the money and why isn’t this happening.”

For a couple weeks I tested out some really weird monetization strategies, like selling prints and maybe t-shirts and how about mugs, and just trying to like squeeze dollars out of it is what it felt like. I realized like I had hit a line that was kind of my integrity line that I crossed, but also it wasn’t going to work. I knew not only did I not feel good selling that way but it was not going to work, and it actually wouldn’t have made me the money I needed, so I realized that one I needed to commit to drawing the cartoons that I need to hear and I need to read.

If I can stay fast on that line I know that the message will always resonate with people, and then on the side create products that people want. And, always creating this dialogue between myself and my audience and saying, “Okay, this is what I’m working on next what do you guys think?” Or, for example, this children’s book I came out with, it was a long story you know like a illustrated story I had on my blog and I asked people what they thought, should I make it a book? It was a resounding, “Yes.” It was just, you know, the integrity of my work is important because it’s what people resonate with, so just have make sure that you know, I’m not creating a cartoon because it’s going to look good on Facebook or something. I’m creating the message that I need to hear and then, you know, separately looking at how I can package this into products that people care about and that people are willing to buy.

Jeff Goins: It’s interesting, so like the creative process for you isn’t commercial, like you’re creating the thing that you think people need or that you need for yourself and you hope other people share that need, but then once it’s made you go into business mode. Am I hearing you right?

Stephanie: Yeah, that’s a great way of putting it, which is it’s almost like the packaging and the presentation, that’s what’s the business side of things, but the cartoons themselves are the, is that really free, creative outlet for me and so I can come up with Art To Self the book comes out of this collection of, you know, a hundred of my best cartoons last year so I know the cartoons have hit home and they, it was, you know, I was creatively aligned when I drew them and created them. And, it took the editing, formatting, business-y, marketing side of me to make that book real, so yeah it’s definitely a two-step process for me.

Jeff Goins: Yeah, and it does seem like when money becomes a chief concern, how you’re going to maximize your profit, that doesn’t necessarily always lead to the best art and when you’re writing something or drawing something or creating something, and you go, “I don’t care if it makes money.” The irony is that that kind of stuff can really resonate with people and, you know, sometimes make some money.

Stephanie: Yeah, absolutely, and I’m a big advocate of keeping those hats separate so I can put on a hat at a different time and be like, “All right, CEO, marketing hat needs to be on right now.” But, first thing in the morning it’s like doodle hat, it’s drawing, it’s writing, it’s creating the thing because that is the fuel and the fire that needs to keep burning, and it’s the thing that has built this lovely
audience that I care about so much. And then separately, carving out time like for me working on my mindfulness guide this afternoon it was creative time and writing and drawing and then deciding how to package it was a separate activity.

Jeff Goins: I really hope you have a doodle hat, like a fedora?
Stephanie: Oh my gosh, now I think I need one like a physical-
Jeff Goins: I think that would cool, you know like, I don't know what your sort of creative rhythms are like, but moving around and changing locations for me when I feel stuck can be really important, and I love the idea that like literally you put on a doodle hat in the morning.
Stephanie: THat's too funny [crosstalk 00:28:13] oh my gosh, I'm going to have to make a cartoon out of that one too. See the ideas keep coming, this is what's so great about being a human and learning lessons and stuff so, yeah, I love that idea.
Jeff Goins: If you were talking to an artist and, I don't know if you have these conversation, I do, you know I live in Nashville around a lot of musicians, also a lot of writers and just creatives in general. I hear this, what I believe is a limiting belief, which is you know like you can't make money as a writer, or as an artist, or as a whatever, and I really appreciate Steph you being transparent about the diverse revenue streams, about doing client work, but also doing creative work and then even figuring out the discipline of how do I monetize this in a way that doesn't undermine my own values and voice, and making peace with all of that which I love.

That's sort of the idea of this show, the Portfolio Life, is the life of a creative professional, and really of anybody these days, is you're going to have multiple things, lots of different gigs and stuff. Whether or not you're a freelancer or not I mean that's just the way we live our lives and I actually, I've been talking about this idea for a couple of years now and like, just like basically lying about it in my heart, because what I thought I really wanted to do was just write all the time and just recently while working on this book I realize, you don't want to do that. Like that would be hell, you would drive yourself crazy. You like the business stuff, you like the marketing stuff, and you also like the creative stuff. It's just when like one you know overtakes the other things it starts to feel fake and flimsy to me.

Anyway, I appreciate you sharing that. I've also started to make peace with that as of like this week.
Stephanie: Good, I'm glad I'm not the only one because I totally feel the same way with these. Am I being invigorated by my work and part of is, that's the question I just have to always ask myself, and if part of that means my revenue equation is consulting work, which I actually enjoy and it's like using a different part of my brain, it keeps things fresh and it makes me feel appreciative for the moments I do get to sit down and write and draw. I just have to be in charge of lighting the fire under my but to make sure that Art To Self grows into what I want it to be, so that I'm not resting on income coming in from a different source.
That's I think is the challenge for me at least at the moment, which is okay even though I am feeling supported by other revenue streams I still need to give Art To Self the love and care and, like you were saying, if I did Art To Self full-time at this moment I think I would go crazy. I think the cartoons would suffer, and I think I wouldn't be as intellectually stimulated and fulfilled, my curiosity wouldn't be as fulfilled I think if was just doing it full-time. I'm really happy that I'm not the only one who feels that I think it is a myth of you have to do this all 100% this way and you should live and breathe your, you know, your medium of choice, and that can be exhausting so yeah, I'm all for that kind of balance.

Jeff Goins: I think maybe it works for some people, but for a lot of us I think there's this idealistic voice of an artist that says like, "You should be suffering." And like, "You should be doing your work 12 hours a day." I read this biography of Van Gogh one time and talked about how when Van Gogh lived in the South of France he'd get up early in the morning, he'd take his easels out into a field and he would just paint in the heat of summer until he had like heat stroke, and then he'd paint like tons of painting, he'd do multiple paintings in a day sometimes and then he'd carry them home at sunset and it's just like, if you're not doing that you're not a real artist.

Yeah I just, I mean I think that what we're seeing these days is a different kind of artist emerge and it's exciting to me to hear folks like you give yourself permission because if anything it kind of validates my own journey. I'm curious, so say somebody comes to you and says, "You can't make money doing this." Or, "I want to make a living as an artist." What kind of advice would you give them?

Stephanie: I would go back to two years ago when I started doing personal finance cartoons and I got a chance to speak with an entrepreneur friend of mine, Noah Kagan, I was down in Austen and he runs a, he's a very successful online entrepreneur and we were talking and I, he asked me what my kind of ideal day would be like and I would be like, "Oh, you know, creating cartoons in the morning." And, you know I kind of outlined all the creative stuff I would want to do, and he's like, "So, it's not writing about personal finance, and it's not making an e-guide about how to get out of student loan debt." I'm like, "No, it's not." He's like, "It's cartoons." I'm like, "Yes it is." And he said, "Okay, in the next 72 hours before you leave Austen you have to sell a cartoon."

I stopped and I was like, "What?" He was like, "You need to put up a Paypal link, e-mail your list of personal finance readers." Who weren't on my list because they liked the cartoons but they weren't there for as an artist or like a creative who wanted to be inspired, they were there for personal finance advice, but he challenged me to put up a buy here button and say, "I have three cartoon prints for sale, first come first serve." I didn't even have the prints printed and I didn't even know what I was going to do if somebody bought one, I just was, he really pushed me to test can I sell my cartoons for money?

It was the first time ever that I put that equation together, that my cartoons could equal money, and it was the first time the rubber hit the road and I actually sent a Paypal link out to my list. And, people bought. I had two prints sell, and for me it was like the first moment that I made money off of my art to a group of people that, you know, thinks of social media, even if you don't have a e-mail list, you know being able to put it out on Facebook and just say, "I
have this one print, or this you know a couple things I'm selling, first come first serve, here's the link."

And it worked, and from that moment on I knew that my only job was to test the things that worked and to create art that I cared about, but then consistently put it out into the world in ways that it's for sale. Because if it's not, no one is going to ... well, you know, I've had a few people ask me to create things and buys things and offer to do that, but usually you have to just create the opportunity for somebody to actually purchase and buy your work. Doing that for the first time is the most important step, and you would just be surprised like what kind doors it will unlock for you mentally and, you know, it was a really significant moment for me.

Jeff Goins: Yeah, so be honest about what your ideal day and schedule looks like, and if you're not doing anything associated with that that's going to get you there maybe change something, and then make sure you can actually sell something.

Stephanie: Yeah, exactly, and I think it was Amanda Palmer's book the Art of Asking that I read where she said, "You know, at least 10% of the population is looking for a way to contribute to and pay for art." She said that and I was like, "Oh, interesting." She's like, "People just want a way to do that." Because, her musical campaign is you know she had one of the biggest Kickstarters ever, all of her fans really rally around the idea of supporting her work, and she's like, "You just need to give them the opportunity to actually give you the money." That was also a big ah-hah for me which is, okay, I just need to create those ways in which people can pay for what really resonates with them.

Jeff Goins: Yeah, yeah, I think it was Amanda Palmer, I'm sort of paraphrasing here but I like in her Ted Talk where she says something to the effect of you know, "Don't, like you don't have to ask people to pay you, you have to let them."

Stephanie: Yes, yeah.

Jeff Goins: That is so true, if you've done what you've done Steph which is be generous, give more than you take, build a community, and it's not everybody right but it's enough people, if you help enough people literally there will be people lining up ready to give you money, it's amazing.

Stephanie: Yeah, and it is, I think giving mentality and then saying, "And what's available here is a book, a children's book, a coloring book, you know guides, things like that." It feels really authentic and like you said, the amount of people who are either one lining up to buy and they can't wait to buy my next thing, or people e-mailing going, "I love the book what's next, I want to buy it." And giving me ideas of what to sell next. I'm like, "Well this is a great feeling." You know? It feels very much like I'm going to let you buy the things that you want, there's no pressure, but I know that if you care about the art that I do you'll love and you'll be so willing to buy the things that I create.

Jeff Goins: Yeah, yeah, I love that, totally agree. I remember when I started my blog and people were telling me, and I don't know if you went through this or not, but people were telling me you could like monetize the blog. I was like logging into my Wordpress dashboard like looking for the switch, like where do I click monetize for like money starts coming in.
Stephanie: The big dollar sign, yeah.

Jeff Goins: I realized, "Oh, I have to like found out what people want, you know, and then actually let them buy it." But literally for, you know, after that first year of blogging every day, and I love that you've done that too, people started e-mailing me saying, "Can I buy something? Like, can I support you in some way?" It's a really beautiful exchange when you do it right and like you said, I think you have to be careful that you don't get to greedy, you know, that it doesn't become just about like how do I make stuff so that I can make money, but I love, I love that your story encourages folks who have a creative gift to share with the world that you can do it in a way where you can actually make a living that feels generous and, you know, and at the same time you can continue to give.

I love what Chris Guillebeau says, I think he does this every time he releases some sort of product. People go, "Oh, I don't have the hundreds of dollars to spend on this course or even a book or whatever." And he goes, "Well, you know, like the blog is always free." You know we forget that right like, "Oh yeah." Like, if you're paying to host something and design it like you, you're spending time, like that is a generous act and it's just a fun time to be alive where artists can be generous but they can also make a living and it doesn't have to be either or, and I don't know about you but that's always my fear is I'm going to come across greedy or I'm not ... because it's actually not fun. What's fun is to make stuff and it's great to paid so I can make more stuff, it's not fun to go, "I'm going to make this thing and I hope it makes me rich." That's not as fun as going, "I'm going to make this thing and I hope it's amazing and really cool and people like it."

Stephanie: Yeah exactly, and for me I know that by nature I'm, I swing towards the other side where I'm worried that I'll come across greedy. Where I'm like, "Oh, I just want to create art for arts sake and I want to give and give and give." I know by nature that I'm going to be, I'm not going to be pushing that, even if it feels like I'm marketing too much it's probably just right or even not enough. And so, I think as an artist just being conscientious of ... I had a blogger friend tell me this once, I was worried that I, I felt like I was spamming people about my book. I was like, "My books coming out." I was talking to her and she was like, "You think about your book 24/7 on your end, nobody else, people think about it maybe 30 seconds when they open their inbox." She was like, "You're really like blowing up how much you think you're bothering people by it because by nature you're giving and your whole brand is giving." And for me that was a nice reminder that even when I feel a little like squishy about the marketing stuff that by nature I'm a giving artist and so I'm usually going to be pretty safe in doing that.

Jeff Goins: To be honest I think that's what has made you so successful is the giving side of it, and I have benefited from that gift, I know lots of people listening to this have as well. I hope everybody listening to it goes to arttoself.com/book and picks up a copy of your book. It's a funny, inspiring, beautiful book, and I'm grateful for your time Steph, thanks for being here.

Stephanie: Great, thanks for having me.