

Ep #23: Reflecting on the Year



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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, my fellow principals. How are you guys doing? This is the end, right? You should be at the end, or just past the end of the year, by the time you're listening to episode 23. And I want to congratulate you on a job well done.

I have to say, I'm a little envious of that feeling of excitement. You know that peak you get when you know the end is near or you just crossed the finish line, it feels so good to know you did it. You were a school leader for the entire year. If this is your first year, an extra dose of celebration is in order for you.

And if you're a veteran principal, every year is something to be celebrated, something to be excited about and something to feel really proud of. This job is not for everyone, so I congratulate you. I've been in your shoes. I love that feeling. I'm so proud of you and I'm a little envious that I don't get to feel that excitement in the same way.

I feel them in other ways now with this new career of mine, but it's not the same, so have fun. And that's what we're going to talk about today. We're going to talk about reflecting on the year. Whether you are relieved it's over and you don't want to think about it or you're actually energized to plan next year – sometimes we feel both during the course of a day – it's really worth the time to invest in yourself; to stop and truly reflect on your school year from a place of how you are thinking and feeling about the job.

Because our feelings, they're the guide to what we're thinking. It's the signal, when you are feeling something positive or negative, that feeling is

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an indicator to your brain and to your awareness about how things are going. So we're going to take a look at how we've been feeling about the year.

I'm going to share with you a little mini process I use to reflect on the school year. You can do this in any area of your life. We do it as entrepreneurs with our businesses every quarter in my mastermind. We stop and we take a look at what we're thinking and feeling about how the business is going, about how our clients are doing, about where we want to go next.

And I'm going to share that process with you because I think it is such a valuable process and I think that as educators, we are so on the go. We're rushing to the next thing, we're playing whack-a-mole, we're trying to put out all the fires and solve all of the problems that we don't sit back and take some of that passive action that's really required to get us into an energetic state of loving the year, planning the year and being very proactive and intentional in our actions.

So, let's start by taking a moment to reflect on how you are feeling. So let's think about the good stuff. What are you feeling good about this year? What went well? What did you enjoy? What do you feel proud of? What did you like about this school year? Think back and list those things out.

And then, I want you to look at that list and I want you to think about why. When you think about those things that went well, those are the situations of your job, and then you have a positive feeling about those situations – remember, from the STEAR Cycle, there's a thought that occurs between that situation and your feelings that brings about that emotion.

So when you look at your list of what went well, I want you to ask yourself, why did it go well? What were you thinking? What happened that made it a positive experience for you? Because remember, that same situation,

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someone else might not have that as a plus on their list. So the reason it's a plus for you is the way you were thinking about that situation.

So write those down; why do you think it went well? What thoughts are you having about that situation or that activity or whatever it was that went well for you this school year? And then, what about that situation would you like to repeat or do again? Because success breeds success and success leaves clues – so if something was successful, take a moment to look at it and reflect on what you think it really was.

Now, this is just your expectation or your perspective of what went well, but that's how we adjust our approach and if something works, do it. Grab onto it and do it again. Take a moment, write those things down.

And then, what you want to do is what did not feel good about the school year – and be honest with yourself. A lot of times, we suppress these negative experiences. I know I did. I didn't want to think about them again because I didn't want to feel the pain of it again. I didn't want to suffer again, so I would write them off.

But if you take some time and sink back into the year and go through the course of the year and what did not go well and what felt the worst, write it all down, guys. Be honest with yourself. Nobody else is looking at your list. It could be a secret list just for you and you could burn it later if you want to, but you have to get those experiences out as well, so write them down.

What did not work? What did you hate? What was a miserable experience? Think of times when parents got irate and went off on you, think about situations with kids that you felt bombed or teachers. Think about those meetings that didn't go well and write down that feeling, like how awful it felt.

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Just put it down on paper. It's just a feeling. It's not going to hurt you. And then see if you can capture the thoughts that are going along with that situation and those emotions. Why were you feeling a certain way, why were you having that emotional reaction? Because of your thoughts, the way you were thinking.

So take time to think through, "Oh, I see why I felt so badly about that situation, because I was totally in this mindset of this is how it should have been or this is how it should have gone and it didn't go that way. Or somebody said something that I wasn't prepared for or that took me off guard or the staff meeting took a turn or I didn't expect that person to quit."

We just have so many things go on that were not ideal in the school year; take time to write those down. Why didn't they go well? Why did they feel bad? Write down the thoughts and feelings and then again, just like success leaves clues, our non-successes also leave clues and I want you to ponder what might you do differently next time.

These aren't judgments. Don't be critical of yourself, you're just observing the year. Now, those are the tools that we use in our mastermind; what went well, what didn't go well and what would we do differently? Three simple questions that are neutral. The more honest that you can answer them, the more reflective you can be and you can see how those thoughts in that given moment were creating those feelings and how those emotions that you were feeling and were brewing up impacted your approach and your results.

Okay, so the next thing you want to think about is, what value did you bring to the game? How did you show up this year as a school leader? How did you contribute? What did you add either to your school or an individual, or to the entire district, the community, the greater good? How did you show up on a daily basis? What did you add and contribute?

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And put all those things down because you want to celebrate them. Those are the unique gifts that you bring to the table, that you add to your institution, to your school, to your district, to your community that nobody else can add. Highlight everything you did well and celebrate yourself.

Those are your unique gifts and that's what you bring and you want to know that you are showing up and contributing. You want to remind yourself of that. Now, on the flip, you want to ask yourself the honest question, did you give it your all? Did you show up 100% every day that you were at work? Did you come with positive intentions, positive expectations, positive outcomes, intentional decision-making, decisiveness, enthusiasm, contribution-minded? Did you fully show up?

Are there areas you fully showed up or are there areas you did not show up completely, things you didn't like you might have avoided doing? So those are all things to consider because if you believe you contributed, then no matter what anybody says to you, you get to feel good because you personally know how well you showed up, how big you showed up, how much you contributed and you get to choose how you feel about that.

And that is very important as a school leader because we don't always get the accolades, the acknowledgments, the kudos that you get as a classroom teacher. Most of the time, when you're a classroom teacher your parents love on you. If they love you, they love on you big and you know it and you feel it and you feel a part of that community, the kids love on you.

But when you get to school leadership, you do not get nearly the amount of external validation, so it's very important as an emotionally fit leader to seek out your own validation, to say, "You know what, I did show up this year. I did contribute. I really gave it my all. We might not have gotten all of the results we wanted but I feel like my intent was on point." That feels good; no one can take that away from you.

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Because when you feel you've given it your all, you tend to feel a much higher level of job satisfaction. But if you're honest with yourself and you look back at the year and you're like, "You know what, I was really distracted this year, I had personal stuff going on. I really was unhappy with this aspect of the job this year and I let it impact my ability to show up completely enthusiastically fully."

People, when you know that you did not show up 100% of the time or you kind of halfway showed up, you tend to feel discontentment. You have a lower level of job satisfaction. And why is that? It's because when you believe you've done all you could to contribute and add value to your job, you don't need other people's approval. You can hold your head high and be proud of having put the effort in.

You can lie your head down on the pillow at night knowing I've done a full day's work, I did everything I could for people. And it doesn't mean you worked 24/7, it means during the time that you were there, while you were there, you contributed 100%.

But when you know you've kind of slacked off in an area or two, that feeling of discontentment, the feeling that you feel, is not because the job sucks, it's not somebody else's fault, it's because at that deeper level, your brain and your heart and your soul, you know that you didn't contribute to your full capacity and when you know that, you feel disappointment in yourself and disappointment is a very uncomfortable feeling.

We say disappointment as if it's just a slight negative emotion, but when we're truly disappointed, especially in ourselves, that stings and we oftentimes make it mean that the job is the problem. I did that for years. I did that for years guys, so until I learned how to take ownership of my own emotional state, the way that I showed was not 100%.

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But when I shifted to understand that my thinking and my emotions were impacting how I showed up, how I approached the job, how I approached other people and I owned it and did not blame others and stopped blaming the job, saying the job sucked, then I realized that I showed up with much more energy and enthusiasm and I got to be the captain of my own emotions. Nobody else could penetrate that because only I knew if I showed up, if I brought value, what went well in my opinion didn't have to be somebody else's opinion.

So if you truly believe you gave it all and you're still feeling discontentment, it's time to explore those thoughts. so today is a Monday morning and I just posted on social media, let's get to work, because I can't wait for Monday mornings. I actually – today, my husband was kind of poking around and he was taking his time getting to work and I was like, “Go. I need my space to get busy and create and do my job that I love so much, record this podcast, I'm writing a book right now and I can't wait for Monday.”

My weekends are throwing me off, whereas before I was working for the weekend, so it's kind of flipped. But when you truly believe that you're giving it all you have and you're still feeling discontentment, you want to explore those feelings, you want to find out what's going on because you never want to make a decision about your career form that place of it's the job's fault or if I move, if I change my situation, then it will be better.

Because I'll tell you what, you can change your situation all you want, but those thoughts and feelings follow you. They come with you. So think about the area you have of discontentment. Is that thought around the time that it takes to do the job, the money you make around the job, is it the other people you work with? Are you comparing and despairing with fellow principals or other school districts, other people's test scores?

We do that so much in education, it drives me crazy. But you have to stop and think, “Wait, what are the thoughts creating these negative emotions, where am I focusing my energy?” Where your focus goes, your energy

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flows. So what's consuming your thoughts, because that's what's creating your feelings.

So how you believe the year went for you is what drives the evidence you seek. So as a school leader, if you think the year went well, you are going to remember pieces of evidence and memories of the year that proves that thought to be true. And if you think it went poorly, your brain is going to seek out evidence to prove that it went poorly.

So the bottom line is this – when you observe your year, be mindful because your year only went the way that you believed it went. That's kind of the zinger. So look at your lists, look for the positives, look for the areas of discontentment, find out those thoughts behind those emotions and see the patterns. Just notice and observe the patterns of your brain. What is it thinking? Where does it tend to lean?

Does it lean more towards everything's going well, everything's a problem, everything went poorly? And find out where you are gravitating towards and then we can start digging deeper into those thoughts to make decisions about your next step.

Are you excited about next year and you can't wait? Do you wish you could jump on a cruise ship and never return? Where are you on the spectrum of emotion about your job?

So, this is what I ask of you; please, tell me how your year went. What went well? What are you struggling with and what do you want to do differently? What emotions are arising for you? Where are you excited and feeling great and where are you struggling? Let's find out what thoughts are spinning around in that head of yours and see if we can realign your blueprint and help you feel better about being a school leader.

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And if you are still feeling like you want to explore other options, that this isn't the job for you or you're scared it's not the job for you, you're afraid to admit you don't feel like it's the job for you, then reach out to me and let me know how the year's going, what's working, what's not. And we can have a free call just to talk, get to know one another, I'm here for you people, this is why I'm doing this.

Don't be afraid to reach out – that's step one. I promise, I'm not going to like hook you up into some crazy program. Don't be afraid. I'm here to help, so let me know how it went. So drop me a line on Facebook, drop me a line in Insta, drop me a line on LinkedIn, go to my website. There's a million ways to reach out. Every single one of them is free by the way; I will only try to help you.

And if you want more, we'll explore that as well, but I first need to know, tell me how it's going. What do you need help with, what's going well, let's share those ideas with one another and build a community of empowered school leaders.

Alright, I love it. Have an amazing week. Be reflective on your year and be sure to celebrate and I will talk to you next week.

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.

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www.angelacoaching.com where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.