

# Ep #24: Change-Back Attack: How to Handle Evolving Relationships



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

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

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack: How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

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.

Hey you guys, how are you? Happy summer. My hope for you is that you are taking some time to replenish your energy and refill your soul with all the things that you love. Summer for me was such a magical time, especially with Alex when he was a little boy.

As a single working mom - so I was a single mom from his age of about three up until I met Mitch, which was quite a period of time. I think Mitch met him around eight or 10, something like that. Anyway, as a single working mom, I felt like I missed out on so much of his life and all of the mom things during the school year because I was preoccupied with all of the other children at my school.

So during the summer, I would put as much energy into spending time with him as possible. Just, I loved it. And one of my favorite memories was taking him to our next-door neighbor's swimming pool. She had a pool in her backyard, she was a single lady and so she let all the kids in the neighborhood just use the pool and enjoy it and have fun. It was such a treat.

So he and his friends, they would swim for hours and I'd sit by the poolside, I'd have lemonade and snacks out for the kids, and then I would personally like, soak up all of the magazines. I would be reading *Sunset*, and *People* magazine, like, all the things I just didn't get to indulge in during the school year, I allowed myself permission to just sit there, relax, and just consume nonsense.

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

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

Oh, and one of the things I always loved doing, and it's funny, it's still a tradition for Alex and I at the end of the school year, we would blast the song Summertime by Kenny Chesney and that was just our official sendoff into the summer. And we still do that to this day, it's super fun.

Anyway, this summer, I'm thinking about it, I'm thinking about you enjoying your summer, and I'm realizing that this is the first summer in my life that I've not been coming off of a school year. And it's so hard to imagine for me. I don't know for you if you've been in education your whole life, but it's really tripping me out.

It feels so different not to be in a school, like that school year rhythm, but I have to tell you I'm still as excited as ever. It just feels different. I don't feel like the highs and the lows of the school year. I just - I know summer's coming and we are hopefully having warm weather stay with us for more than just a day or two. So I'm really excited.

I've got the beach, you know, we've got Alex coming home from his freshman year, then we've got the wedding reception underway at the end of June, and finally we - you know, take off on our trip to Sweden. So there's a lot for me to be excited about but it feels really different.

So speaking of all the changes that have been going on in my life, I want to talk to you today about how to handle other people's responses to changes that you've made in your life. So for those of you who have been following me, you probably know my story. For those of you who are new, welcome to the podcast. So happy to have you here.

And just to give you the absolute quick summary is I pretty much stayed in education my whole career, last summer I decided to resign, we sold our house, we moved to the beach, we eloped, and we sent our kid off to college. So I basically stripped myself of all of my identities and the product

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

that you see now, which is my current life, came from intense decisions, intense emotional experiences from those decisions, and what has come out of this is basically I've kind of like rebirthed myself into a whole new life, a way of being, a way of thinking, a way of showing up in the world, a way of showing up on social media, all of these things.

And I'm here to show you and help you when you decide to make changes in your life if you are ready. And I'm assuming if you're listening to this podcast, you're looking for something different. You're looking for a change, you're looking to feel better. And what I can share with you is that my experience having been coached for years is that as you start to create changes, first, the change comes from within, and then it starts to manifest itself outside of you.

And when that starts to happen, people notice. And over time, they're like, "Wait a minute, this is really weird. She's not the same person she used to be," or, "I don't feel like I get her anymore. I don't feel connected anymore." So they tend to think like, it's your issue, they're the same, you've changed, they're feeling confused, they're feeling probably a little agitated that you're not responding in the same way they are used to you responding because they're feeling like they can't predict your behavior and that tends to bother people.

And really this comes from a place of fear. They're fearing the change, they don't want to lose the old you, and it really is bothersome for them. So this just happened to me very recently with a person I'm super close to in my life. And I was talking to this person, it just happened yesterday to be honest with you, and she brought up the fact that our relationship had changed over this past year.

And I was like, "What do you mean by that?" Because my transformation - and I'll tell you this. When - if you hire a coach or you're interested in

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack: How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

coaching or you want to know what coaching's all about, it's about supporting people to think and view their life differently so that the internal - that internal work you do with your thoughts and your emotions transforms into physical outcomes in your life.

Whatever that may be, whatever it is that you desire, that's what I do is I help people manage their thinking and their feelings, their emotions, and their emotional responses, their emotional state, to get to a place where they can manifest results that they want in their lives. And once people realize that they have the power to do this and they're willing to go through the scary times, the sky is the limit, right? The sky is the limit.

So anyway, I was having this conversation about her being worried about my changing. I wasn't feeling it because when you transform, you're like, "What? This is just me." But the conversation that ensued was quite a long one. So I took the time to listen to her full story about our friendship. It started with her apologizing to me because she was frustrated at me.

I was like, "You are? I had no idea. What's going on?" She said she was frustrated at me because I didn't pick up her phone call at a time when she really needed to talk to me. She felt she really needed me, she was in emotional pain, and I didn't pick up. So I was like, "Wow," and I explained to her that I didn't know she was frustrated that I didn't pick up the call and I said, "How could I have known that?" She goes, "Oh, you couldn't have, I didn't tell you."

So I explained to her like, you know, I wanted to justify like, why I didn't pick up the phone and I was telling her like, I was out of reception and we were in the car and I figured I'd just call you later, there wasn't a voicemail so it didn't seem like a big deal, I didn't know. I honestly didn't know. And we kind of laughed about it because I said, you being frustrated at me and me

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

not knowing about it was making her feel bad and I had no reaction at all

because I wasn't aware of her thoughts and emotions about that phone call. I had no idea.

And this conversation led us into another discussion of like, awareness and how our thoughts and our emotions, they don't impact any other person, especially if they have no awareness what you're thinking. The only person who feels that emotion is you. So emotions are stimulated by your thoughts. You only feel an emotion when you have a thought. If there's no thought in your brain about something, you will not have an emotion about it.

My not picking up her call meant nothing to me because I had no awareness of the call, nor did I have any awareness of her feelings about my missing the call. I didn't have a clue, you guys. So this is important to understand how situations outside of us, we think they are the problem, we think that that is what is causing our pain. But this whole example highlights that thoughts creates emotions, versus situations.

Because when we don't have an awareness that something has occurred, we don't even think or feel anything. So let's use an example from school. Let's say a parent went to the superintendent to complain about you, and you had no idea that the parent had gone. You had no idea that it had happened, you would not feel any negative emotion at the time it was actually occurring because you weren't aware that it was occurring.

You don't feel the negative emotion until you become actually aware that the parent complained. That is when your brain kicks into gear and generates thoughts about the parent's actions. And then you have an emotional response to what you think about that parent's actions.

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

So until you're aware that it happened, you do not feel one way or the other, and that is because there is no thought about it, there is no

awareness. And the same holds true, what if the parent went to the superintendent to praise you and to sing your glory to the world? You are not going to know, you're not going to feel that positive emotion, that positive vibe of that parent's actions until the superintendent called you and made you aware that the parent had praised you.

So it doesn't matter whether there's negative emotion or positive emotion or the situation of what that parent did or did not do. It's the awareness of the situation that creates a thought and that thought stimulates an emotional reaction, a response to the thought.

This is how I know with certainty that our emotions are tied directly to our awareness of situations versus believing that the situation itself causes the emotion. Now, easier said than done, but that is a perfect example of awareness equals thought, equals triggered emotions, okay?

So back to my conversation with my friend, she went on to tell the rest of her story, which included her conclusion was that I just don't need her anymore. And now that my life is so great and I live at the beach and my coaching business is taking off and I have a husband and my kid's doing great, and I just no longer need her.

So her brain connected my not picking up the phone to this whole story of her needing me and me not needing her anymore. And then her brain gathered evidence to support her theory by listing all of the things that are different in my life to prove to me that I no longer needed her.

So as a coach, I could see exactly what her brain was doing to her. I could understand it completely. But what you need to know is that when you are

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

a coach, you have to be extremely mindful that you aren't in coaching mode when you're engaged in friendship mode. It's really a challenge when you're a beginning coach because you're constantly seeking out ways - you

know, you see what's going on, you're constantly seeking out ways to coach, and you want to coach, you want to jump in and fix it and solve it and help them see and help them feel better.

But my job as a coach is to help people see that their thoughts are creating really uncomfortable emotions for themselves but I only want to coach people who want to be coached. Nobody wants to be coached unsolicited. That's just not cool. So I had to listen with my friendship ears, and then it hit me. I saw it and I felt it.

I realized why she was feeling so disconnected from me, and she was right. I actually have changed. And from that moment on in the conversation, I started agreeing with her. I went from trying to defend myself and justifying to agreeing with her, and I said, "Yeah, you know what, I have changed. I think differently now, I act differently, I talk differently, I live differently."

My work schedule's completely different, my personal schedule's completely different because I'm very intentional about creating all of my life, all of the areas. And I'm finally at the age of 47, taking ownership of every aspect of my life and spending my time doing what I love, all the minutes in my day.

I've spent a great deal of time self-coaching, I've been coached by several other coaches, I've taken programs, and I've worked really hard on strengthening my mindset as a business woman, as a professional, and as a person, as just a human being. And I've really taken some bold steps. I've walked through the ring of fire, I've been feeling the burn, and I'm realizing



## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

that I am moving away from believing that other people need to take care of me, versus stepping into the job of taking care of myself.

So I realized, she's right, I am different. And this conversation was really powerful for me because it helped me see my new life from the eyes of

someone who "knew me when." It also allowed me to stop and observe what was going on - not just for myself, but for that other person who are impacted by your changes and this is something if you do and want coaching, you do decide you're interested in coaching and you start to coach with somebody, or even if you self-coach using these tools that I'm teaching on the podcast, your changes as they start to become external in the world around you, people will be impacted by them.

Like, my colleagues were greatly impacted by my decision to resign. It didn't stop me from resigning, but I had to acknowledge the fact that it did have an impact on them and their life. And when you've taken ownership of your life, and you've changed over time, you tend not to see the difference between the old you and the new you because that transformation's happening over time.

It's like when someone who hasn't seen your kid for a while and then when they see him they're like, "Wow, he's really gotten tall. When did that happen?" And you're like, "What? I guess so," because you don't see the drastic change or the shift because it's happening right in front of you over a period of time, right?

So it dawned on me that this conversation was what Martha Beck refers to as a change-back attack. An attack to me is a harsh word, but I think she just did it because it rhymed. Change-back attack. But really, what it just means is that people who've been in your life, especially people that you've been connected to for a long time like family and close friends, and you

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

know, way back to maybe you have elementary or middle school or high school friends.

They are really freaked out when they see a transformation in you. They get highly uncomfortable with that change. They may be agitated with the new you, most likely they will be, in some way shape or form, and they

want you to change back to the old you. Hence the title, change-back attack. Please, I'm going to attack you to get you to change back. That's the label that Martha created.

But you guys, they're not ill-intentioned and they're not trying to change you or to - they're not trying to hold you back at least at a conscious level, and they don't recognize it as such. To them, it just feels like they just want things to go back to the way they were, they just enjoyed the way things were, you being you, them being them, and they're going to say things to you like, "I'm really happy for you, I'm so excited for you, you're killing it in your business, or your life is amazing. But I just feel like things are different now, I feel like we've lost touch, we're not as connected, I really - we don't spend as much time together."

And they think that what they're saying is like, supportive and positive, and they're not intending to hurt you. But deeper inside, their deeper intention is they kind of want to say something that sparks you and makes you feel like, maybe I should go back to my old self, maybe I'm not being who I am meant to be or should be. Those kinds of things. You start to question yourself when people give you feedback about you being different or not being as connected.

And you start to say things to your old self. You're like, "Wow, you know, I am wondering, I never did use to be like this. We did use to have a lot more time together. Did I like the way things were back then?" Because they're

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

certainly saying these things to you. Like, "Hey, we didn't use to be like this. We used to have plenty of time. I liked the things were, let's go back to that."

And there are a thousand different versions of what they can say, but basically the message is please go back to being you, let's go back to status quo. I'll stay being me because this is really uncomfortable up in

here. And why this brings up angst is that you don't want a person in your life that you adore to feel you're leaving them behind or that you don't care about them.

This is something I really struggled with when I was in this conversation, the feelings that were coming up for me was like, "Wow, I would never want someone that I love to believe that I don't need them or that I don't care about them. Because I care very deeply, I care about this person tremendously."

And what happens when you design your life intentionally and you start to take the wheel, the way that you show up in the world looks really different for others because you're managing your thoughts and your emotions for yourself, and that's going to impact the way you approach your life. But it also impacts the way that you approach the people you work with, the work itself, and everybody involved in your life.

I know, I know, these conversations on evolving relationships can be really tough. Whether you're the person who is changing or the person who is witnessing the change, it's uncomfortable for everyone involved. And it's really hard to hear someone say they want you to be the old you, especially when you're pretty fond of the new you. You find yourself loving your life, you don't want to go back, but you feel this sense of guilt because you can

## Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:

### How to Handle Evolving Relationships

sense that they're unhappy with it or they're trying to be happy for you but they're not.

[bong 0:20:50.2] So I found myself wanting to justify my new life, and even downplay it, and I tried to explain my thinking, I tried to like, say, "Oh, it's really not that different, everything's just the same, it's not that glamorous, you're only catching glimpses." And another thing I found really hard about this was that it was especially hard to hear some of the comments because if I were to be honest, I believed those nuggets that she was saying.

Like, there were nuggets of truth in - at least for me, in what she was saying. So for example, you know, thinking back to what she was saying, like, I actually do not spend as much time on the phone with my friends as I used to. I used to spend a lot of energy and time either with my friends in person or on the phone.

But now, I'm pouring that energy into my business and my relationship with my husband. And that doesn't mean I don't care about my friendships. It just means that in order for me to build my coaching practice and ensure a really solid marriage this second time around, I'm choosing to constrain the amount of time that I'm spending on other activities.

So I had to acknowledge to myself that the reason I was indulging a lot of time with my friends before was that I was really unhappy in other areas of my life like my work, my job. I was using my friend time not only because I loved hanging out with them, and I love - you know, I love chatting with the girls, I'm all about girls. I just love my friends so much, but I was also using the phone calls and you know, getting together after work to buffer myself from the other areas of my life where I was unhappy and that just - that pain that I felt when I was alone by myself, I was left with feeling bad.

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

And when I finally got real with myself about what I needed to do in my life to make me really truly happy, then I no longer needed to indulge and consume all of my friends' time and attention to feel happy. So basically what I was doing was I was taking up their time in order for me to feel better, which doesn't serve them, like, I'm taking away from the time they could be doing - and granted it was a choice, but that's a selfish move on my part.

So now when I spend time with friends, it's with complete joy and satisfaction because when we do choose to spend time together, it is with

full intention and love and excitement. It's really a more conscious choice. It's not out of a need, it's out of a want.

So think about a time you've changed and other people in your life either didn't change along with you or they did not like the changes you made for yourself. Perhaps it was like a group of high school friends not being excited that you chose a college far away, or maybe you were dating a person who wanted to go out to the bars every weekend and party it up and you started to prefer nights in with friends and family.

And a common situation at work, this is what happened to me. You start out as a teacher and you have a group of colleagues, maybe you're grade level peers, you're all kind of on the same working level, and then over time I started to get interested I wanting to try new things. I ended up becoming a reading specialist for a year, and then I went into instructional coaching, which then led me to the administrative position.

And I worked at a school - I was at my school for 15 years. So like, maybe 10 years as a teacher and then I stepped up and did some of these other jobs while some of my colleagues chose to stay as a teacher. Then I got

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

my admin credential, I went to another school within the district for two years, I came back, and I was a principal of my colleagues, of people that I had been teaching with - that I started teaching with when I was 24 years old.

So it was an interesting transition that occurred, and some of my fellow colleagues who didn't choose the same path as me, which is totally fine, they didn't like the fact that I had moved into administration and became the boss while they were still teaching. So that was a time where I really had to finesse and navigate those relationships and build new relationships with the change that occurred.

Like, I had transformed as an educator and I had to really carefully navigate and massage those relationships and build a new type of relationship with them. So it was an adjustment for sure.

So the big question: how do you deal with change-back attacks? You start with listening with your full attention. And what this means is that you are not constructing a response while they are talking. You're not thinking of, "Oh, let me explain, let me justify. No, let me tell you how it is." You're actually listening to the words that they're saying. You're just dropping into listening.

Then you observe and respond with attentive responses so that they know you're listening, especially if you're on the phone, they can't read your non-verbal cues, like eye contact and you're leaning forward and listening. So they need to hear from you that you're being attentive such as, "I'm listening, tell me. Say more about that."

So the goal is to seek to understand their perspective. It doesn't mean you agree with it. It means you're seeking to understand. You are just simply

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

listening with compassion and empathy knowing that they're coming from a place of fear and that they need to be heard.

So after that happens, it's okay to take some time and this is step two, to determine what feels right for you. So if it's possible, try to process what that other person said. Are there any nuggets of truth? Did anything resonate with you? Can you at least understand why they're noticing a difference and why they might be afraid of the change that they're witnessing?

Take some time to process it. You might not be able to. You might just have to listen with compassion and try to respond as gently as possible

until you're able to, you know, disengage and then have some time to yourself to process everything.

So if the changes you've made serve you, you need to be honest with yourself. So you have to look and decide if these changes that are happening in your life are actually serving you for the better, are they making you and helping you become the best version of yourself. If so, carry on, sister. But if not, you need to adjust.

Now, this is the caveat. Listen to this warning. Do not, do not change back only because they want you to change back. Because the truth is this: the best thing that you can do for everyone in your life is to be the highest version of you as possible. They're either going to support you or they'll find another way to meet their needs based on where they are in their lives, but going back for the sake of somebody else does not serve you, of course, but it does not serve them. It feels like it might, but it doesn't.

## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

So step three. When you're ready, when you're grounded, when you have weighed in all the feedback and you've decided yes, this change is for the best, then you state your position when you're ready. So once you've decided to what extent the changes you've made are actually serving you, then you state your commitment to the changes.

So you might say something like, "I understand that my new position is challenging for you to accept, but it's really taking my professional life in the direction that I want and I'm very proud of my accomplishments. I look so forward to working with you in this capacity and please let me know how I can support you in your goals and dreams."

Staying true to yourself is the most important job you will ever, ever have, guys. You are responsible for you and you are all you've got. So even when others you love disagree with you, stating your position and your

commitment to that position will help them see that you love them and you're going to commit to the changes that benefit you.

And then finally, step four is really just offer your love and support. Because the truth is this: you can't ever really change back, and once you become aware of a change and you've taken action to make that change a part of your new reality, you can't unlearn it or unknow it, right? It's already a part of who you are, the being that you are.

And even if you did try to change back, you're going to be met with the resistance from the part of you who knows what your highest self needs. So your essential self is going to be like, "Oh no, no, no, we're not going back because I now know what it feels like to be aligned with who we are and be in integrity, and I'm going to resist going back to that old space."



## **Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:**

### **How to Handle Evolving Relationships**

You can't unknow what you now know. So you can love the people who attack your changes and still not agree with them. So continue - just offer love, support, compassion, and understanding without going back on your commitment to yourself.

And you are not going to be able to control their actions, but you will learn how to become much more fluid and flexible and able to interact with all kinds of people. You're going to get more comfortable owning your responsibility for living your life and you'll be able to better unconditionally love others, truly from an unconditional state.

This is practice. You have to practice this and the more you're willing to stand up for yourself and love people - and here's the other thing. You don't have to drag them along with you. You can let them be where they're at and you can go where you need to go and still love them.

If the relationship can stay intact, that's wonderful and if it doesn't, that's okay too because some of our relationships have chapters. But being true to yourself will serve you only 100% of the time.

Alright my friends, I want you to continue forward in making courageous decisions for yourself, allow others to attack your decisions and your actions and all your changes, and be willing to listen to their concerns. This skill, my friends, is going to take you places far beyond comprehension in your job and in your life.

Thank you so much for joining me today. Hey, and if you love this podcast, would you please take a moment to write a review? We're still working our way up. Would love to get more reviews because it - one, I just love the love because we're all here to share the love, and that lets me give you love back, it lets me highlight people who are writing reviews, so thank you

## Ep #24: Change-Back Attack:

### How to Handle Evolving Relationships

for all of you who are listening, who've taken a moment to write a review. And I would love it if you could share this podcast with someone you know who might benefit from its contents. Please take a second to share it with them and spread the love, guys.

If you love this podcast and want more, check out my website at [angelakellycoaching.com](http://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](http://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.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principle Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit

[www.angelacoaching.com](http://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.