

## Ep #81: Leadership Mindset



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With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 81.

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, how are you guys doing? I am so, so good. I've been on such a high vibe these last few weeks. As I record this, I'm about to head up to Spokane for the National Association of Elementary School Principals Conference and I am so excited because my latest client Brenda, shout-out to Brenda, she will be attending the conference. So, she and I are going to get to meet in person, how cool is that? I'm so excited. I absolutely love it when I get to meet clients in person. It's so fun.

I'm getting all of these podcasts recorded early because of my upcoming travel schedule. I'm going to be gone for a week at the conference, and then I'm actually home for a full month, which is heaven for me because I'm on the road so much, before my husband and I head to Europe for our honeymoon.

So, finally, finally we're going. We eloped two years ago. We just had our wedding anniversary last night. We had a wedding on the first anniversary of our marriage, and then this coming fall, we are taking a three-week trip to Europe. We are so excited.

And for those of you who are on my email list, I shared a very vulnerable post on the date of our anniversary about what my husband has taught me about leadership. He is truly one of the greatest gifts in my life and his mindset had taught me so much about the power of our thinking and how we create any result we want in our lives.

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If you haven't signed up for my email list, do so ASAP as I share all kinds of extra details about what we've got going on over here and all of my freebies with my list. So be sure to join the *Empowered Principal* community.

And speaking of community, are you in the book study group with us? I'm hosting a free book study of *The Empowered Principal* through the month of July. We meet weekly on Tuesdays at 10am Pacific time through Zoom. All you have to do is download the book, read a few short chapters per week. They're really short, guys. And then just come to the call ready to talk about the book.

I'm going to provide coaching to those who are live on the call and the calls will be recorded for anyone who can't make it. So please, be sure to join us. This is a one and done chance. Okay, let's dive in.

We're going to talk about the heart of my coaching program. I'm going to review the STEAR Cycle in detail and provide examples of how the components work and influence one another. This tool is the most powerful tool I know and although it feels simplistic in nature, it can be a challenge to implement it in practice. But it does work. And once you've experienced the magic of it, you will want to use it to problem-solve in all areas of your life.

I honestly believe this tool is the key to having a better career and a better life. Your brain is the most powerful asset you have on the planet. The brain has created every single thing around you and you now have a tool that's going to help you create results in your career and in your life that you didn't even think were attainable. So let's get started.

The STEAR Cycle is an adaptation of a tool that I first learned about in my certification program at The Life Coach School. It's based on the idea that our thoughts create results. There are many variations of this concept and this idea out in the world. So this concept is not new or original to me, but

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rather a compilation of all the work of many humans who've studied the mind, studied personal development or the science of how people create change in their lives.

And the reason I coined the tool the STEAR Cycle is that, number one, let's have some fun here, educators love acronyms. And the word STEAR is the acronym for the tool. And come on, you guys, you know it's all true. You know education has so many acronyms and it's almost as if we speak in tongues, or at least, I know parents used to say, "You guys have a language of your own. There's letters being thrown around all about."

So I decided to create the STEAR Cycle because it has to fit into the education language as well. But number two, the STEAR Cycle is actually a play on words. It's how you steer your life. Now, the way I spell steer is STEAR and you'll understand why in a minute. But this tool actually does help you steer your brain, your emotions, your thoughts, your feelings, the way that you act, the way that you approach life, and ultimately your results.

You can use this tool to steer your thinking in the way you want to feel and act and achieve. And you can learn to do this and teach yourself and your staff to do the same. It's amazing.

So, what is the STEAR Cycle? Many of you who've been following me a while do know this tool, but please don't tune out because you've heard it before. There's always something new to learn and we can go deeper into the tool. So the STEAR Cycle stands for this; S equals situation, T equals thought, E equals emotions, A equals approach, R equals results.

Situations – and this is a cycle. It starts with a situation and it cycles down through the letters and it goes back up, round and round. So a situation is anything outside of your control. It can be the weather, it can be the traffic, but most of the time, when we're talking about situations, we're talking

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about people or circumstances that come up when we are at work. They are out of our control. It just is something that happened. It's not within you. It's not something that you created.

Well, there's a caveat to that in a minute, but when I'm referring to situations, I'm talking about people. I'm talking about their behaviors. I'm talking about anything outside of you that creates you to have a thought. So a situation occurs, a thought is triggered in your brain.

Your brain is wired to create thought. That's just what it does. You can't stop your brain from thinking. If you did, you would not be alive. So, let's not try to stop thoughts. Let's just know that they are there, know that they are coming about at 50,000 to 70,000 times a day. You guys, isn't that mind-blowing, our brain is so fast. It's such an amazing tool.

So, a situation occurs, a thought is triggered. A multiple series of thoughts is triggered and I just call that a story. Like traffic, you might have a whole story about there shouldn't be this much traffic, this guy cut me off, I need to get somewhere on time. You're going to have a series of thoughts. I just call that a story.

So, the brain is producing tons of thoughts. You're only aware of a handful of them throughout the day – I mean, many of them, but as it relates to 50k or 70k, you're just grabbing a few. But the thoughts that we hold on tight to are thoughts we believe.

So we have thoughts that just run through our mind, and then we have beliefs. Beliefs are thoughts that we think are true, that we believe are facts, and most of our thoughts, we are unaware of. They're just floating in the back of our mind. We have to bring them up to our awareness if they're impacting our results. But belief systems are thoughts and stories that we think about over and over again; thoughts about money, thoughts about

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time, thoughts about our job, thoughts about our boss, thoughts about our husband or our partner, thoughts about our kids.

We have systems and the way we create what we believe to be true about the world are called belief systems. We take them as, like, hardcore truth. And that's where we generate our values. So values are beliefs we choose to hold on tightly and not let go and not let somebody penetrate them.

Okay, so a situation occurs, you have a thought about it or a series of thoughts or you believe something to be true about that situation. When you're thinking thoughts, thoughts generate emotions. And this little connection right here is everything because many times, we believe that our emotions are triggered by the situation.

What we don't recognize is that there's a little thing that happens very instantaneously when a situation occurs, and that is this; we have a thought about it. Now, the reason we know that thoughts generate emotions versus the situation generating our emotions is because a situation can occur and different people have different emotional responses. And why would that be?

If the situation triggered a particular emotion then everyone would feel the same way about the same situation, and that's never the case, right? So, I always use the term a football game or a basketball game where half the crowd is cheering for one side and half the crowd is cheering for the other side. The result of that game, the situation is somebody will win; half are going to love it, half are going to hate it. And the reason for that is because of our thoughts about it. We think team A should win. Team B thinks they should win. And whoever wins will have a different emotional reaction.

So, emotions are simply vibrations that occur in the body. And emotions stem from our thinking and they run down. So emotions are started in the mind and the brain, and they trigger down throughout the body.

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Sensations start in the body and run back up the brain. And I like to use the example of your stomach growling. Like, that sensation is something that occurs in the body and it sends a message up to the brain telling you, “Hey, I’m hungry.” But emotions are triggered from the brain, the way that we’re thinking. And then they vibrate down through the body. You can have intensely happy emotion or you can have intensely negative emotion.

And many of us spend our entire lives trying our best to control and avoid negative emotion. Anything we ever do in our life is because of the way we think it’s going to make our body feel. Isn’t that crazy? Every decision that you make is based on the way that you think it’s going to make you feel.

So, tuning into your emotions is critical. And the reason we have to be aware of our thoughts is because they generate the emotion. So if we are compelled as human beings to make decisions based on our emotions then we have to know the thoughts behind those emotions. And that is why the STEAR Cycle is so powerful.

So, a situation occurs, you have a thought or a series of thoughts, a story is developed in your brain instantaneously about that situation and you have an emotional reaction to those thoughts. Now, you have to use those emotions and the emotions are the way that the body speaks to you. It’s the way it communicates with you so you know it’s time to be aware I’ve got some thoughts going on that are either serving me or not.

And you may want to feel angry about the traffic. You may choose, yeah, I’m angry about the traffic. That’s fine. You get to choose how you feel. You get to decide to feel negative emotion. Like, for example, we don’t want to feel good when we see child abuse or when we see students failing school or dropping out or we see a child who’s self-hurting. We don’t want to feel happy about those things, or when somebody passes away that we love. We don’t want to feel happy. We want to feel grief. We want to mourn the loss of our loved one.

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So just know that the job is not to feel happy all the time. The job is to be aware and decisively choose your emotions and allow yourself to feel those emotions from an intentional place. So, we have these emotions. The way that we feel will determine how we approach our job, our life, our people in our lives.

So the way that we're feeling directly impacts how we choose to approach something. That's the A in the STEAR Cycle. So we've got S, situation, T for thought, E for emotions, A for approach. Our approach is based on the feelings that we have. Basically, an approach is just an action or a set of actions that you take. And you typically take one of three types of approaches.

You either react, or you are in inaction, which can be intentional or not. You might choose to not take action, or you just don't purposely choose it and you're taking inaction by avoiding something, procrastinating something, buffering, doing something else instead of what you want to be doing. So there's reaction, which is just completely in reaction to our emotions. There's inaction. And then there's intentional action. It's a choice that you're taking a particular approach to a situation.

So, we have this approach and the way that we choose to approach something, either reaction, inaction, or intentional reaction, lands us a result. So the way that we choose to approach something determines the type of result that we get. And a result is simply the outcome of our thoughts, emotions, and approach.

And this result eventually ends up becoming a situation because what ends up occurring, we have another thought about it. And then the cycle goes on and on. So this cycle is running constantly, whether you are aware of it or not. And the beautiful thing about being human is that every single result we have in our lives is because of the way we think, feel, and act.



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Now, what I also love about the STEAR Cycle is it gives us a concrete way to explore and examine and question why we're getting a particular result in our life. So if we're not happy at work, we get to sit down with the STEAR Cycle and be like, okay, the result in my life right now is I am miserable going into work, or I just don't feel like I have any impact or influence. I seem to be spinning. What's going on? Why am I getting that result?

You can put that in the result line and then work backwards. Or, if you're not sure even what your result is but you have a really intense emotion, what I do is I actually look at an emotional list. I created one. It's online on my website and it's just a really basic one. There's tons of them out there. But look up an emotional list and try to pinpoint exactly how you're feeling because there's nuances to being angry. There's nuances to being disappointed or sad. There's nuances to fear. There's nuances to overwhelm and confusion. There's nuances to grief.

So decide exactly what you're feeling. Put that in the E-line and then work around and see what's going on for you. That's why this tool is so amazing. But I'm also going to share with you why it's a challenge. The STEAR Cycle is a challenge because, one, we think that situations outside of us make us feel a certain way and act a certain way.

So without even realizing it, our brain is looking for the immediate out. It doesn't want it to beat us because it feels bad to take responsibility and ownership for our emotions, actions, and results. So we're like, nope, must have been something outside of me. We blame. We point the finger at somebody else. We think it's somebody else's problem. We think the situation was out of our control and that's just the way it is so oh well, guess I can't control that.

We try to push the ownership outside of us. It's very easy to do, to blame outside circumstances, right? Our brains are just wired that way. It doesn't want us to feel badly about knowing that, my thought is the reason behind

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why I'm feeling so crappy. I'm angry at the traffic because of this whole story I have about them being in my way when I'm trying to get somewhere, right?

So, we think that situations outside of us make us feel and act a certain way. Number two, we blame the circumstances for our results. I mentioned this just a minute ago. But we like to blame. We like to put the onus on somebody else. And three, we don't want to take the ownership because it feels terrible. It feels like shame or guilt. And those emotions, those vibrations, they're just yucky. So we don't want to feel that way.

But you have to see that when we do, we take our empowerment and put it back into our pockets, back into our hands. And sometimes, the reason the STEAR Cycle is challenging is because we simply can't see the connection between the thought and the result. It's like too far of a gap. We're not quite sure what we're thinking. A lot of times, my clients will be like, I don't- know what I'm thinking.

So that is simply unawareness and that's what a coach does; we bring that to our awareness. Like, no, let's explore this. You were just talking about this situation as if you're a victim of it. Let's see where your thinking is the victim of it and then we can prove or find that thought that feels a lot better, a thought that feels more empowering.

So, we say we don't know, we say we're confused, we say we're not sure, and that's why sometimes people get really annoyed with doing the STEAR Cycle because it's laborious. It's laborious to look at your thought and be like, crap, I created this result, I see the connection, I don't like that.

But if you have the courage to just explore your thinking, just explore the awareness of it all, just to explore the connection between thought, emotions, approach, and results, then you're going to feel the empowerment that you have once you, like, whoa, if I can create that result

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in a positive way then I can put anything in the R-line. I can practice it until I get there. That's the cool part about it.

So, why must leaders believe in the STEAR Cycle? As school leaders, it's your job to inspire people into action. I just talked about this with a client the other day. She was feeling like she didn't have the impact on her school that she wanted. She wanted to inspire her teachers into action and she was aware that she can't control them, but she wasn't sure how.

The how is by working with somebody to help you clear your thoughts about those people and their actions. So it's our job to inspire people into action and we have to be the example of what is possible. We have to lead by example. The way we inspire them is by being the person and the leader that they want and that they want to follow.

So it's our job to believe in our staff and our students more than they believe in themselves. When teachers are discouraged it's because they are having thoughts. Their emotions are triggered by their thoughts, so we want to get down and dirty, like, we want to understand, what are you thinking about? Why is this a problem? Why do you feel this way? What are you not getting that you want as a teacher? Where's the confusion? Where's the pain point?

We have to believe that anything is possible and we have to create that by believing in ourselves. We have to create the belief that anything is possible ahead of time, before we get the results. So as leaders, we have to believe that we can be the change and that change can happen more than we believe that it cannot. We have to believe in the possibility versus in the impossibility, that it can't happen, that we can't make a change, that things can't get better, that we can't feel better about what's going on, that we can't improve morale.

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We have to be the leaders who show evidence of how our thoughts powerfully create results. And we have to be honest with our teams. We have to show them both the intended results, like I set out to do this, this was my thinking, this was my emotional state when I did it, this is how I approached it and this is how I nailed it. And we have to show them, wow, this is a result I got, and when I went back and reflected, it's because I was thinking this.

I had a bad interaction with a parent because I was thinking this about the situation. Now, when I think back to it, if I had adjusted or maybe I had questioned or I had asked a little more, I approached with a little more gentleness, I could have created a different result. Show them that. Show them the honesty and the humanness that comes with school leadership and that vulnerability.

And finally, we have to be able to manage our own thoughts and emotions about the job on the regular so that we can be very rested and energized in order to lead. We cannot continue to allow ourselves to be a victim to other people, victim of the job, victim of outside situations because we cannot lead.

If we are stuck in our own drama about our job and what's not going well and our emotional state and we're reacting and we're not self-caring and we're not putting boundaries around the time that we work and the amount of energy that we give out to people, then we cannot be good leaders because we won't have the ability to, like, show up in this high vibe and high energy.

We certainly don't have the ability to control or create influence in our life when we're running on empty. So you have to be able to manage your own emotional and mental wellbeing. You have to be able to do this. So how?

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When I coach clients, they are able to intellectually understand the STEAR Cycle. Like, you can put something outside of you in the STEAR Cycle and you'd be like, yeah, totally, I totally buy into that. But when we're in our own messiness, then it gets complicated.

So, what I notice my clients doing is like, yeah, I can put examples of situations in the STEAR Cycle and I see how it works, but when I'm applying it to a problem that I'm in the middle of experiencing, my clients struggle to see the connection between thought and result. And hey, guys, let me be honest here; I struggle with it too.

It's called blind spots. We all have them. That's why it's nice to have a neutral person from the outside looking in to help you. When we're in the middle of a struggle or a challenge, we can't see that it's a thought creating the result. For example, when I first became a principal, I could not see that my thoughts about the job and how busy I was was the reason for my stress.

I honestly thought that's just the way things were. I thought there was too much to do and not enough time and my story about this just grew into this monster. It's like I was reporting the news, like, this is a matter of fact, this is just how it is.

In my mind, the overwhelm of the job was a proven fact. You could prove it in a court of law that principals have too much to do and not enough time. I really believed that story and I clung to that story for years. I had the story everybody wants to meet with me and that I should meet with them, I need to get to classrooms, I don't have enough time to get to the classrooms, I want people to like me, I need to be around and available 100% of the time, I've got to get to the PTA meeting and the choir concert, I can't leave work until the budget reports are in, on and on and on.

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And even though I talked with other principals who were like, girl you've got to let this go, work's always going to be there, go home, be with your kid and family, come back tomorrow – I still chose, even though people were telling me I was going to be okay, I still chose to hang onto that belief because there was so much to do and no way to get it done during the normal business hours.

I couldn't see through it. I couldn't see it was my thoughts creating that miserable result for me. So this choice to hang onto my beliefs about being overwhelmed caused me stress for several years.

How do you use the STEAR Cycle to strengthen your mind? One, start with awareness. Notice when you're feeling off. Negative emotion is a red flag that you're having a thought that's creating cognitive dissonance, which is just like conflicting thoughts in your mind. You have a thought that.

You have a thought that says you can, you have a thought that says you can't. That conflict is creating the stress. Know that the thoughts are the source of your suffering. Number two, try to identify the thought. You might not be able to at first because the thought tends to be hidden under a series of thoughts, and that's what I call a story.

Most people can start with the emotion because that's what you notice. It's like the first red flag and you begin to explore the emotion from there. Brain drains work wonders. A brain drain is simply writing every single thought you have about a situation until you can't write anymore.

Number three, you want to complete the STEAR Cycle with your current set of emotions and thoughts and just notice, notice how you're getting the result. Notice how that thought is somehow creating the result that you don't want and that your current line of thinking is why you're experiencing what you're experiencing. So, for example, if you're afraid to hold tough conversations at work, just notice that. Notice how that fear is impacting the

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way you're approaching conversations and the results you're getting out of those conversations.

Number four, ask yourself, is this the result I want? If not, what do I want and why do I want it? Number five, put the result in the R-line of the STEAR Cycle and work backwards. If you already had this result, what would you be doing? How would you be feeling, and what thoughts would you be thinking?

Number six, practice, practice, practice. Intentionally try on thoughts over and over. You're going to catch yourself slipping back into the old thought patterns and you're going to tell yourself, why am I doing this over and over again? Just keep practicing. Just tell yourself, this thought's not serving us. It's not helping me. I'm not choosing to believe it any longer. I'm trying on new thoughts.

And then finally, allow yourself some bad days. No one is 100% evolved 100% of the time. Give yourself some grace. Try again and know tomorrow is a fresh start. Your willingness to strengthen your leadership mindset is what will help you implement your ideas, your plans, your strategies, and visions.

You can't go and read a book on strategy, visions, plans, ideas, and then expect to fully implement them without managing your mind. No other tools, tips, will be effective if you don't manage your thoughts about them. That is why I believe I am the perfect life coach for you all. I understand the brain. I understand this tool. And I understand how to coach you through it.

So, you can't implement what you want if you don't manage your thinking about it. You can't take action when your thoughts and your emotions are not aligned with that action. The action will do no good. Good leaders always start by cleaning up their thinking. And that is it. Boom.

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Alright, guys, I've got to run. Have an amazing week. I will talk with you all next week. Take care, bye-bye.

Hey, if you're enjoying this podcast and want to learn how to apply these concepts at a deeper level in real time, then you have to check out what Principal Empowerment can do for you. It's my one-to-one personalized coaching program where we take concepts from the podcast and we apply them to your specific situation. This is how you become the most empowered version of yourself. Not just as a leader at work, but in all areas of your life. Join me today to become an empowered principal.

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