

## Ep #58: Self-Coaching Part 1



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 58.

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 there, my Empowered Principals. How are you doing this week? I am so good. I am coming off of a series of trainings and workshops and travel, and I'm finally home again and it feels really good to be back in Santa Cruz with my husband at the beach. We are having such a good time.

So, welcome to February and welcome to the second theme of 2019 for *The Empowered Principal Podcast*. I'm so excited to be with you guys. This month, we are going to focus on coaching. As a school leader, one of your primary roles is that of a coach. A coach is someone who leads, guides, instructs, inspires, and that's what your job is all about.

Your job as a principal is to do all of these things, with the students, with the teachers and your staff, with your parent community, with your board members, all of it, right? I consider being a school leader like being the CEO of a company. You have to oversee all the aspects of your campus and your instructional program, and you must find ways to connect and align all of the moving parts.

The difference in my eyes, however, is you don't get to have directors and managers below you at your site. Most of you don't. Like, I would daydream of having a special-ed manager or a director of student behavior or even like a cafeteria coordinator on my site. Wouldn't that be fun?

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But no, it's basically you as the leader and then everybody reports to you and everybody's underneath you and you are having to oversee it all. There's just you doing all the things.

So when I became a principal, when I first became a principal, I had no idea what I was getting into. And when I think back, it's really because of the way we are trained to be leaders. It leaves out one significant piece of the puzzle. And that piece is this; how we manage and process all of the emotions of being an educator and a leader in the field of education.

In no class did I ever learn how to navigate the situations that I have been faced with as a teacher, but as a school leader. Things like child abuse, death of a parent, death of a sibling, deportation, lots of police activity on my campus, crises with the staff or with the family, and how to relay that heartbreaking news to a parent, something about their child that maybe the IEP team has come up with and you have to share that and it's really hard for them to hear.

All of those kinds of things that really make our job feel challenging and weigh really heavy on us, nobody talks about that aspect of the job, and that's why I created this podcast. Let's talk about those things. Let's talk about the hard stuff. Let's talk about how we are going to manage these emotions and these really challenging situations and learn how to navigate them.

I wanted somebody to say to me, hey, there are going to be some really mentally and emotionally taxing times. You're basically going to be tried to your very limits. So here's some tools and strategies and ways to manage your own emotional health, ways to include self-care in the day and in your week and in your life so that you get to show up and be the leader that you want and need to be.

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No one is teaching this stuff, guys. And I feel it's so important that we address the concept of self-care, self-coaching, self-love, self-preservation as a school leader.

So it's one thing to learn the skill of dealing with both the everyday moments, and the more traumatic events that occur on a campus, such as what steps you need to take to build that school vision or how you document an incident, but it's a completely different skill to be able to manage the intense emotions that come with learning these skills and leading people through such events.

That's a different job. That's a different understanding. That's a different kind of knowledge. And for most of us, we just basically do the best we can until at some point we hit this wall of complete confusion or doubt or discouragement. And when we reach this point, we either throw our hands up in the air and want to do something else completely, or we kind of drag ourselves along and basically, we numb ourselves. We numb our hearts in some manner.

And it seems like these two options are the only way. Like you're up and out, or you just succumb to the agony that is school leadership. But I'm here to tell you, I believe there is a third option. And that option is self-coaching.

So, what is self-coaching? Self-coaching is the practice of examining our thoughts and determining whether the thoughts we believe are getting us the results we want. And by results, I don't just mean increased test scores or fewer absences and tardies. I'm talking about results in the form of a healthy life and emotional wellbeing. We're talking about the results that you want in your life as a result of being a school leader.

When you think about why you chose to be a principal, part of that choice included how you thought it make you feel to be the leader. As humans, we

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are driven by our emotions. We take action based on the way we feel or we believe we will feel.

Before we were school leaders, we envisioned having more influence, control, impact, and flexibility in our lives and our schedules. We believed that our ideas and efforts would produce more successful students and teachers and smooth out the operations of our school. You know, as a teacher, we always had that idea of how something can be better and we want to get in that leadership position so we have the authority to make the change.

We daydream about that all the time, right? At least I did. But I also wanted to maintain a very balanced lifestyle I wanted more flexibility. And being in that classroom, you felt like you had to be with those kids in that classroom 100% of the time. And as you grow and evolve as a teacher, you want to experience more flexibility and some more influence, right?

And so you imagine that result of becoming a school leader and you imagine it feeling better than your current status as a teacher, or perhaps you're an instructional coach. And this is why this happens; it happens because our brains believe that changing our situation will change the way we feel.

We think, when I get my Master's degree, then I'll know what I'm doing and I'll feel more competent as a teacher. When I get married to the man of my dreams, then I'll be happy and in love. When I become a school leader, then I'll feel more influential. Or when I move to the district office, then I'll feel more successful in my career. I'll have made it, right?

All of these thoughts, we believe that changing the situation is what changes our emotions about our life and the way we feel. But this is where we get tricked by our own brains. It feels very true that a change in our circumstance will produce a change in the results we want. That's because

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when we change our situation and then we feel differently, we're like, see, I told you so.

We attribute the situation for the shift in the emotion without the understanding that it is our thoughts about that situation that makes us feel differently. So let's break this down. I talk about this all the time, but we have to continue to remind our brains that it's not situations that make us feel a certain way. It's our thinking about them.

So, let's say you're a teacher who's been teaching for 10-15 years. You're wrapping up the end of year 12 and you keep having this thought, like, I'm not really looking forward to coming back next year to fifth grade. I've taught fifth grade for so many years and I'm feeling like I need a change. I'm just not that jazzed anymore. I don't feel that spunk I used to feel.

And you're saying things to yourself like, maybe it's time to put my admin credential into play. I've had it for a couple of years, but I wasn't really ready. I just have it in my back pocket. But now, this year, I'm like burnt out of fifth grade. I need a change. I want a change of pace and I know I could do a good job as a leader.

Your brain's going to tell this whole story, right. I'm not really excited, I need a new challenge, and becoming a school leader is going to give me these new skill sets, the challenges I want, a greater impact on my entire school. And your brain's going to go on and on and on and daydream. It has all these thoughts about how good it's going to feel to become a school leader.

So, all of those thoughts that you have and that whole story that your brain comes up with about becoming a school leader, shift your emotions from boredom and discontent to anticipation and excitement before you even change your job. You feel the excitement and interest of changing jobs prior to actually being in that new job. Do you see that?

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The thoughts about having the job and what it will be like and feel like are what triggers you into this – like, you think the thoughts, you have the emotion, and it vibrates you with anticipation and excitement and eagerness. Those emotions that you have ahead of time before you actually have the new job, those emotions are what stimulates you into taking the actions that will land you in the principal's chair.

So, as you think about becoming a leader, you feel the high vibes and the energy associated with that new situation. And when you feel all that excitement, you're motivated to take the actions to get that admin credential to apply for the jobs, to interview, accept a position, pack up your classroom and move into your new office. All of those actions manifest the result in becoming a school leader.

But you felt the emotions ahead of time in order to stimulate that series of actions. The result of becoming a principal was initiated by your thoughts about your current status, which was no longer wanting to teach. So your thoughts were, I don't want to teach anymore, but I do want to pursue this, which is the leadership position.

So when you think those thoughts, you feel a certain way. The way you feel impacts the actions that you take. So, this is the STEAR Cycle in motion in your life. Thoughts appear, we contemplate them, and we attach an emotional meaning to them.

Those emotions influence the decisions and actions we take and our actions impact our results, which then becomes our new situation. It's kind of cool. So here's my question, you guys; if your brain still believes that your situation is the source of your emotions, how are you feeling about the job now that you are a school principal?

Do you still feel all the excitement and the anticipation and the eagerness? For most of us, we might have felt that when we first got hired and the first

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weeks into the job, and over the summer when you're planning and setting up your office and playing principal. But once you get in that position, basically by the first few days or few weeks, and maybe even months, my guess is that most of you, soon into your first year, were not only feeling the good feels.

I'm guessing, most likely, you also experienced the negative feels, right? So what happened? Why doesn't it feel the way we thought it was going to feel? Because we're so excited beforehand only to feel overwhelmed and engulfed in bigger and more complicated problems once we're actually in it. And when this happens, our brains tend to think that the situation is the fault and it seeks out evidence to prove to you that it's the job that's the problem.

So we can bounce from job to job to job or position to position thinking that it's the position and the situation that's the problem because our brain's really good at showing us that that's what the problem is. It's messed up, you guys. But know this; when we believe the situation is the reason for why we feel so bad, we try to change that situation over and over again.

Do you have a girlfriend or know somebody who chronically dates? Like, they want to find true love and they get into a relationship and they're so happy and so in love and then a few months into it, they're like, this isn't all the good stuff. We're having issues or conflict, I don't like it, he's not the right person for me. And then they break up and then they do it again and over and over – that's because they believe that the situation, the individual, is the problem. They're not realizing that their thoughts shifted from I'm so in love, I'm so lusting after this person, to, like, I'm now thinking that we don't always get along, we don't always agree, or whatever, like that.

So, when we believe the situation is responsible for our emotions, we spend all of our energy trying to get into the, quote en quote, right situation,

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and in this case the right job, so that we can feel good. So, how do we get out of this spin-cycle? How do we self-coach?

The point I want to make is that our situations never make us feel better or worse. It is our thoughts about the situation that make us feel better or worse. You loved teaching until you thought about it differently. You believed school leadership would feel better until you experienced it and had new thoughts that generated less than desirable emotions.

Knowing that thoughts generate emotions, we can use our emotions as an indication that our thoughts about our circumstance have shifted. When you are experiencing negative emotions about work, you know that it is stemming from a thought. And this is where self-coaching comes in. When you are experiencing emotions that you don't want to be feeling or they're chronically weighing down on you, it helps to identify the thoughts behind that emotion.

We don't always know what we're thinking because we're not thinking about our thinking. So the first step in this is to simply just write down a list of all the sentences, which are thoughts, that are coming up for you. So let's say every morning you just do not feel like going to work.

You want to want to like work, but you don't. Like, you wake up and there's a heaviness in your chest and you're dreading it. Your motivation's low, your energy's low, and you're feeling really reluctant every single morning, and that does not feel good, you guys.

I floated that boat for a long time. But when you're feeling like that, use that as a signal, hey I need to figure out what's going on in my brain so I can get this shifted and up and running and thinking differently. So, what I want you to do is this; take a moment and write down a list of all the thoughts you have about work.

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I call this a brain drain with my clients. You might write down a series of thoughts like this; I hate work. There's too much to do. I don't want to go to that meeting today. There's no support. I'm exhausted. I just want to stay home. I wonder if I should call in. no, then I'd have to reschedule everything, and that would be more work. I wish I wanted to go. It just doesn't excite me. I thought it was going to be so much more fun. All I do is deal with complaints.

And your brain is going to just let it flow, let it out, get it out of your head and onto the paper. You want to let your brain go on for as long as it can. Eventually, it will slow down. When that happens, stop writing and take a look at the list of thoughts and just notice how reading them over again feels.

You are quickly going to see why you feel the way you feel. You're going to be like, no wonder I feel so awful, look at the way I'm thinking. That feels terrible. But I want you to do this; try looking at them as if someone else had written them, like as if you were a teacher reading a student's homework or if – this is what I do; I look at my list as if my son had written it.

It really takes on a different meaning when you look at them neutrally, like wow, if someone else had written these, I really notice a different meaning when you look at them from that context. So, if you are reading somebody else's brain drain about their job, could you see why they were feeling terrible about work? Could you feel some compassion for them?

My guess is probably yes. You can see how the thoughts are causing them a lot of pain and you might feel compassion or you might want to reach out and help them in some way. That's how I feel about all of you. It hurts my heart, but I know I know the answer. I know how to make it better.

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The process of putting them onto paper allows you to create separation between your thoughts from your body and you get to observe your thinking from a more neutral standpoint. This practice alone can help your brain start to see how the thoughts it produces impact how you feel.

This first step, you guys, is all about awareness. We have so many thoughts per day that the majority of them are out of the realm of our consciousness. This is mind-blowing – our brain produces between 50,000 and 70,000 thoughts per day. That averages out, if you get out your calculator, between 34 and 48 thoughts per minute. That's crazy, right?

So no wonder we feel like our emotions are happening to us because the brain is creating thoughts at rapid fire. And the only way to know which ones are causing us pain is to slow down that process by focusing on the thoughts that are coming up to the surface. You're not aware of 50,000 thoughts per day. There's only a few that make it to the top.

And thinking about our thinking – or meta-cognition is what that's called, we ask our students to do this – is how we process our own thoughts. And we want to slow the process down by putting it onto paper in order to observe those thoughts.

So, what's going to come up for you? When you practice this, it's going to have some things bubble up. Now, this first step, it's really simple in theory. It's like, okay, just write down my thoughts. But, number one, it takes some practice and discipline to do it on a regular basis. And there will be a series of things that start to come up for you when you do this work.

Number one, your brain is going to say, I don't know sometimes. Like, it's going to say, I don't know what I'm thinking. Some days it happens and you feel like I have no idea what I'm thinking, and others, you can't stop your brain from thinking. The thoughts will just pour out of you and you can't write them down fast enough.

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But on the days it says I don't know, ask it this question, but if you did know what would you say? Don't let your brain off the hook, okay. Number two, you're going to feel some resistance to this work. And this happens when we are afraid to see, on paper, what we're thinking in our heads. You can circumvent this resistance by putting it all on a piece of paper and then throwing it away or burning it or making sure nobody else is going to see it.

Because what's really happening, you don't want other people to find out the horrible thoughts you think about yourself and about your job and about whatever situation you're in, right? you're embarrassed or ashamed that you think bad thoughts.

Well, we're human. We all do it. Tell yourself that you're just in the privacy of your own brain. Nobody else is going to see it. Throw it away if you want to. But just notice that you do have a resistance. You will, at some point, have a resistance, because it's almost like it's a secret that you're thinking that and you don't want other people to know.

Don't be fooled by that resistance. Allow it to happen. Number three, you're going to be really shocked at your own thinking. As you become more honest with yourself and more honest with your thoughts and you're allowing yourself to write down whatever comes up for you, you're going to be a little shocked. You're not going to believe some of the thoughts that come out and you will definitely judge your own thoughts because they're going to be ugly. Don't think they're not.

They're going to be mean. You're going to say horrible things about yourself and to yourself. You're going to say horrible things about other people. You're going to feel bad. You're going to feel embarrassed and kind of ashamed, like how could you think such thoughts?

They're just thoughts. They're just sentences. It's okay. Keep ensuring yourself that they are just thoughts. They don't mean anything about you.

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Every single human brain does this but you, my friend, are the brave enough one to uncover the thoughts that are creating you pain. There's no need to add further suffering by beating yourself up over having negative thoughts.

So, there was so much about self-coaching I was going to try and get it all in this one podcast, but I'm going to break it up into two components. So this week, just practice draining your brain of all its thoughts. Put them onto paper. You could either type them out or you can write them out, whatever works better for you.

They both have merit. I'll tell you, there is a difference in process though. When I have something I'm really holding onto, typing it out for me, it lets me see the words in just black and white print and it makes them very neutral. It's like anybody could have typed those thoughts. They're not necessarily mine, right?

But it helps me see it on paper, or electronic paper, and I'm just like, okay there's just a whole list of sentences right there and I'm going to take a peek at those. On a normal basis, when I first get up in the morning, I just write them out. And what I love about writing out my thoughts is that it lets me see how the sentences impact me on an emotional level.

I can tell by the way my handwriting looks how I feel. It's really crazy. Basically, it goes like this; really messy handwriting or scribble handwriting is messy scribbly emotions. Clear, clean, precise handwriting, clear, clean emotions. It's so wild, you guys, so try it out.

Have some fun with this. Play around with it. Play around with typing. Play around with writing, whatever your preferred method is, and let me know what questions come up for you this week. What comes out of that brain of yours? Get it down onto paper.

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Next week, we will talk about what to do next with all of these thoughts. if you have any questions this week, you can reach out to me. email is the best way, [angelakellycoaching@gmail.com](mailto:angelakellycoaching@gmail.com) – just shoot me a line and if you have a question, I will personally answer it for you, not a problem.

So, next week, we're going to talk about what to do with those subconscious thoughts and how you can shift those thoughts to more intentional conscious thinking. This one is so fun, you guys, because you get to learn how to go from letting your brain be in charge and continue its thought loops to training that brain to think the thoughts you want to think. And this is where it begins to feel like magic. Have an amazing week. I can't wait to hear from you.

Hey, are you ready to take your empowerment to the next level? If so, my February cohort is open and available just for you. The only thing you guys have to do, if you're ready, is to sign up for a consult call and we'll take it from there.

And when you become my private client, in addition to personalized weekly coaching, you will receive a monthly ebooklet with all the worksheets aligned to this monthly podcast theme, and it allows you to dive even deeper into your own empowerment. All you need to do in order to gain clarity about your career, boost your confidence, and take inspired action is to sign up for a consult call with me at [angelakellycoaching.com](http://angelakellycoaching.com). I love you guys. I'll talk to you next week.

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.