

Ep #47: Goodbye, Victim Mentality – Hello, Empowerment



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 47.

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, my friends. How are you guys doing? I am thinking about you. I have to say, congratulations, you have made it to Thanksgiving Weekend. I can remember being so stoked about the holiday season.

One, it's such a festive time of year at a school. The campus is full of energy and excitement. The artwork and all that seasonal décor is uplifting. I just love it. I still miss the vibe of school, especially during the holidays. Pumpkin spice would fill the air, because I knew there were a lot of classrooms and grade levels doing project-based learning, they were doing cooking projects.

I know my kindergarten program did an entire Thanksgiving menu and had all of the families come. It was such a great event. But what was more enthralling about fall festivals and pumpkin pie and lattes was that long-awaited holiday break.

I remember being so laser-focused on getting to that break. The energy and focus required to start the year is phenomenal. People have no idea. As a school leader, you are going all out from August 1st, or maybe even earlier; maybe you worked through July.

I tried to take July off, or at least parts of it off, but you are going full bore, straight through to Thanksgiving break. I mean, you do get a day over Labor Day and maybe Veteran's Day, and you might even have a staff development sprinkled in there somewhere, but I called the beginning of

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the year the Fall Haul; that push that comes with starting up a new year with new students, new families, and new staff.

It is no joke, my friends; the fall is hard work. I used to tell my staff that the school year is like being pregnant. The first trimester you are excited, but beyond, like so, exhausted, right? You use that excitement and energy to push you through setting up your classroom, meeting and greeting and getting to know your families and kids, establishing the routines and procedures at the site with the new babies on campus.

The first trimester is really pushing, but you're so excited. It's so much fun. And then the second trimester, you get into flow. Routines are established, the kids are learning; life's going pretty well. But then that third trimester, your brain's starting to wonder, like, where all the time went and you begin to think of all you have left to do with the kids before the end of the year.

You're panicking and rushing through the lessons. You're trying to cram everything in. But you're also getting the itch for summer to arrive and for the year to be done. And I know, by the end of my pregnancy with Alex, I was ready for him to come out and be his own person, get my body back.

So for the teachers who are also moms, they can totally relate to this and we get some good laughs comparing the two periods of time. So you guys are approaching the end of your first trimester and I am guessing you are pretty fatigued.

Your brain is tired, your body is tired, and your emotions may be tired. And when we feel mental, emotional, and physical fatigue is when we are most likely to slip into victim mentality.

Today, we're going to talk about victim mentality and how we cannot truly be empowered and engaged in victim mentality at the same time. School leaders who reach out to me are seeking to feel more empowered in their

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career. They want to learn how to feel better. They want to manage their time. They want to manage their workload and their team.

They want to feel more in control of their lives and strike a more harmonious balance between work and family. They yearn to have less conflict and feel stronger communication with their parents, teachers, and colleagues. They ache to feel physically, mentally, and emotionally better and they want to be the best leaders that they can possibly be.

We all want that, right? We want to feel that we have a say in our professional and personal life and that we have the power to lead and live the way that we way that we want to.

If we did deeper into why school leaders want empowerment, we see that the appetite for authority over our own lives is a universal adult human desire. We see this even in our young toddlers who will fight to the end for a sense of autonomy. I know we definitely see it in our teenagers, but we also see it in ourselves.

In my research on the need to feel empowered and autonomous, I've found that when we have restrictions on our ability to make choices from our own free will, that is one of the greatest sources of unhappiness in human beings. We are wired to want a level of control, certainty, and power over our lives.

When we feel like every move we make is determined by another person's expectations or actions, our frustration rises. This is why the majority of school leaders I know experience intense disgruntlement on a fairly regular basis. They feel they have to answer to district administration, to the teachers, parents, students, the community, the school board, the county, the state, and the federal government.

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It's coming at them from all angles. And when they share their schedules with me, I ask them this; how much of your daily actions were chosen specifically by you, because you put them on your calendar, because you want to do them versus how much of your daily actions are because you feel you have to and that they are in response to a given situation or a person at work?

This mindset, this have to versus want to, is the core of our emotional eight and baggage. This belief that things are happening to us and that we have no control over them creates a circumstance where we are the victim of our situation and that we have to approach the job in this way because we believe it must be done.

I use the word victim in this podcast to identify a mindset. I know the word victim can possibly trigger us into a political debate, and that's not what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about victims of heinous crimes or acts. I'm referring to the times where we hand over our power and responsibility of our lives and of our workload to other people; those times when we blame others for the way we are thinking, feeling, and acting.

We empower the idea of being a victim of our job when we perpetually respond to the demands as if there were no other choice. We empower those around us to continue barking those orders at us and ultimatums, or whatever they're doing, because we react to them. Do you see that? We actually embrace the victim-ness when we react and respond because we believe we have to.

And when we believe that all of the things coming at us during the school day are happening to us and that they are out of our control, then we feel like we have no say, no voice, no influence, no authority. That is what brings along frustration and unhappiness.

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True empowerment is an emotion. It's not a state of being. You feel empowered when you believe you have some level of control. You aren't granted empowerment from some institution or some person. You don't get an award or a degree that says, "I am now empowered."

You are only empowered in your own mind. Your thoughts are what grant you empowerment. When you believe that, no matter what goes down at work, that you have the power to choose how you will feel and approach that situation is when you will feel empowered.

Now, here's when people will push back with me. They'll say things like, "But don't you remember how it felt to be in the job? Didn't you feel like you were overwhelmed and overworked?"

Yes, I totally did. I did until I learned why I was feeling that way. And even when I consciously knew that I was creating my own feelings, even then I, at times, struggled not to believe I was a victim of my circumstances.

You guys, it is not easy to shift from victim mentality to empowered mentality, especially if we have been empowering our victim mentality for a very long time. And many of us, from a very early age, were led to believe that life situations happen to us and that they are the reason we feel and act the way that we do and have the life that we have.

We believe that it's our circumstances or the situation we're in creates our result. That's not true. And we even create proof that this belief system is true by collecting tons of evidence to support it. And this is what makes me even laugh because, even in the face of contradicting evidence, we continue to buy into its story.

Have you ever watched those Goalcast videos that float around on social media? These are videos created about high-performing individuals, usually very famous people, who came from what we label as negative

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situations; things like homelessness, poverty, abuse, incarceration and so on.

These videos are meant to inspire us into new ways of thinking. They are created to help us believe that we're not victims of our current situation and that any situation is simply that; a situation. It is the power of our minds that get us to a new improved better situation.

Our goal is to collect new evidence that challenges our current ways of thinking so that we can drop our old story. So, my empowered leaders, I ask you this; do you want to empower victim mentality, or do you want to embrace empowerment?

You do have the ability to do so. Now, it is not easy. And it is not easy because our brains struggle and resist when we contemplate new ways of thinking. We do not like to have our thinking and our belief systems challenged. It is at the core of why we stick, why we feel stuck, and why we stay in certain stories in our lives and stay in certain situations in our lives.

Our brain does everything in its power to struggle and resist when we contemplate new thoughts. It really is the most challenging work that we will ever do. Our brain is really, really good at convincing us to hold onto that story. And the reason our brain wants to hold onto that story is because it doesn't require new effort. It doesn't require discomfort. It's that status quo, it's that comfort zone. It just keeps us in our corner of what we know to be safe and true.

This is why, you guys, people hire coaches. Coaches help keep our brains in check. They push us and support us in challenging old belief systems that we would otherwise allow ourselves to continue believing. We have blind spots when it comes to our stories, our own stories, especially the stories that empower our victim mindset.

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So really, the only difference between those who live an exceptional and an empowered life versus the ones that choose to live average, and at times victimized lives, is that empowered people allow their stories to be questioned. They have the emotional stamina to let their coach question and gently push them and have them consider and try on new thoughts that might better serve them and drop the thoughts that no longer serve them.

And here's the thing; you can have a thought that served you for a particular point in your life or a particular time and space of your life. That's okay. But you need to ask yourself, is this still serving me? Is it still serving me to believe that I don't know how to do the job or that I'm new at the job or that people run over my schedule day in and day out? Are those thoughts serving you in any way? Does it make life better?

If not, consider trying on a new thought. You guys, everyone has a story. All of us do. So you can either continue to believe the story that you are a victim of your current situation and the circumstances that are involved with that situation and other people who are in that situation. A lot of times, we blame other people or we think it's somebody else's problem that is creating our problem.

You can do that. You can continue to do that. There's nothing wrong with choosing to stay in your story. But if you're not happy, if you're uncomfortable, if you want more for your life, if you know there's something out there better for you or you even just want to enhance a good thing you've got going, you can stay in that current situation, or you can choose to write a new story.

You can choose to write a story where you are the hero and you are empowered, you have great influence, and you have joy and balance in your life. It's totally up to you to decide.

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By the way, my private coaching cohort enrollment for December is open for 10 more days. So if you are ready to dive deeper into this work and expedite your empowered transformation, come on, guys, let's sign up for a consult call and let's see if we're a match to work together.

I will be sure to have Pavel put the link for the coaching consults in the notes so that you can sign up today. Let's do this. Let's have an empowered week. I cannot wait to hear from you. Be amazing. Take care, bye-bye.

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