

Ep #56: Ending Relationships



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 56.

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.

Well hello, Empowered Principals. How is life going for you this week? Most of you probably had no school yesterday in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. This means a lovely week for you; only four days to go.

I felt like having a Monday off made the week go faster because my brain was always thinking that I was a day behind and I kept thinking, like, "Wow, it's Thursday already. This is cool." But if we have the Friday off, the week seemed to drag on and feel like a full five-day week because I was so eager for Friday to arrive. Have you guys noticed that?

So I hope that, however you spent your day yesterday, that you enjoyed it. And even if you did work, working at school without students or the staff present is an entirely different environment. Don't you agree? It's way more relaxing. Either way, I hope your Monday was everything you'd hoped for.

This week, we are wrapping up January's theme on relationships by discussing whether to and how to end a relationship, and why ending relationships, even when the decision is of our own choice, is difficult. For the context of this podcast, I'm going to talk about a very specific relationship, and you can apply this information to any relationship in your life.

The relationship I am going to speak to today is the relationship you have with your job. The reason I chose to discuss your job as it relates to ending

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relationships is because the majority of my clients dream of following a path that's more in alignment with their passions and they wish to end their relationship with their current position. Not all of them, but many of them.

I can speak to this very intimately as I have done the same in my own life. For those of you who are not interested in pursuing a different career lifestyle, that's okay. This information in the podcast is still applicable for you.

You can apply this to relationships with people, you can apply it to places, locations, or things, like material items in your life. I have had clients who sign up with me who thought that they wanted to talk about work. And as life unfolded during our sessions, we really ended up talking about things like marriage, children, parents, the clutter in their house, having to move, money and finances, illnesses, and even, unfortunately, sometimes the death of a loved one.

Life is full of chapters. Some chapters are short and sweet, others are long and complicated and messy. There are themes of your life that weave throughout these chapters, and other moments that feel like they stand alone.

All of these experiences create the story of your life and parts of the story include having to say goodbye. People do not like having to say goodbye, and so having a process for deciding to say goodbye and fully letting go will be helpful in many areas of your life.

As I always say to my clients, the way we do anything is the way we do everything. So learning to let go and end a chapter opens up an invitation and a space for new experiences to enter your life. So whether you are considering relationship changes, friendship changes, your home, your location, moving to a new home or a new town, perhaps it is a job, perhaps

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your children are going off to college, we have to learn to say goodbye to many things.

I know I even had trouble saying goodbye to my Honda Pilot. I had a car I loved and we had many memories in that car, so Alex and I said goodbye with the experience of driving it across country to deliver it to my sister. And now she is enjoying my pilot and I have a new car and it's all good. We said goodbye.

So deciding whether or not to end before you make a decision to say goodbye, you need to decide whether or not the end and saying goodbye to a relationship of one kind or another is important. And the first step in making that decision to end a relationship is to first notice how the relationship is impacting you on a regular basis.

We use our emotions as an indicator to determine whether something is positively or negatively impacting us. If, on most days, you're feeling anger, frustration, distress, sadness, helplessness, indifferent, or afraid, then these are signs that it's time to do some deeper exploration.

Get honest with yourself and identify the emotions you most often feel while you're at work. If necessary, do this at the end of each day. Write down the list of emotions that you felt throughout the day. Do this for at least a week or two to gain a sense of how you're feeling most of the time. You can also write down how you feel when you think about work. Even when you're not at work but you're thinking about it, how are you feeling when you're thinking about it? That can be very helpful as well.

Once you've identified what emotions you experienced most often, then you need to decide if that is how you want to feel. And if not, what is it that you do want to feel and how would life be different if you could feel that way? Knowing how you want to feel helps you clarify why you're

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considering ending a relationship with your job. It gives you a reason to hang on when the goodbye process starts to get uncomfortable.

When I was deciding whether or not to leave my position, I spent a great deal of time considering how the position impacted my life. In the beginning of my career, education was the perfect place for me. I loved it so much. I loved teaching, I loved learning, I loved my students, I loved their families, I loved the bonds I made with my grade level, and the many friends and connections with colleagues I made throughout the entire district.

There was no question, I was in the right position for me. Were there difficult days? Of course, but overall, I really felt happy. I was competent in my job, I was contributing to children's lives, and my team was my family and my campus was like a second home. I was so aligned.

When I became a principal, I was, at first, in shock. There was a lot coming at me I wasn't prepared for, but I was still really eager to learn and gain proficiency in the position. As the years wore on, however, I realized I was gaining proficiency, I was able to do the job, but I did not feel the joy like I felt in teaching.

And over time, I started to question my purpose and the impact I was having and my overall life. I felt really dull and numb, like a robot just going through the motions. These feelings made me start to question what I was doing with my career and my entire life.

I had to first get clear on what I wanted and who I wanted to be. I had to ask myself some tough questions. If I were to do this over again, would I choose this career? If money weren't an issue, would I choose this job to do with my time? If I could do anything in the world for work, what would I do?

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After processing all of this, I realized that what once felt amazing was now feeling very restrictive and suffocating. My mom had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and I wanted to be able to visit her as much as possible. I wanted to make an impact on the lives of children, but I felt like I was buried in paperwork and late-night meetings.

I wanted strong and healthy relationships with my son, and at the time boyfriend, who's now my husband, but I was rarely at home. And when I was at home, I was working or stressing about work. I finally had to acknowledge that my career was no longer serving my best interests.

I was exhausted, out of shape, and fully discouraged. It was then that I committed to finding out how I was going to end the relationship with my district and my job.

I want to interject here and say that what our brain does when we are exploring these questions is to have reasons why we should stay in the status quo. I've spent so much time and money earning all the credentials – this is what our brain's telling us. I'm too far down the career path to change. I don't know what else I would do. Oh, and one of the most dangerous thoughts, it's not that bad, I can handle this or I can manage this or I can get through this.

And I'm telling you, did I try and convince myself of that for a really long time. So here's the thing; you cannot evolve as a human and hold onto everything forever. This applies to people in our lives, objects such as clothing, furniture, cars, or houses, our living spaces, our location, and our careers.

As my master coach teaches us, you cannot hold space for both of those things. You cannot be the person that used to be afraid of doing anything and the person who's courageous doing everything all at the same time.

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You have to be willing to let go of parts of your own identity and parts of that thinking.

It's like dragging every little thing you've ever purchased in your life along with you for eternity. It's going to weigh you down and you won't be able to make significant changes in your life. And know this; your career does not have to be broken or have something wrong with it for you to want to make a change.

Things can be fine at work and you still might feel a need to do something different. That need is enough. Sometimes, we think something has to be terribly wrong before it's okay to shift into something new. We may even self-sabotage ourselves at work without realizing it and we make things so terrible that we're asked to leave. We make drama happen in order to get us out. But just know that your desire to grow and evolve is reason enough to end the relationship with your current position.

So, how to say goodbye – how you say goodbye is simple but difficult. Here are the steps and some tips on how to manage the emotions behind those goodbyes. So number one, you check the status of your daily emotions regarding your work and decide if these emotions are what you want to continue to feel.

Number two, you ask yourself, is this job best serving me? Would I choose it again today? Is this how I want to spend the rest of my career? If the answer to these questions is no, then it's time to create a plan for saying goodbye.

So you're going to identify what you do want to do. And mark my words, guys, this has to be so compelling and so rewarding that you will commit to it no matter what. Plan B, you have to create an exit strategy. You have to decide how and when you will say your goodbye to the job. Be specific. Choose a date, choose how, choose when, choose with whom you're going

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to share this information with and be as transparent, open, and honest as possible.

Communicate your intent as soon as possible. This will solidify your commitment with yourself. It also lets the district know that they need to move forward in filling your position. Then, take as much action as possible to put your new career into motion.

Set up as much as possible for the incoming leader. Provide as much value to your organization as possible prior to your leaving. Express tons of gratitude for all who have supported you along the way, and then you go home and you hustle on the side to get your new endeavors up and running.

Follow through and allow yourself to feel the emotions that come with saying goodbye. This is important. When you decide to say goodbye, you decide, you say goodbye, and then you release. Our emotions are a choice based on what we would choose to believe. So if you commit to saying goodbye and then choose regret, you're trying to hang onto both worlds.

If we believe we've made a mistake, then we're going to feel that regret. But if we choose to believe that there are no wrong decisions and that no path is perfect – and you know what, there will be problems regardless of our choices we can choose to follow what feels best to us and commit to the work of achieving the life we want.

So why is saying goodbye so hard? The most common reason that saying goodbye to something is so difficult is because of our fear of regret. We worry that we will have made the wrong choice and that we will have missed out on something that we currently have.

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Your brain is very good at doing this, you guys. It makes what you have now seem better than it feels in reality. It tells you that you should hold on tight to what you have and that you shouldn't give up, you shouldn't give up the job, the paycheck, the status, the title, the relationships at that job. And it puts these rose-colored glasses on you even before you've moved on.

Your brain is very afraid of regret. But if you decide to believe that there are no mistakes, that you could always solve a problem, you can always fix whatever comes your way, then you will move forward boldly in your choices to follow your heart.

Number two, we also fear the unknown. We don't know what is going to happen if we leave. We might not make as much money. We might have to move. We might have to take out a loan. We might have to get some training, or worse yet, we might fail.

Our brain freaks out at the thought of failure. It would rather stay where it's not as happy but it knows what's going on and it has that sense of certainty and efficiency. It would rather do that than jump into the unknown. But just tell yourself, it's just your brain trying to protect you once again.

Buying into those thoughts is going to leave you stuck in uncertainty and you will not take action. Saying goodbye is also hard because there are things we do know that we will miss. For me, even though I was clear on my intentions and my rationale, I spent 22 years in my school district.

I knew I was going to miss the dear friends I'd made along the way, all the students, the families, and really just being a part of a group, of an organization. I really like collaborating and working with other people. And, to be honest, saying goodbye to some of those aspects of my past career was incredibly hard.

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I lost friendships that I thought would last a lifetime. I let go of a steady income and benefits. I had a solid pension. I sold my home and moved to a smaller home in a new town in order to have capital to start this business. So it's not to say that you won't experience negative emotions just by choosing to change your situation.

You can't change your situation and then automatically feel better. Situations don't make you feel a certain way, but following what calls you and what you're committed to loving, even during the rough patches, it is what makes your life feel better.

So while there are days that I still reminisce and miss parts about being in my district, there is no comparison to the love that I feel for coaching. I will take the negative emotions that come with building my school leadership company over the occasional feelings of nostalgia that I have.

I'm so passionate about supporting school leaders that no matter what bumps come along the way, I'm committed to my mission of bringing emotional wellbeing to schools and school leaders. And part of my mission is to help school leaders decide to either embrace their work as leaders and love the job, or to courageously choose to follow a new path; one that allows them the freedom to serve others in whatever capacity they're called to do.

So, saying goodbye may be difficult, and especially is in the moment, however, not assessing all of the things in your life and deciding whether or not they serve you now in this moment is the greatest loss of all. Going through life telling yourself that things aren't so bad and that you can handle it even if you feel terrible is worse than trying and failing.

And think about it, if you do fail, if you actually failed and did not make what you needed to make or you didn't do what you wanted to do, the worst

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thing that can happen is you go back and you get another job as a principal or a teacher. You know how to do that.

You have a backup plan already because you're already doing it. You can always go back. You can always start a new job. You can always build new relationships, you can always go and buy new things, right?

So the art of saying goodbye is such an empowering practice. I encourage you to try on something small, like try going into your desk drawer and cleaning it up and saying goodbye to a few things that you never use. Do that and then work your way up to something bigger. And let me know how it feels to say goodbye.

I want to hear your empowerment. Tell me those stories. I want to share, with the world, your progress. Please, go have an empowered week and practice the art of saying goodbye.

If you are considering saying goodbye to something in your life but feel afraid and unsure, feel free to sign up for a free consult call with me. We'll walk through what's going on in your mind and see if there's a way I can help. What's the worst thing that could happen? Give me a call.

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.