

Ep #33: Organize Your Office Space



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 33.

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.

Hey, you guys... That makes me think of *The Goonies*. And I know I'm dating myself, but it just came out of my soul. How are you? How are you doing? I am awesome. I have been thinking so much about you and what would be a helpful topic to talk about at the start of a new year.

So I'm guessing your energy is really revving high right now because the beginning of any new school year is so exciting. There's so many possibilities, new people, fresh faces. You've had a break, you're rested. I love, love that feeling. It's so exciting.

So I really hope you are in an awesome mental, physical and emotional space right now. And I also know that you are spinning with so much to do. You are in the throes of setting up your systems at school, getting the schedules ready, getting the classrooms ready, navigating new people around campus and you are getting your office space ready for the year. Because I know, once the school bell rings, you are out of the gate and in the race.

So I thought it would be helpful today to talk about setting up your office space for the year and explore what your physical space says about your mental and emotional space. Martha Beck believes that your physical space is a representation of what is going on in your interior world – your mind, your heart, your soul – and that ever pen, paper, coffee mug and wall-hanging in your office space is a window into your inner world, into your mind, what you're thinking and feeling. Isn't that amazing?

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And this theory really makes sense to me because everything in our office space is there because we chose it to be there. So the things that you bring into your office, you obviously love or want to have there. And even the things you say, “Well that was there when I moved in. I really didn’t bring that in. That’s not mine.” Well it’s still there because you didn’t opt-out. You didn’t opt to have it moved out or removed from the office, so you did choose it in that way.

We’re going to explore this a little bit and then get into some ideas around how to organize and clear your space, okay. before we get to the organizing part, which is jumping into action, I want us to stay in our thoughts for a minute. I want you just to think about your office. How would you describe it to somebody else? If you were describing your office space, what words would you use?

Examine all of its elements and its details and include things like the color, the space itself, how it’s set up, the walls, the smells, the furniture, everything. Completely describe that office space, and then I want you to view your office as a situation. So in the STEAR Cycle, your office space as it currently stands is just a situation. It’s external from you.

You created it with your thoughts and your emotions, but it is separate from you. Okay, so that’s a situation. So when you’re describing your office, for example, let’s say it has yellow walls, a couple of filing cabinets, a desk, of course, and maybe a meeting table that’s round. Those are facts about your office that are neutral, they are facts of law you could hold up in a court of law.

So now that you’ve described and thought about the facts of your office space, let’s explore your thoughts and emotions about that space. So think about this – what parts of your office do you love? Do you love the colors? Do you have a Scentsy and you love the smell? Do you love the design;

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maybe it's a brand-new office space? I know some of my colleagues at my former district are getting new office spaces designed.

Perhaps maybe you love the bulletin boards you've put up or the décor that you've brought in. Think of how much you love and what you love about it, and then I want you to think about what drives you crazy.

When you walk in, is there a space or a draw that, like, every time you see it, you're like, eurgh... to the point you want to avoid it? Things like that dead plant over in the corner that you've had for six months or those piles of paper on your desk or that stack of books in the corner you have not put back in the closet yet because you're thinking, "I might use those." And the ever-popular junk drawer; the pencil drawer that turns into an everything drawer. Or for me, it was my filing drawers. I had to clean those out; it was so bad.

But really, think about the spaces in your office, down to the drawers, that drive you mad. Let it all out. And this is a really important part of the process. So what do you love and what drives you crazy?

Now, think about why you love what you love. Why do you love that – maybe you have a salt lamp that keeps you calm. And I want you to think about the stuff that bothers you; why does it bother you? Really think about this. Why does that pile bother you or that junk drawer or that filing cabinet? What is it that bothers you about that space?

And then, when you think about why it's bothering you, I want to ask the question – and this one's the kicker in the pants, guys – think about the things you don't like, think about why you don't like them and then ask yourself this; why haven't you changed that space if it bothers you? Why haven't you thrown out the dead plant, cleared up the piles, reshelfed the books, cleared up the pencil and junk drawer? What's going on? Why haven't you done that?

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And the answer to this question is what is blocking you from having the office space that you crave. Those are the blocks. Can you see that? So things like this; you didn't throw the plant away because a favorite parent or PTA member gave it to you and you feel bad because you didn't water it enough and it died so you're holding onto it. You haven't cleared those piles because there's too much work to do and if it's out of sight then it's out of your mind and it won't get done, so you've got to leave the pile there because you don't want to forget or not get something done. So you keep it there in the pile because it's in your sight.

Or those books that are still there because you're thinking, I might use those again and I don't even have time to stop and put them away anyway. I'll just leave them there, let them be, whatever. Or that pencil junk drawer thing, that too is out of sight and you're thinking – it's kind of like when you clean your house quick when you know company is coming unexpectedly. You throw something in the closets and then the drawer so you don't have to worry about other people seeing them.

And, by the way, your pencil drawer, I can tell you, is probably the last thing on your priority list, right. Do these things sound familiar? They do to me. The interesting thing about this whole process of thinking about your space, thinking about what you love, thinking about what drives you crazy, is because this whole idea that our external space is a representation of our internal space and our internal workings in our mind, that means we've got some dead things over in our mental corners, we've got tons of work and overwhelm weighing us down in our mind and our energy because we believe that there's too much to do.

We don't take time to put our thoughts and feelings to rest because we believe that we'll just use them again soon so why bother dealing with them, and then they stay in our present line of view. And we don't take a moment to sort those thoughts and emotions out because we think, well

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others can't see inside of us, so we just allow them to stay messy, unorganized and overfilled.

Isn't that fascinating? The way that our home and our office space is designed is a direct mirror into our inner selves. I find that so cool. So the question that comes up is this; Alright, I get you, I'm with you, what do we do about our office space when we're feeling overwhelmed by it? And that's a fabulous question.

So I have help for you, and it's not coming from me, it's coming from an organization expert. Her name is Shira Gill. And she says that we want to focus on one small vital change at a time. Her belief is that one small important change will trigger a series of multiple small changes in your life. Think about this, guys. Even when you're making one little small change in your space, it really requires you to stop and consciously think about that space in an entirely new way.

That is why making even the smallest habit changes are so tough to make, because you have to consciously think in a different way. And you have to purposefully get your brain to think about that space or that particular area of your office in a different way.

So she recommends taking one tiny space that requires the least amount of effort to start. Set a timer for 10 to 15 minutes and take each item that's in that space and, one by one, decide if you're going to keep it or get rid of it.

Now, here's my favorite part. Here's where I'm interjecting my life coaching strategies into the cleaning process. So, when you're doing this, if you're actually going to take each one, item by item and decide yes, no, yes, no, notice whether you have a hard time deciding.

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Are you spending a lot of time deciding if you need them or not? Does it feel uncomfortable to get rid of that item? You know, those things you're holding onto but you don't really know why – ask yourself why. Why? Why are you making it mean to get rid of that pen or somebody's business card from three years ago or those almost dried out markers in the draw – you know what I'm talking about – why? Why are you holding onto them?

Why is it so hard for some of us to let go of the tiniest little thing while you see other people can keep their office space neat, tidy, clean, like 100% of the time? Why is it so hard? I will tell you why; it is our mindset based on our belief systems.

It's a scarcity versus an abundance mindset. When you fear letting go of material things, you are living with a scarcity mindset. Your belief system, which is just a series of thoughts you have, it goes something like this; well this is in perfectly good shape, why would I get rid of it? I haven't even used this yet. I might need that someday. Wait, I'm going to use that later. I can't get rid of that. So and so gave that to me, I have to keep it. I'm required to keep these documents for a minimum of a million years. Or the famous, the kids gave me that. The kids gave me the thank you card. It would hurt their feelings. I have to keep it.

All of those thoughts pop into our head and that's a scarcity mindset. We're attaching meaning to every item in that space. You're making it mean that getting rid of something is bad and that if you get rid of it, you are being bad or that you are bad for doing it. You have to hold onto it.

Let's make a joke out of this. Let's think about this. Think about spoiled milk. If you have a gallon of spoiled milk in your refrigerator, do you feel guilty when you throw it out? Why not? It stinks. It's no longer of use. It's taking up room in the fridge where fresh food should be residing.

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So you're not attaching the same meaning to that stinky milk as you are to all the items that you're holding onto and grasping onto in your office. And even though you spent money on that milk, the cost of keeping it around, the cost is a stinky crowded fridge and the possibility that somebody could accidentally drink it and get sick. It's definitely not worth the money that you spent on the gallon of milk. You simply just go and get fresh milk. You're not worried that more milk is not available to you. That's an abundance mindset.

So you think abundantly about the milk, but you're thinking in scarcity about the items in your office. So what if you cleared these parts of your office with an abundance mindset? There will always be more pens. I don't need 23 black Sharpies. I can hardly say this without laughing because this used to be me.

But think about it, guys. You can always get the books back out of the closet. It takes five to ten seconds. Put the books away. You have plenty of time to get the books out. And here's the other thing; if you clear out the clutter, everything will have a space, a designated space. Then you will know where it is, you won't need the piles to remind you and then you can get the item you need quickly and you'll know exactly where it's at because there's a space designated for it.

My son and I were cleaning out the closets this summer. He's living with us in the two-bedroom one bath condo with all of his stuff in one room, which is my office, and all of our stuff in our room. So we're a little crowded right now. Anyway, we were cleaning out the closets and he was struggling to let go of some of his old hoodies.

He was fascinated with hoodies; loved hoodies. He's been wearing them since he was a little boy and he has really good memories with these hoodies and so he didn't want to get rid of them. That's the one I bought at the concert or that's the one I bought when we were up in Truckee near

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Tahoe. We talked about how these memories are beautiful, but they're not stored within that hoodie, they're stored within his heart and in his brain.

So I asked him the question, what if you released the hoodies and donated them to someone less fortunate so that they could wear them and make good memories of their own? You're passing along the joy you had and experience with that hoodie, and doesn't that feel so much better than believing that your memories are leaving with the hoodie?

It was such a powerful conversation and such a lovely conversation and we got to reminisce about the memories, but the memories are with us, they're not with the hoodies. Such a powerful lesson for him.

So the reason you feel overwhelm and clutter in your mind is because your physical space is overwhelming and cluttered. Having a lot of things in your physical space over-stimulates your mind. Scheduling time and intentionally taking a moment to de-clutter the physical space in your office will actually clear out the clutter in your mind. Isn't that wild?

Just try it, guys. Let me know. Let me know if you tried this and then leave me a comment or connect with me on Facebook and let me know. Did you try this process? Was it hard for you? Why was it hard for you? And did you notice a sense of cleanliness in your soul when you cleaned up your office space?

So anytime you're starting to feel cloudy or confused or overwhelmed in your thinking, stop and take a look around you and see if there are areas in your workspace that could use a little TLC. Alright, okay, if you found this helpful, you can certainly learn more from Shira at shiragill.com and I also recommend the book titled *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, by Marie Kondo – such a great book, you guys. I love it. Have a clean and tidy and uncluttered start to your school year. Trust me, you will feel so much more empowerment. Do it. I love you guys. I'll talk to you next week, bye.

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