

Ep #57: Unconditional Compassion



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 57.

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, my Empowered leaders. How are you doing this week? How has the month been going in terms of your relationships? Have you been implementing this month's podcast concepts? I hope so. I hope you're starting to feel some shifts in the way you interact with yourself and with others.

For those of you who are currently coaching with me, you have the e-workbook that supplements the podcast, so you can extend your practice in building these relationships. For those of you who are subscribed to my newsletter, I'm going to send out a bonus worksheet for this particular episode that aligns with this bonus podcast on relationships.

I want you to get a taste of what the e-booklets are like. In the event you decide to sign up for a free consult and coach with me, then you have unlimited access for as long as you're a client to the workbooks each month.

So, I have to tell you guys a story. In full transparency, when I planned out this year's podcast themes, I created the themes based on months. Then I created about four topics in each theme with the assumption that there are four weeks per month. Now, I realize, in the big scheme of things, that this was not the case. However, I didn't anticipate January being one of those months with five weeks in it, until I recorded the last four episodes, created the workbook, and sent it out to all my clients.

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I did this work in all of December and then I took a break for the holidays. And when I came back in January, I pulled out the calendar and I realized, OMG, there's one more Tuesday in January. So I decided to extend our theme on relationships one more week and use it as an opportunity to offer listeners who sign up for my newsletter with the worksheet for today's episode so that you get a taste of what the workbooks entail.

I turned my oversight into an opportunity. And, you guys, you can do the same at school. When you realize that you have had an oversight or a mishap on your part, share it in full honesty and offer something of value to your constituents. It not only lets them see you and connect with you as a human – a human who makes mistakes from time to time. Even though we're leaders, we're not perfect.

But it shows them that you care about them and you value them both as employees, or the students, but you also adore them as people. You just are connecting with them on a human level. And I get it, it might feel uncomfortable and you might cringe at what seems like extra work in the beginning, but the payoff for following through with your people is going to be so appreciative.

So, what I want to talk with you about today is how to practice unconditional compassion; unconditional compassion, both with yourself and unconditional compassion with others, even people that you do not find to be especially lovable. Unconditional compassion, it's very similar to the concept of what you commonly hear as unconditional love.

And I'm using the word compassion because I believe there are times when our brain just cannot wrap around the feeling of love for somebody that we are at odds with, but it can settle into some feelings of compassion for them as fellow human beings.

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When you are able to feel compassion, you can then shift to love because compassion is completely based in love. You cannot feel compassion when you are in anger or in fear. You feel compassion when your thoughts are loving in nature.

So when you hear me talk about loving others unconditionally, you may be rolling your eyes and thinking, okay, Mother Theresa is the only person who can be this loving. I'm just not that compassionate, I'm just not that loving. I don't have it in me.

I hear you, guys. You might question your ability to be compassionate to someone that you cannot stand. And here's why; it seems illogical to feel compassion to a person who bothers you the most. But the reason we question our willingness to feel unconditional compassion is because we believe that if we choose to be compassionate towards them when we don't like their behavior, that we are condoning their behavior and that they are going to get off the hook and that we have to be the ones to sacrifice what we believe and we have to be the bigger person, and that doesn't feel good, right?

It feels like a win-lose and we are the losers. But hey, I've got some good news for you; choosing to feel compassion for someone is always, always a win for you. And it had nothing to do with the other person.

So, what really happens when we opt to feel compassion for someone unconditionally is that we are the ones who get to experience relief. We get to feel better. We let ourselves off the hook. And I want to take a look at how this happens.

So, if you had to choose between feeling love or compassion versus another emotion, especially any negative emotions, about somebody, I'm guessing that you would choose to feel love, because love feels amazing.

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When we choose to love someone, we are the ones who experience that feeling of love. The other person does not feel our love. Feelings of love and compassion are the vibrations within us that we experience as a result of a thought that we are loving somebody else.

We don't love somebody and then they experience that emotion of love. If this were true, we would not have to go through the dating process. In many dating relationships, one person feels love for their partner and in love with their partner, and the other person may not feel that same vibration or intensity or as in love.

If other people could feel our love for them then they would feel the same level of loving right back at us whenever we thought loving thoughts about them. So you can feel love as much as you possibly want to or can for another person and it does not change the way they feel about you. Can you see that?

I'm sure you've experienced this at some point in time. Maybe you were the one that was feeling totally in love and your partner did not reciprocate that same level of love, or perhaps someone was deeply in love with you and you just didn't feel or resonate and have that same level of love and compassion for them.

Now, I want to interject here and say that in these scenarios, it sounds like those involved, these two people in this relationship, we're not choosing those emotions. It sounds like the emotions were just happening to them, like they were in love, they fell in love, and that it's not up to them to be in love or not in love, they just are.

Be careful with this. This is tricky to the brain. The reason that one person does not feel the same about their partner as the other person feels is because of the way they are thinking. One person is thinking, "Wow, I love

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this person so much because of X, Y, Z.” And the other person is thinking, “I like him, but not so much because of X, Y, Z.”

The feelings of love and compassion, they don't come down from the heavens and zap you. They come from a thought that you are thinking. This is important to know because when you choose to experience unconditional compassion, you will need to generate a thought that triggers compassion.

So as I said, every emotion that we feel, including compassion for others, can only be felt by the person who chooses to feel compassion. What this means is that when you choose to feel compassion, you are the person who experiences it, not the other person.

But this also means that when you choose to feel hatred, anger, resentment, or frustration about them, you are the one and the only one who is experiencing that emotion. You are not making them feel the negative emotions that you have and even if you decide to treat them negatively based on the way you're feeling, you can't force them to feel negatively back.

Have you ever had someone try or say or do something to you out of hate but it doesn't even phase you? Like, they try to get under your skin as if they're punishing you because they don't like you and you just kind of look at them, like whatever, and you laugh it off? Have you had that happen to you?

They are the ones experiencing the anger and frustration, not you. Can you see that? And the reverse is true when you are feeling frustrated and you're going at somebody sideways. Like, they may or may not care. You can't make them feel a certain way.

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And you know, I thought about this, our own children are such a good example of this. When they get mad at us and they say something in anger, they slam the door, they're just ticked off at us, we as parents can write off that behavior as them being angry and we don't make it mean anything super horrible about us.

We just can still love them, even when their actions are ugly because we don't let those actions mean anything more than just they're upset, they're having a bad day or they're not happy with what I said or did. Fine, I can still love those kids and have some compassion for them.

Now, on the flip side, when someone we don't like does or says something we don't like and we do let it get to us, then we are allowing ourselves to stew in negative emotion over this person or this situation. We believe, at that time, that moment in time, that we don't have any control over how we are feeling and we're telling ourselves that that person is the reason we are feeling this way, and that in order for us to feel better, they need to act in the way we want them to.

So they need to change the way they're acting in order for us to feel better and we are giving our emotional responsibility right over to them and we are disempowering ourselves completely. When we get into gridlock with someone like this in our mind, it can seem like they are the reason for our emotions and that we don't have any control over how we're feeling about that situation.

We don't realize that our brains are making up a story of what this person's actions mean about us, and it always points back to what it means about us. We forget that we are capable of thinking and feeling anything we want. Did you hear me? We are capable of thinking and feeling anything we want, even compassion and love, regardless of how that individual is choosing to behave.

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So, how do we get back to feeling compassion for someone when they aren't behaving how we want? We have to consciously choose to feel it for ourselves. In any relationship, compassion is always, always available. We may not like how the other person is acting and we can still opt to feel compassion inside of us.

We do this with our children at home, yet we find it, often, very challenging to do it with other adults, especially adults at work. It seems different, but it's not.

The way we do this is to strip ourselves of the story and what we are making that other person's behavior mean, especially what we're making it mean about us. We have to search for their humanness. We have to seek to understand and relate to what thoughts they might be having that are triggering negative emotions for them, which are impacting how they choose to approach you.

When you break down another person's behavior to its least common denominator, which is the thought, you can usually see why that person is behaving the way they are. Now, this doesn't mean that you agree with it or condone it, it just provides your brain some perspective and context which helps you create thoughts that feel more loving and more compassionate.

The way that I tend to create unconditional compassion within me is to look at somebody and think thoughts such as, "There goes Mark being Mark again. That's just how he rolls." Mark gets to choose whatever he wants. He gets to do what he wants. He gets to be who he wants. He's just being human. He's doing the best he can.

He gets to do this thing and he gets to do it this way, and I get to do this thing and I get to do it my way. And I also like to think, you know, "Mark must be having some pretty intense thoughts that are generating this reaction." Because when I allow Mark to be Mark, I can observe his

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behaviors from a more neutral standpoint and see that his actions do not have to impact me personally.

Imagine, you guys, what would it be like for someone to be doing something that you don't like and being able to generate feelings of compassion for them in that moment? How does choosing compassion serve you?

Does not choosing compassion benefit you in any way? And even if you could hurt that other person by not choosing to feel compassion, how does that play out for you in the long run?

Here's another thing to keep in mind; you don't have to tell the other person how you're feeling. You can think and feel whatever you want and it has nothing to do with them. You get to feel good regardless of their behavior and they can carry on doing whatever they're doing.

You feeling compassion for them does not impact them in any way. You're not agreeing or condoning or accepting or giving in to them in any way shape or form. You are allowing them to be responsible for their thoughts, emotions, and actions, just as you are taking responsibility for your own thoughts, emotions, and actions. It is such a beautiful way to approach life and our careers.

Now, one final thought, and this is for those of you who tend to be really hard on yourself. I want you to practice this with yourself. If you are a person, like me, who is extremely harsh with yourself, if you self-attack and you beat yourself up for mistakes or for not being good enough in some way, this practice will be incredibly freeing.

Ask yourself the same questions that you would ask about somebody else. Does treating myself harshly feel good or bad? Does it help me grow as a

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person? How will choosing compassion serve me? How does not choosing compassion benefit you in any way?

And sometimes, it can be even more challenging to be compassionate and loving with yourself than it is with others. So please, give it a try.

Unconditional compassion, give it a try in the next week. Let me know how it's going.

For those of you who are current clients, I'll be sending out the worksheet on unconditional compassion. And for those of you who are signed up for my newsletter, as a bonus, I'm going to give you a copy of this week's worksheet, this bonus worksheet, and I'm going to let you explore where you are practicing compassion for yourself and for others, and where you can use some more work on your unconditional compassion. So, with that, my friends, have a loving and compassionate week. I will talk to you next week.

Hello, my Empowered Principals, next month's theme in February is on coaching. We're going to talk about self-coaching, roadblocks to self-coaching, how to coach other people in our workplace, and the difference between coaching versus leading.

If you are interested in expediting the changes you want to make in your life, this is the perfect time to sign up for a consult call. I will teach you how to implement coaching tools to improve the quality of your career and your life. Sign up today at angelakellycoaching.com.

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.

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