

## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 32.

Welcome to *The Empowered Principal 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, hello, hello, how are you guys? How was the summer? I really hope that you chose to take time for yourself and fill your heart and your body and your mind with lots of rest, activity, pleasure, and perhaps even some personal learning. Did you? What did you do? I want to hear from you.

Whether you read books or caught up on some shows on TV or listened to some podcasts, which is what I love to do, maybe you took a Zumba class or travelled to Thailand, which a few of my friends are in Thailand as we speak, I hope that you created a summer filled with no regrets.

As you are listening to this podcast, if you're listening to it the actual week it's released, we are now in the first week of August, which means you are most likely gearing back up for the new school year. If you're excited and looking forward to school, welcome back. That means your time off was successful and it did its job in replenishing your energy and enthusiasm. I love it. That is so awesome.

It's time to go back in and get busy. And we're going to talk today and address how to manage those thoughts of excitement and anticipation and sometimes that anxiety that comes with a fresh year. Even when you're excited, you can feel and experience negative vibrations and emotions in the body.

## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year

Now, if, on the other hand, you are the principal who's been having those dreadful going back to work dreams that are keeping you up at night and you are definitely not looking forward to the school year, today's podcast is also for you. I've got your back.

We're going to talk about managing the emotions that come with not wanting to go back to the grind. I have been in both seats on this bus. I can speak to them very intimately and we are going to address both of them.

So let's start by talking about the folks who are excited to be heading back to work. If this is you, you most likely are a brand-new principal who has no idea what you're getting into. It's like getting married or having your first baby. You're so enamored with the idea of it all, but when reality strikes, my oh my.

I'm just kidding with you guys. There's many leaders out there who have done the job before and they're still excited to get back to it. I can actually remember being really excited my second year because that first year, I took some serious sucker-punches and I was like, "Okay, I learned the hard way and now this second year, I'm excited because I've got some insight as to how to do the job; what I don't want to do again, what I do want to try." And I wanted to take all that I had learned in that first year – and really, it was the school of hard knocks, guys, and you know this if you've been a principal for a while.

You want to apply those learnings and so you get excited about it. But with that anticipation and excitement comes some anxiety and stress. You guys will also see this type of anticipation with kids and video games. If you have kids at home, you definitely know what I'm talking about. But even as a teacher or a principal, you know what I'm talking about. Kids love video games. And when you think about it, they fail over and over again but they learn each time they try and fail and they're just so excited to jump back on and try again so that eventually they can conquer the level.

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

## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year

That's what I'm talking about; when you're excited about something but you have negative emotion when you fail, you want to apply that new knowledge and try again. Whatever year this is for you, if you are excited to be heading to the office but you find yourself swimming in anxiety or stress about all that is to come in that new year, we can do work through the thoughts that are causing stressful emotions and level out your energy and focus so you're not revving at such a high vibrational rate. Does that make sense?

When you are excited and stressed at the same time, you are generating thoughts that have you approaching the job with worry, anxiety and fear. My guess is that the thoughts you're having start out something like this; I'm not sure how to... I'm worried about... what will happen if...

So let's break down each one of these thoughts. And you will have your own set of thoughts, but these are, generally speaking, where your brain is going. So the I'm not sure how to... stems from thoughts that you don't know how to do something or you don't know how to approach something.

It is a belief that lacks confidence in your own ability to handle a situation or solve a problem. You can counter these beliefs from thoughts that stem from courage; thoughts that originate from, "I'm going to take the step courageously." Things like, I'm not sure how, but I will figure this out. Or, I don't know how to do this yet, but I'm going to ask for help.

So you don't have to know how to do something to try and do it, but when you're stepping in your courage and saying, I don't know it yet, I'm going to try, I'm going to fail, I'm going to figure it out, those are much more empowering thoughts than I'm not sure how to do this, I don't know how to do this.

Second – I'm worried about... That type of thought stems from a future-focused mindset. You are anticipating future pain, like something bad is

## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year

going to happen to me in the future. You're either thinking that way or you're thinking about actions that you're not able to take in this present moment. I want you to remember this quote by Eckhart Tolle; worry pretends to be necessary but serves no useful purpose. The way around allowing worry to eat up your time and your attention and all of your energy is to ask yourself this one question; is there any action I can take right now? If so, do it now. If not – if there's nothing you can do in that present moment – then there is absolutely no need to worry.

If there is no immediate set of actions that will solve the worry right then and there, then there is no worry. There is no useful purpose to the worry. Worry is an idle activity. Do not allow it to consume you.

Number three – what will happen if... That stems from fear-based thoughts. You feel stressed when your brain conceives every negative possible outcome. It's also a future-focused mindset. You are worrying about something that has not yet happened. Your brain wants to believe that you are doing it wrong, that you're going to get in trouble or that something bad is going to happen to you. It doesn't know what, so guess what it does – it generates an entire story that would basically keep you awake all night because it's going to go to the worst-case scenario every single time and it will think of, "Oh what about this? What about this? What about this?"

The way to come back future-focused and fear-based thoughts is to tell your brain, "Hey brain, I hear you and thank you for keeping me safe. But right now, in this moment, we are here, we are safe, we are well, nothing is happening, nothing has gone wrong. We can handle whatever happens." You need to tell yourself that you are capable, no matter what situation happens.

Even if the scariest worst-case scenario did happen to you, you are going to be okay. If you got fired, you will be okay. if you lost all your money, you will be okay. you are going to be okay. you need to remind yourself and

## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year

reassure your brain that yes, I understand your job is to protect me, but we are okay.

And being aware of these three common thought loops will help you catch yourself slipping into those future fears. So when they arise, just assure your brain that you are safe and that you are capable of handling anything that comes your way. Got it? Okay. That's for the excited people, now let's take a look at those who are not as excited to return to the job.

And I love talking with you guys because I've experienced both ends of this spectrum. I loved going back to teaching. Every year I loved going back to teaching, but in the first few years of my principalship, I was at excited, anticipated, new, thinking I'm going to conquer the world, solve all the problems, so I was in it to win it, but I quickly waned into despair and discouragement because of the overwhelm I felt on the job, or that I chose to think about the job.

But I will say, I can remember my second year being especially exciting because I loved learning and applying that new knowledge and experience from that first year, right. You get bombarded, you get pounded, you're like, okay, okay I know what not to do. Let me try this a new way.

So I remember the second year being really exciting. But I have to say, by the fourth or fifth year, my thinking started to shift. I started to feel like my job owned my life and I was really feeling disempowered. I felt like I had no power in the position. I wasn't making the traction I wanted to make. I wasn't able to make changes as swiftly and quickly and decisively as I thought I was going to be able to and I started to get resentful and I started to feel really disenfranchised and I was like, why am I putting in all of this effort and so much time and energy and so much emotional push into this job that felt like I wasn't getting a return on investment?

## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year

So the last two years of my tenureship were actually absolutely painful. Not only did I not want to start off the year and want summer to last forever, I was basically miserable most of those days, until I learned these tools and strategies and I was able to start turning some of those around.

So that's why we're here. I'm here to help you, especially if you're in suffering mode where you're in pain about any aspect of the job. That's why I'm here recording these podcasts for you. So when you really don't feel like going back to work and you barely feel like you can tolerate the job one more year but you also have the belief that you have to do it for the money, you truly suffer.

Your thoughts, most likely, have these types of themes; I have to. I don't want to. I don't like... I can't... I have to thoughts stem from the belief that someone else or something else is in control of your actions. You think that you have to because your boss said so. You think you have to because you need the money. You think you have to because somebody's got to do the job. You think you have to for all these different reasons.

But you believe that these situations outside of yourself are making the calls for you. And choosing to believe that something else is in power and in control completely disempowers you. What it allows you to do is blame other people and those circumstances for your own unhappiness. And then this will cause you to feel that you have no control in your life, which will then cause you further suffering.

So the way to shift these thoughts is to exchange the word have to either choose or want. So say these three sentences; one – I have to manage the budget. See how that feels. Two – I choose to manage the budget. See how that feels. Number three – I want to manage the budget. See how each one of those feels differently and there's one-word shift.



## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year

So with my clients, the jump from using the word have all the way to want is sometimes too far of a stretch for them. So I like to offer the word choose because it helps them see that they do have a choice. And saying the word choose feels better than have. I have to manage the budget, feels like an imposition. I choose to manage the budget, it sounds like I'm choosing this. I may not like it or I may not want it, but I do choose it. So I'm choosing to do this. That feels better; it feels better to me.

And when something is a choice, it almost always feels more empowering. And you guys, the truth is this; you don't actually have to do anything. You don't have to manage the budget, but you might choose to manage it so that you do not have to experience the consequences of going over-budget. So you can motivate your brain by saying, "I'm choosing to do the budget even when I don't like it because I would rather not deal with the consequences of going over-budget."

If you can stretch yourself to actually getting too the word want, I want to do the budget, then I challenge you to try one more step and say this; I look forward to managing the budget. That really puts you in a position of energy, positivity, and you're really now stepping into your own power. That may take you some time to believe those thoughts, but you can say them and you can try them on and see how they feel and how they fit for you but choose the word substitution that works best for you.

I don't want to and I don't like are sentence starters that state we are not willing or able to withstand negative emotion. We're basically focusing on the problem, not the solution, and this is when we procrastinate, complain, or justify our inaction, that we are not taking action.

You can try using the same word swapping strategy, just as I mentioned, but oftentimes, clients will try it and say, "But wait, Angela, I don't really want to. I don't really like it." So in that case, I will ask them, do you have to want or like every single thing that you do in your life? And then we will look



## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year

for examples of times in their life that they've had to do something or they've chosen to do something they didn't really like to do, just because it was a part of achieving a bigger, or what I like to call a macro-goal.

So for example, I don't love taking tests. You know, we take exams our whole life, but I choose to take them and I want to take them because I want to be able to drive a car. You've got to take a test to get a driver's license. I want to get into college. I want to teach children and get my teaching credential. I want to lead schools and I want to get my admin credential. All of those things, if I want that macro-goal, I have to go through the little bit of pain that is taking an exam and passing it.

And the reality is that tests, they exist in the world. So I can either spend my energy not liking them and hating on them or I can take the test even when I don't want to because my focus is on the endgame, the macro-goal. That's where you've got to put your energy.

The I can't sentence stems from the belief that you don't have what it takes to get the job done. You either don't have the knowledge or the practice or the mental and emotional stamina to tolerate learning something new. And it may show up as sentences like, I don't know how... I've never done this before... I'm new... You can go on and on.

You can use the same hacks as I suggested for the excited new principals. When they're new at something but they're excited about it, they say things like "I'm not sure how, but I'll figure it out." Or, "I don't know how to do this but I'm going to ask for help." You can shift into that eagerness of learning and shift yourself from I can't, to, I can do hard things. I've done hard things before and I can certainly do them now.

Shift that energy right around. So regardless of the mindset you are approaching this school year with, you are going to have some mental drama; trust me. I know this because I've lived it and I've talked with many

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

## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year

clients who are approaching the school year. And regardless of whether they're excited or they're dreading, they feel negative vibration in the body.

And even this is true – I can tell you that even if you left the job today, you eventually in your life are going to have some of the same thoughts come up; no matter what. At some point in your life, you're not going to know how to do something, you're not going to want to do something, you're not going to like doing something. You are going to have negative thoughts that create negative emotions in your life, no matter what your job, where you live, who you're married to, how many kids you have, all of that.

And the reason I point this out is to say, the situation of your principalship is not what's causing the negative emotion in your life. It's the thoughts about the situation. And these universal thoughts, they're normal. They are part of the human experience. So what I want you to try on is just being aware that they're going to pop up. They will happen and if you just accept the reality that they're going to pop up, it will help you look at them and say, "Hey, I see you, boo. I know you're there and guess what – everything's going to be okay."

Alright, so welcome back to the new school year. I'm so excited for you. If you are entering into your- very first year of principalship, congratulations. I'm so proud of you and I want you to reach out when the \*\*\*\* hits the fan – and it will. And trust me, this community, this group of school leaders who are following this podcast, we've all got your back. Write your comments, your questions, follow me on Facebook at AKellyCoaching, and I'm on Instagram, Twitter, I'm on LinkedIn – wherever you follow, all the things.

So follow me there. I will have your back. If you want to dive deeper, give me a call. Have an empowered year, my friends, and welcome back.

Hey Empowered Principal, are you ready to lead your school from a place of full empowerment? Do you want to take control of your time and get

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

## Ep #32: Welcome Back to the New School Year

some more work-life balance in place? If so, I am offering a six-week coaching program at a highly discounted price just for school leaders who are brand new to coaching.

The program will focus on methods and strategies from my new upcoming book *The Empowered Principal*. As a bonus for signing up for the six-week program, you will receive a free copy of my book along with some really fun other perks.

All you need to do is hop on an initial consult call with me so we can say hi and discover how we can get you empowered as quickly as possible. Schedule your free call now directly on my website at [angelakellycoaching.com](http://angelakellycoaching.com) – I look so forward to seeing you and meeting with you. Take care. Sign up now.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit [www.angelakellycoaching.com](http://www.angelakellycoaching.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.