

## Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

### Mini-Episode 15: Leah's Creativity

(Brief intro music)

Leah: Hello, and welcome to another mini-episode of Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast—where we sometimes talk about books—by the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm one of your co-hosts, Leah, and we are, perhaps unsurprisingly at this point, recording in my living room again! I wanted to devote this episode to the ways that I'm getting creative while I'm holed up in my little apartment. As someone who really likes crafts and working with my hands, I do have a pretty well-stocked craft supply, and I've really been enjoying taking stock of what I have to see what new things I can come up with, and I would like to share some of those ways with you today. Actually, the first way that I'm using creativity that I'd like to mention is this podcast. Listeners might realize that I'm relatively new to being one of the co-hosts here. The first episode I worked on was actually for our March 'Meta Episode', which was about podcasts. When the Safer at Home order went out, Rachel and I thought that it might be nice to try and put out some of these mini-episodes, and I've really enjoyed making them. From the writing, to the recording, to the editing. In college, I worked with audio and video as part of my coursework; my major was Multimedia Digital Art and Communication. Now, it's been a while since college, so it's nice to dust off those skills. I've also rediscovered how challenging it can be to write, for me, when I have no one to bounce ideas off of and work through problems with. God bless Zoom and Skype though, am I right? The next way that I've been embracing creativity is with yarn. I have a small supply of various yarns, and I like to crochet. I would absolutely love to learn how to knit, but that skill eludes me. Honestly, I only know how to crochet because when I was a little baby freshman at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater my roommate's friend stopped over and taught me. It's a skill that I've kept using over the years although, to be real honest, I can make a pretty nice scarf. Or blanket? Washcloth? Straight lines! (laughs) I can do straight lines. I haven't picked up the skill of reading a pattern or making any fancy stitches. However, semi-recently I did learn how to crochet 'on the round' which basically means I can make hats if...if I want to because I know how to crochet in a circle. I actually learned it as part of my job at a previous library. I wanted to make a certain decoration for something. We happened to have a crochet club that met at that library led by one of our circulation staff members. So, I asked that staff member to help me learn that skill. Anyways, recently I've been working on making blocks for a blanket to see if I can attach them all together later. And it turns out, nah. (laughs) I definitely didn't do enough planning to make a nice, even blanket, so my brand new plan is to take all the blocks apart and start fresh to try and color block in a different way. I've got a plan in mind. Now, I also plan the library's monthly craft program, called Make & Take. I have had such a great time researching different projects that I think would be super fun, cool to make, and are something that can be done relatively mess-free and easy time period. Certainly, this program will change a bit for a while with social distancing, so I've been working on a plan to change it around and offer Take & Make crafts. This means I needed to come up with craft ideas that could be put in kit form that y'all can just take and go home with. It's been fun to trawl Pinterest to see what I can come up with. I always find some interesting ideas both for library programs and for stuff I want to try myself. The very first kit that I'm going to put out starting in June will be a DIY Friendship bracelet. I have had so much fun remembering how to macramé these little bracelets and, honestly, my close friends—who you might remember me mentioning in my mini-episode

dedicated to the TV show “Friends”—were so excited about the idea that I whipped up a bracelet in coordinating colors for each of us and sent them off in the mail. I spent my Saturday making friendship bracelets and watching documentaries, and I’m so not mad about that. So recently, my mom gifted me a food dehydrator. I’ve wanted one for a while but just always held back on getting one for some reason or another. My current reason was that my kitchen is teeny and I was afraid I wouldn’t have a spot to store it. Glad to say that I did, indeed, find a wonderful spot for it and found a different kitchen experiment I’d done months ago in the process. That previous experiment was one where I’d picked up some super cheap blackberries. You guys remember when Meijer had packages of them for, like, \$0.50? Well, I got some, and I put them in a mason jar with vodka and let them sit in a cool, dark place for months. And I forgot about them. But in rearranging to fit that dehydrator someplace I came across those jars. I strained all the fruit out and was left with some gorgeous blackberry- infused vodka. I’m currently enjoying figuring out different cocktails I can use it in. But back to that dehydrator: my very first project in it was beef jerky. Beef jerky is actually the reason I wanted a dehydrator in the first place; I love jerky and I love the idea of making my own. To be quite honest, I’ve only made one batch so far. I just can’t quite justify running to the store to buy a whole bunch of meat just for jerky when the supply chain is a little bit interrupted and we’re under the Safer at Home orders. Sure, I could get some delivered, but I would much rather pick out my own cut. Anyway, my first batch was a bit of a fail. I followed a recipe that I found online, and it promised to be ‘the best beef jerky ever’! That proved to be quite the opposite, in my opinion. It tasted like a salt lick, and she called to dehydrate it for an entire eight hours. I did not do it for that long, as I kept an eye on it and every other recipe I consulted recommended a shorter time. Still, I wanted to err on the side of caution, and I ended up with just some way too-dried jerky. Maybe some people would have enjoyed it, but between the salt and the texture, it was not for me. So, now I’m in the recipe research process, looking for something with way less salt and perhaps a slightly different flavor profile. I also really dove into how to properly slice the meat, the different cuts, and even joined a Facebook group about jerky making. I am hopeful that whenever I make another batch it will be more successful. The final way I’d like to talk about embracing my creativity is with candle making. I’m not an expert or anything. My process pretty much consists of placing clean burning wicks in glass jars that I’ve saved, and then adding in wax that I’ve melted down. I’ve done this in two ways before. The simplest, and quite honestly the easiest, was to place the glass jars in my slow cooker and add in wax chips to the jar that would melt. Once more space was created, I would add more wax chips until the wax filled the jar to the level I wanted. I did this one year in order to produce more candles with less work to give away as Christmas presents to my coworkers. I don’t think I’d make them that way again, because wow did my apartment smell like various candle scents when I was doing that. It was very overwhelming. The other way that you can pour a candle is to have a metal pot—usually with a pour spout—that you place wax in and heat up over a double boiler. Once it’s melted, you just pour it into the candle jar or form that you’ve created. Now, my sort of hack that I used is that I purchase wax melt cubes that you can find in the candle aisle and melt those down. I do that because they’re already fragrant and I can tell in the store if I want the scent or not. You can, and I have in the past, order unscented wax chips that are in very small bits. Once you melt those down, you can add special candle scents, or special coloring. I wouldn’t say I’m picky about scents, but I do worry about ordering them online when I can’t smell them first. I also don’t necessarily like adding color chips, because it’s a trial and error process to get the color you want. I do keep those unscented wax chips on hand, because when I melt down the scented wax cubes they don’t always add up to the volume of the jar. So, I’ll add those wax chips to fill up the jar and to make those scented wax cubes stretch a little

further. I want everyone to know that I am not a pro at this, it's just a craft that I've done before and I enjoy doing. I have no idea if there are better ways to accomplish candle making, but my process works for me when I want to make a new candle. Also, wax is hot, so if you do want to try your hand at this please be careful. All right, there are a few other ways that I can think of that I'm staying creative, but I think I've talked about enough for today. I really hope that you guys at home are finding ways to be creative, and I hope hearing about how I'm embracing creativity might spark an idea for you. You can find ways to get creative with anything: cooking, actual arts and crafts, writing, gardening...heck, the list goes on! Until next time, happy reading and I hope y'all can get a little creative, too. Bye!

(Brief outro music)