

# 107 Student Success Spotlight with Tori Kelner

## **Laylee Emadi**

Hey friends, this is the last episode in our series highlighting the behind the scenes of the educator journey of a few of my incredible student alumni from inside the creative educator Academy. So if you're listening to this episode when it goes live, I am so pumped to share that the creative educator Academy is now open for enrollment. We only opened our doors twice a year because I've decided to actually change things up and the Academy is no longer a do it yourself course it is now a full on group coaching program where I teach you weekly live, and you get lifetime access to the course materials that already exist. So it's a pretty awesome experience if I do say so myself. And I am so thrilled to lead this new group of students through it and to be able to walk alongside my students and hopefully you in your journey as a creative educator. Inside the academy, you'll be able to learn how to create and deliver and sell effective and impactful education so that you know you're doing things the right way as a mentor, or course creator or speaker, or in person, event host and all around educator. So to grab your spot in this round head to [Layleeemadi.com](http://Layleeemadi.com). And if you're listening to this after doors have already closed, no worries, go grab your spot on the waitlist so that you're ready when doors reopen the next time around. Now let's dive into our final students spotlight and hear about a fellow educators journey.

## **Laylee Emadi**

Welcome to so here's the thing, the podcast for small business owners, entrepreneurs and creative educators who are ready to take their business to the next level, through candid conversations, tactical approaches and a few unpopular opinions. We're lifting the veil on what it takes to build both a life and a business that you love. I'm your host Laylee Emadi, a coach for creatives and founder of the creative educator Academy, where I help entrepreneurs step into the role of industry leaders and educators. I'm so glad that you're here. Now let's jump into today's episode. Hey friends, welcome back to this special series where I am spotlighting a few of my creative educator Academy Alumni who are doing incredible things in the industry. And today we are talking with the fabulous Tori Kelner I adore this woman you guys have no idea. I'm obsessed with her. And I'm so excited to hear all the stuff that you're offering in your business education wise. I know obviously, you're a phenomenal photographer, and an amazing educator. So tell us all about you and like what all you're doing in your business and in particular, what kind of education are you offering now?

## **Tori Kelner**

Yeah, hi, I'm Tori. So excited to be on here and like so honored that Laylee asked me when she messaged me, I was like, this is the best thing ever. I'm equally as obsessed with lately. So thank you. So I'm Tori Kelner. I am originally from New Jersey living in Philadelphia right now. So I'm a little bit all over the East Coast and glad to travel wherever but I'm a wedding photographer photographing pretty laid back outdoorsy, adventurous couples and all my couples are so chill, they make my job very fun. And my style is a little bit more earthy and just joyful and fun. And for education I do one on one coaching right now. So mainly keeping that virtual COVID kind of changed everything and it actually ended up working out really well to switch everything over to virtual for me right now. So I'm doing one on one mentoring and have a few different options there I offer a strategy calls that are about 90 minutes and that kind of tags, one to three topics we can really dive into one or two. I try to keep it very focused on just a few topics versus like huge q&a of everything and then I offer a VIP day which is

closer to five hours and that is still all virtual but definitely like can dive into way more in the business. And that's where people who are few steps into their business and just need a little bit more help up leveling. So I'm really excited about that one and I swapped over to virtual with that one it was originally all in person with an in person shoot but I was finding that not everyone needed the shooting aspect and then there's people who absolutely love the Shooting aspect. So I wanted to give people options there and variety and not force everyone to meet in person if it wasn't you know the best case scenario so now they have an option to just add on a shoot with me with a real couple which is also super duper fun getting to teach posing, which is one of my favorite things. So right now have those mentoring options and then working on a resource shop for hopefully this year where I just can sell some passive income products but a lot of the things that I now know my students need and want from me that I've like learned over time working with them that I can now create so that more people can get that from me.

### **Laylee Emadi**

Oh my gosh, you said so many things that I'm literally like, I was like okay, what do I talk about first because so many things stood out to me about that one I love hearing about how you've built out like a full suite basically of mentoring options and coaching options with you that are one on one but that serve each student so uniquely and so intentionally so that's incredible. I love hearing that. I'm like literally like I could go away on this. Love hearing about how you're creating your shop products based off of no Weighing now, after like years of working with people one on one, what other people need, I think, I don't know what you I'm seeing, like so many products shops or, you know, resource shops pop up without ever having like, seen an educator like talk about those things before. And then I see them kind of struggling to sell it. And I'm like, Man, that is so smart to get to know what your person needs one on one first, and then create resources. I guess my fault. my follow up question to all of this was like, what in that process surprised you, if anything, because that's something that would have surprised me is like, Oh, you can wait to create resources based off the things that you're basically like, learning from your own students.

### **Tori Kelner**

Yeah, I saw every coaching option as market research along with just you know, helping every single student but I was like taking notes, I have all their questionnaires. And I just create, I see the commonalities between everything because one that tells me what people are actually interested in learning from me specifically, and what they're coming to me for versus just anyone or looking on YouTube or something. So that was super helpful to learn what people actually wanted from me. And then what actually excited me to make. So I knew that there are just certain topics that like, yeah, I could probably teach on but it's not my specialty. So throughout the process of, of niching, down on what I actually enjoy teaching, and then creating products from that has been really helpful. But I've always known I wanted to have some kind of resource shot, but it actually feels better now waiting a little bit to do that. And then so the things that surprised me, and a lot of what I learned from the Academy was just about niching down. When I first got into education, it's really exciting to just try everything and want to teach everything. But after working with students and learning what I'm good at teaching and stuff, narrowing it down, I was surprised by how I could keep the content the same, but teach it in so many different ways. And from that trial and error period, I just learned what I do best and what works best for the students. So I've tried everything from meeting and coffee shops, which lately was like, able to cut down to a tee right at the beginning. And I was so happy when she said something like that in the Academy because it gave me such a breath of fresh air that I didn't have to always meet at a coffee shop. And she gave really valuable reasons on why but I had done that I had done, you

know, shoot and edit sessions, I've done five hours sitting in a coffee shop, just all these different things in person workshops, the content always stayed the same. But I was just surprised that I could kind of pick and choose how I wanted to teach that. So that was a big one. And then the lesson planning and the prep ahead of time learning how to do that from lately. And then being able to come super prepared to each different session was way more helpful for me just because I felt way less confused going into every session, because sometimes you'd have multiple in a week. And I'm like who asked me what and where are we going with this. So being able to prep huge and I feel like the experience with the each student was so much better than just q&a, pick your brain. And it's kind of just scattered and all over the place. And we kind of just have a list of all this random stuff at the end. So definitely super surprised about those things on the teaching aspect, and then have a few others. But if you have any thoughts on that first.

### **Laylee Emadi**

No, no, I like I totally agree. Obviously, I totally agree with all of that. And I love hearing like that those takeaways came from the academy that makes me obviously really happy. I'm biased about it, but it makes me excited to hear but no, I mean, I agree. And I think that those things do take people by surprise. I like of all of that or even of the other things that you've jotted down that you mentioned, like, what would you say would be one thing that you would tell somebody who was like just starting out and maybe felt the way that you did pre Academy days, like before you ever signed up, and you were just getting started and building out like your education programs.

### **Tori Kelner**

Don't be afraid to ask people I think people are really scared of like putting something on their Instagram stories and looking uncertain. It's so much better to do your research ahead of time and just ask people what they're interested in. I think you'll be really surprised by the answers. But I put poles up on my stories, I'd reach out to past people who I had mentored or who who seemed interested in mentoring and just ask them, What would you want to learn from me and how, and I got a lot of really good advice on things. Oh, I thought I was gonna go in this direction. And because everyone was saying the other direction, I just went that way and so not creating things out of nowhere because it's going to be a lot harder to sell when you don't you know, have anyone who really wants that and then I think I guess these two kind of tied together something I was also surprised by it was just like the community that I'm building I'm like, wowed by how supportive and loyal and like special they are to me and how much they like get to know each other and use our Facebook group. So that was like a huge side factor I had never thought about but I'm super pumped to have and because of that the testimonials that have come from that and the word of mouth so they've helped bring in a lot of new students. So that's been amazing. And then like we talked about the passive income products that I never thought I would create, but now have come out of that that'll surprise to me, but yeah, the things for telling people what to do before they start. I think biggest thing I learned as an educator was like really just learning what kind of heart for education you have, and A lot of that did come from the Academy too. But learning that you like really have to have a heart for giving. And like want to do that, because I've actually talked with a bunch of people who want to start getting into education, and they're so fearful of giving all their secrets away. And I say like, if the the initial thought isn't, I just want to help people, I want to learn the best way to do that. But that's the sole reason is because I want to help people, you're probably going to end up resenting it or feeling really upset when your students start having greater success than you like. I think one of the best things in the world is seeing my students surpass my definition of success. I think that is success for me, because it's like, I've given you some some tool along the way that has made you surpass what I can even imagine. So I think having that

heart forgiving is just huge. And that was just something you have to go in with that mindset of like wanting to because that's something that just is kind of innate in you. And it might not be something you probably could grow to get there. But it's gonna take a little bit of work. But yeah,

**Laylee Emadi**

that's amazing. I'll never forget, like, I remember I did an in person workshop, and it was for photographers. And one of the guests got like the front page of I don't remember, see, he was like, style me pretty or something. And she was so excited. I did not. And I was like thrilled that her images were selected, like you want people to exceed you as an educator 100%. I agree with that. There's like no room, I think, for being selfish during any kind of educate, like, educational offer. And I think that's really hard for some people to understand when it is a business as well, because you want to profit but like, you know, what's the real intention there? Yeah,

**Tori Kelner**

yeah. And I think one other thing I would say, like learning, learning about yourself or learning along the way before, I mean, I think the Academy will help so much with this, but also just practice of teaching people just because you're good at it yourself doesn't necessarily mean you're good at teaching it. I think that's something I learned huge for myself, but then also paying for a lot of different mentoring or just being you know, I went to school for photography and stuff. So I learned very quickly, some people are awesome at photography, but aren't great at teaching certain aspects of it. And so learning what what you want to teach and how to be good at teaching it as well was huge. And definitely, like, give a lot of credit to figuring that out from the academy and just like continually doing it. Well. Thank

**Laylee Emadi**

you. I love that. And I love to hear that because I totally agree as well. Okay, so if you had to pick like one favorite thing, or one big takeaway from your time inside the academy, what would it be? Ooh,

**Tori Kelner**

I think module wise, creating the curriculum was the biggest for me, because that was like my biggest question mark. It was like I had all these ideas of things I wanted to teach, but just didn't know the best way to do it. And I actually before the academy even came out, I had asked, I have multiple teacher friends. And I remember asking him like, can someone just sit down and show me what a lesson plan looks like? And like, but looking at that, like, I watched YouTube videos on how to make lesson plans, and I'm like, How do I then turn that into what I'm teaching? Because that makes sense for a third grader, but how do I make that make sense for a photographer. And so when when I saw that, that was an aspect of this, I was like, perfect. This is everything I've been wanting. So that module was huge for me. And then I think just as an overarching like your teaching ability and your ability to be like honest and real, like really resonated with me. I like that no fluff teaching, but I also love that you're like, you're so supportive, but you don't sugarcoat, it's like, you just want people to be really good educators to help Excel the education community, which I love. And so I feel like you helped me kick the imposter syndrome of like, Can I do this? Can I be an educator? Am I good enough for this so quickly, just because like everything you laid out, just made it so clear of like, here are the steps actually do it. You know, you can do it. You just got to do it well, and I feel like you You made it so easy to feel like oh, I can be an educator like I'm cut out for this. So I think those are some things that I took away from it that I really value.

**Laylee Emadi**

Okay, we are back I have to go cry. Thank you, Tori. That means so much. And I do like it's kind of hard sometimes. And I think anybody who's listening and probably you'll agree to as an educator, it's hard to have like tough love or like, it's hard to like not sugarcoat things, because you're dealing with people, right? But like, at the end of the day, if your hope is to better that person's career or life, no matter like what kind of education you're offering, I think that that makes it just so worth the hardship of of like, being kind of blunt. And

**Tori Kelner**

I think any educator who's really in it for the long haul would want that tough love but also like you do it and it's still nice. It's not like you're beating anyone up but you're very sweet about it. But I think too, like what helped build my confidence was knowing that I took the steps to even invest in the academy and made me feel so much more confident that I like I took the steps to learn how to become an educator and didn't just dive in with like, let me just wing it and try it which is still totally fine, but I knew I really wanted to learn in some way before I just put stuff out and you know, I will If you're teaching somebody how to grow a business, like you want to make sure that you're giving them the best possible chance. So yeah, I'm, I'm really, I'm so grateful for you.

**Laylee Emadi**

Clearly, I'm grateful for you. And that that really makes my life because that was the whole purpose. And so now I feel like I can sleep at night.

**Tori Kelner**

You've done it, check it off.

**Laylee Emadi**

Yay. Thank you so much, Tory, okay, how can people find you?

**Tori Kelner**

So I'm typically on Instagram. That's kind of where I live. So I'm just Tory calendar on Instagram. And then my website is Tory calendar.com have a bunch of education stuff coming on there. And there's some good blog posts on there for education. But yeah, thank you. Thank you so much, Tori. Thank you.

**Laylee Emadi**

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