

Ep #16: The Blame Game



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Welcome to *The Empowered Principle Podcast*, a not so typical, educational resource that will teach you how to gain control of your career and get emotionally fit to lead your school and your life with joy, by refining your most powerful tool: your mind. Here's your host, certified life coach, Angela Kelly Robeck.

Hello, Empowered Principals. Welcome to episode 16. How are you guys doing today? What is going on? I hope you're giving a great week. Here in Santa Cruz, we finally saw the sun. Now, I've been bragging to my Mid-Western family and friends about how lovely it has been to live on the beach. And it has been, I'm not denying that. however, I will say that California has been getting pounded with rain for the last few weeks.

So we're in the middle of March and it has been raining for pretty much the month of March. So yesterday, I woke up and there was sunshine and it was everything; I was so excited. So I am thrilled to see the sun. I'm ready for it to warm up. I'm ready for summer to be here.

So let's get on with it. Last week, on the last podcast, we talked about what responsibility is and why we resist it and how we can embrace taking responsibility for our lives. And I truly believe that taking responsibility is the only way I know how to feel true empowerment because the act of taking responsibility by default, it means you're taking power over your own life, including your thoughts, your emotions, your decisions, your approach and ultimately your results.

So, I want you to do this. I want you to think back to a time when you felt like you took full ownership of a situation in your life. For me, I go way back to high-school. I was always a hard worker. I loved to work. I was de-tasseling corn, I don't know, maybe at the age of 12, 13, 14 years old. I know I was young; before teenagehood.

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly

Ep #16: The Blame Game

And then I was babysitting. I babysat for friends of ours – lots of people actually, I babysat a lot. And when I was 16 and old enough to get a job, I worked at the local grocery store. And I loved that job because I loved talking to people and mingling with the public and all my friends worked there too. It was just a really fun job.

So I definitely had that desire to work and to take ownership from a very young age, but where I really felt it was when I bought my first car. And I bought a 1982, I believe was the year, red Dodge Omni. So if you don't know what a Dodge Omni is, you can Google it. It's a very ugly car.

It was such an ugly car, but it was mine and I needed wheels and I wanted to take responsibility for my freedom. I wanted to be able to drive to work versus walking and I really wanted this car and my parents weren't able to afford it for me. And I decided I was going to take it upon myself to buy this car.

So I bought the car, I paid for everything, I paid for the gas, I paid for the oil changes – well actually, I don't think I did too many oil changes, but you know, I fully owned that car. I washed it. I loved it. I drove my friends around in it and I took such good care of it; pretty good care of it.

I do think it ended up dying because it didn't get an oil change, but that's another story. So for the most part, I took ownership. I took financial ownership of this car. And I share this story with you because that sense of empowerment that I had, the sense that I had control and power and ability to make decisions for myself all around that car was so big for me as a young girl.

I was probably 16, 17 years old and I think of that car as my first step into my own power and my own freedom and my own decisions and my own choices. And this is what we're going to talk about today is the opposite of that, like what happens when we don't take full ownership of our lives and

Ep #16: The Blame Game

our feeling and our thoughts and our actions and our approach to situations and our results.

So, when we're not being empowered, we're pretty much in the mindset that we are in control from other people, that other people are in control of us. So I want to talk about how our brain tricks us into believing that other people are the source of our problems.

So, the opposite of responsibility is blame, and when we believe other people are the source of our problems, this means that we think that the other person's behavior is why we feel the way we do and we think that the way that they're behaving, acting, talking, speaking, not speaking, whatever they're doing or not doing that you believe is the problem, you are saying that the reason for your unhappiness, discomfort, whatever is that their actions or their words are causing you to think this way, feel this way, act this way, get this result or not get this result because of them.

But when we believe this, we want them to change their behavior because we think that them changing their behavior will make us feel better. But if this were true, ladies and gentlemen, if this were actually true then everyone would have to behave exactly the way we want them to in order for us to be happy. That doesn't make any sense. It can't be true because other people would have to behave the way we want them to in order for us to feel good, which would mean that we would have to behave exactly how others want us to behave in order for them to be happy.

So, to me, that is in direct opposition of embracing our responsibility for our emotions, but we do it all the time. The brain tricks us. We fall into this trap way more often than we think and it especially happens when we believe that someone has a certain type of positional power over us. So I believe that we tend to gravitate to this thought more often when it's somebody like our parent or a police officer or our boss or the government or whatever; people that we believe have a positional power over us, we definitely lean

Ep #16: The Blame Game

into this idea that, “Well they have the power over us so therefore it’s their problem,” or they’re causing me to feel this way because I don’t have the control or power.

So the brain will argue with you and it will tell you and it will find evidence that this person has power over you because they’re in charge of you at work, they evaluate you, they could fire you. Our brain does this. It’s like, well, they actually do have power and your brain gets you to believe that this is true.

So it does feel like they’re in control and there are certain things that these people have over us to convince us to believe that we are not capable of owning completely our responsibility. And we talk ourselves into it.

Now, when we believe this, it allows us to not take responsibility when things go wrong, and it’s because we can say, well, that’s just what the boss told us to do. We step aside and we say things like, “Well, not my job, not my problem.” So we avoid and step aside taking responsibility because we actually kind of want to be able to say, well the boss made that decision, that’s not coming from me.

Also, our brains want to believe that this person has power over us because it also excuses us. Think about this. It excuses us from taking uncomfortable action so we can step back and say, “Well I think it’s their problem. They are the source of my problem so I’m not going to be able to manage this. I don’t have to do anything because it’s them, not me.”

But, we also use this thought to our disadvantage when we feel we should have control and we believe we don’t have the control. So we use this for our benefit and to our disadvantage. When we want to blame and we don’t want to take responsibility, this works. However, it doesn’t really work because we’re giving our power away and then we are feeling frustrated and incapacitated. And this is victim mentality; it doesn’t serve you at all

Ep #16: The Blame Game

and it's not true. It just can't be true, otherwise people would be our puppets and we'd be their puppets and that is not how we work.

When you have thoughts that another person should be taking different action than they actually are taking, you are believing that you need them to behave in the way that you want them to in order for you to feel good. So my coach, my master coach, Brook Castillo, calls this having a manual on this person.

And basically, what she means by that is that you have this instructional guidebook in your mind as to how this person should be behaving. So like, I'm going to use your boss, because I think a lot of people can connect to, like, my boss has power over me and they are my problem, or they are the problem; they're the source of this problem.

So you have this idea of how this person should be acting or not acting, what they should say, what they shouldn't say, who they should be, how they should be, how they should show up, all of these things. You have all of these sets of rules in your head about this person's behavior and how they should be acting.

And really, what we're saying when we're upset with somebody or we think they are the problem is we're basically saying that they should be approaching this situation differently than they currently are. So we think that when our boss gives us too much work to do then we are really saying that our boss should behave differently and give us less work.

So you think you know what that person should be doing. And you don't realize this when you're doing it because your brain has tricked you into believing that they are the problem. Here's how you know when you're falling into the manual territory, having a manual on somebody. Actually, it's one word. The most common manual word in the world that I can think of is the word, "Should."

Ep #16: The Blame Game

So those thoughts usually contain the word should. Things like, “She should visit classrooms more often.” Or, “He should not come to meetings late.” Or, “She should step up and deal with this problem.” All of those shoulds, that’s telling you, that’s a signal, that’s a word that’s a sign that you are stepping into manual territory.

So, if you believe that they should approach situations a certain way, meaning the way you want them to, then you believe that all would be right in the world. If they would just do this, it would be better, or if they would just do that, things would get fixed or solved. But when you do this, you’re actually attempting to control and manipulate their behavior. And as you know, you do not control other people’s behavior, so this does not work.

And the problem with having a manual is that you’re basically putting your emotion into someone else’s hands. It’s like saying, you won’t be happy unless your child behaves exactly the way you want her to all of the time. And if you think that other people’s behavior is a source of your happiness, well, my friend, you are going to be waiting a long time to be happy.

So guys, this all circles back to blaming versus taking responsibility. When you blame somebody for your emotional response or your emotional state, the way that you are feeling or acting, you are not taking responsibility for yourself. This disempowers you. When you think that someone else should behave in a certain way in order for you to be happy, you are giving your power away.

Now, this does not mean that you allow someone to treat you any way that they want to. You need not put up with harmful situations or circumstances that are not serving you. So there’s a difference between, “He shouldn’t give me more work to do,” and, “He shouldn’t hit me.” And that difference is this – whenever I catch myself thinking a certain way and I’m not sure, like, is this a boundary issue or is this a manual issue, I change the word should, or should not in this case, into, “I will not allow”

Ep #16: The Blame Game

So for this, it would be, “I would not allow him to give me more work to do.” That feels different. That’s how I know I am kind of in manual territory because that’s not true. I’m not going to create a boundary for my boss about how much work he should give me. But in the case of, “I will not allow him to hit me,” that statement comes from a place of personal power. It means that you are creating a boundary.

Shifting the statement to I will not allow helps you hear your thinking and decide if you feel that there’s been a boundary violation. And I’m going to talk about boundaries and how to create them and how to build them from a place of love and trust and compassion on next week’s podcast. But for now, I want you to understand that your boundaries come from your values and your actions; your actions, not somebody else’s actions.

We’ll talk about that next week, but you need to identify when it’s a boundary and when it’s not and you need to know that boundaries are incredibly important. They are critical to self-empowerment. So, identifying the difference is key. We’ll talk more about that next week.

But I want to wrap this up – I want to come back to the beginning. So, people are never the problem. Your brain is going to get you to believe that they are the problem and the longer you believe this, the longer you stay in disempowerment.

So, angry parents at school are not the problem. Misbehaving students are not the problem. Your boss is not the problem. Your teachers are not the problem. What is the source of your problem? This is a quiz. What is the source of your problem? Your thinking. It’s how you think about the angry parent or the misbehaving student or the boss or the teachers. Your belief system, the way that you think about these individuals or group of people is why you’re feeling the way you do about them, which will impact how you approach them, which, in turn, obviously impacts your results every single time.

Ep #16: The Blame Game

I know you want to argue this because it feels like the things that people do to us are the source of our pain, but it's what we think about what they do that is the source of our pain. It's not easy to shift that thinking, but it is possible. And just knowing that can help relieve some of the anxiety, the stress and the fear around personal power.

There you have it, folks. People are not the source of your problem; your thinking is. How's that for a zinger? We'll talk more about boundaries next week, but I want you to know that you can change the way you think and feel about even the people who bother you the most in your mind. And we'll talk more about that in a future podcast.

So, chew on this a little bit this week. Identify times when you're noticing that you're resisting the responsibility of your feelings and your placing it onto somebody else, especially someone at work who's getting under your skin. Just observe and notice.

You don't need to change it this week, just be aware that there is a thought behind that feeling and see if you can capture what that is.

Hey, if you love this podcast and want more, check out my website at angelakellycoaching.com and sign up for my weekly newsletter. Don't worry, it's a short one. I hate reading long emails and I won't take up much of your time. But I do love to share with all of you all that's going on, my random thoughts on education and the fun life at the beach. So join me on my newsletter at angelakellycoaching.com. You just sign up, pop in your newsletter and it comes to you every week. Have a wonderful week, my friends, talk to you then; bye.

Okay, so I hope you enjoyed this podcast. If you did, would you please take a moment to write a five-star review on the podcast. And if you want to dive in deeper, you can sign up for a free weekly newsletter. I send out a quick update full of inspiration to get you empowered and keep you motivated to

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly

Ep #16: The Blame Game

keep going and keep leading with passion. Alright, have an empowered week, my friends. I will talk with you next week. Take care; bye-bye.

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