

Ep #82: Leadership Legacy



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 82.

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 friends. How are you guys doing? I'm loving July. I'm loving the sun. I am super-duper. I am having the absolute best July ever. I feel like I am reaching out to principals at an exponential rate, super stoked. And here's why, because when I first started this business, it seemed as though no one was listening. And actually, nobody was listening.

I mean, who am I, right? Nobody knew who I was. And one of the first things I did when I decided to become a coach fulltime and not just as a hobby on the side – for a while, I was just coaching people while I was still working. I enjoyed that, but I felt there was a conflict of interest if I coached on anything related to education because I was in a district, I was a principal, I was a district leader. And I didn't want my work to be confused, so I coached people actually on relationships and body image. I was trying to coach on anything but school leadership.

But, when I decided that principals need some serious coaching support and that I wanted to turn this into a fulltime career and not just a hobby, one of the first things I did was record this podcast. And I did so with so much resistance. My coach can confirm this resistance. But at the time, she told me, I need a platform to reach out to people that are outside of my inner circle contacts, right?

So, I started the podcast. And for close to a year, it felt like only a handful of people were really even listening. Even so, I kept going. I kept recording

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the podcast, I kept turning them in. I made sure they were on time. I took feedback from my producer. I tried to enhance the experience for the podcast listener by bringing my best content, by being succinct and within a certain time limit. I didn't want to ramble on and on.

So, over time, I actually began to love creating content for this podcast and love recording it, so much so that I started to spend hours researching and reading and learning about the topic that I was going to discuss. I studied topics that were relevant to me, like in my own personal development, and I thought about how they applied to school leadership.

And what I've come to find is that the way we do anything is the way we do everything. These concepts apply to any job in any situation and in any area of our lives. And I'll share something that I'm working on with my husband, and he'll say, "Well that sounds just like what I'm dealing with at work.

So it's really fascinating, but my point about the podcast is that I committed to doing the podcast no matter what, no matter when people were listening or not, no matter when the numbers were dismal. I put 100% into this work of this podcast and just kept going. I remember even, when looking at my download numbers and they were in the double digits at the time and my producer was asking me, was I even promoting the podcast.

I had to keep going, and now here we are, 82 episodes later, and the podcast consistently has an average of over 500 downloads per week. That's 500 school leaders who are learning the tools and strategies they need to lead their schools from a more empowered state of mind. And that's 500 school leaders who want more than just tips on how to structure a staff meeting or how to implement PBIS or some other program or project.

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And I get it, yes, principals need to know what resources are available for their students and they need to learn the skills of instructional leadership, but I believe more importantly than that, they need to understand how they make decisions. They need to understand how to manage their emotions. And they need to know how to lead their school without sacrificing their own wellbeing or other aspects of their lives.

The key to being an empowered school leader is understanding that we need to study how we think much more than we need to study how we do something. We want to focus on taking action in order to create the results we want at school and in our lives, but we failed to study where the actions are actually generated from. And they are generated through the thoughts we believe. But when you use the STEAR Cycle to study it and break it down, you can see how it's true.

So many principals jump into the position and they want to know how to do, what to do, what action to take. Well, actions stem from thoughts. But nobody wants to study the thoughts, and that fascinates me. So I am here to show people how thoughts create results.

More and more, principals are expected to take on more and more with less and less. The pressure to perform by getting others to perform is so intense that we're seeing upwards of 30% of school leaders leaving the profession because they believe, if they leave the job, they'll be happier. But ultimately, if you don't realize what triggers your emotions, you're going to move onto a new job because you believe the job is going to create happiness or it's going to create a different situation that you will like better.

But the pressures will ultimately drag you down and you'll go back to feeling overwhelmed, or you're basically going to trade one set of problems for another. You may take a job that requires less time, maybe you go back into being a teacher because you're like, oh god, I thought becoming a principal was going to be better for me, but actually, it's way more time and

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energy, so I'm going back to teaching. And that might feel better, but it also pays less money.

Or, you might move up to a district level, thinking you're going to have more influence and find out that you seem to have less. I know that was true for me. I thought I would have more influence as a principal. And at the beginning, I was like, wait a minute, I actually have less influence on kids as a principal. I'm further removed from them.

So your patterns of thinking will come with you, regardless of what job you choose to take. Trust me on this; I brought my old thoughts in a little mental suitcase along with me from being a principal to being a coach, so you're not escaping thoughts and emotions because you're changing a situation. You have to be able and willing to look at the thoughts that are creating those emotions so that you can decide intentionally how you want to approach your job before you decide to love it or leave it. And this is why you can't swap out one situation for the next, because your thoughts and belief systems and emotions, they all come with you.

What I offer as a coach is to show you how your mind works, to help you see the thoughts that hold you back, especially the sneaky little thoughts that don't feel invasive or they don't feel like they're a problem, but really, they're holding you back. You want to guide yourself to allow your body and your heart to lead the way more than you lead with your head.

So many of us try to make every decision and take every action from our headspace. We try to believe that more action is better or less action of this is better. We try to let our brain make all the decisions. And the brain is really powerful and we need it, we absolutely need our brain, but left unattended, it's pretty darn unruly. It acts like a toddler.

Your brain wants immediate gratification. It wants comfort. And it will do anything, including hurting itself and others, to get what it wants. Like, it will

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tantrum and tell you, you have to have something right now. It's going to feel all this intensity if you don't get what you want right away. It doesn't have any discipline, basically.

And what's most fascinating about our mind is that if we don't stop and take notice, we live our lives completely at the mercy of these thoughts and we're not even aware that we're thinking them or that we're reacting to them, that we're playing victim to them. It's like a car being on autopilot. No one's steering. You're just sitting in the car and you're at the mercy of wherever the car decides to take you.

That feels really out of control, but you don't know how to change it or you're, like, so unaware that you're sitting in the back seat just watching the world go by, thinking that whatever you see along the journey is what's happening to you. So you sit in the back seat and you just let it take you where it's going to go. That, to me, is like the scariest thing I can imagine ever happening in my life.

Not being aware of my own power over my life, it is still somewhat startling to think about how much control that we actually do have in our lives. And that can be scary as well, right? But I'd way rather lean into the power that I do have to take control over my life and live a life I want to, even when it's scary, versus claiming that I don't have the control, sitting in the back seat, choosing unawareness and just letting the wildness of my brain take me wherever it thinks of at the moment.

And believe me, I used to believe and live in this way. I used to react to whatever came my way and I had no idea there was a way to have more control over my life. Honestly, I didn't. It was through personal development that I learned how to take back my empowerment, take back my control, and know that I could create a result that I didn't yet believe was true through the process of practicing on how to believe it was true.

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So, here's something I want to point out about any fears or frustrations that you may be having as a school leader. When I say step into your empowerment, I'm referring to being intentional about your thoughts, being aware that all results come from a thought.

This doesn't mean that you can mind-meld your way into something crazy like winning the lottery, because you don't control situations. There is a difference between choosing to believe that you are the possibility of getting the results you want, versus wanting to control the actions of someone else or something else.

So, for example, aiming for the result of, I want Mrs. Teacher Smith to behave differently than she is, is trying to achieve a goal that has nothing to do with you. There is no thought, emotion, and approach that you can take with Mrs. Teacher Smith that will ensure that she will behave differently.

Even when you do attempt to control her behavior and coerce change, she doesn't have to change. She doesn't have to do it. She might leave or she might be fired, you might fire her for not changing her behavior. You might try to control her. But what will happen is she will have to leave because you fired her. But she's going to go to the next job and do that same behavior.

Not because you fired her you've created a different result in her. By firing her, you've created a different result for you. The only way she is going to change is if she is inspired to change on her own because of a new thought she's choosing to believe. She changes because she has a thought that is more appealing to her than the past thought that was creating an old result. And when she feels good and is thinking about change, she takes the action to make that change.

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But it has nothing to do with you. That is her STEAR Cycle. It has nothing to do with your STEAR Cycle. You cannot own or take responsibility for another person's result.

So the STEAR Cycle is about how you achieve the results that you want. And today, we are going to talk about your leadership legacy and how you create the results that you want for your school and yourself by deciding, right now, the legacy that you want to leave.

This work is perfect timing for you to focus on this because your brain is not distracted in July by all of the activity on campus yet. You have some time over the summer and the next few weeks to schedule in time – yes, I said that – to dream up the legacy you want to create. So, let's get busy. How do we create a legacy vision?

Number one, you start with intentional dreaming. This is about you. It is about what accomplishments you would like to make, not what you think others think you should do or even about what others say you should do, including your boss, by the way. This is about what you want to accomplish.

You may want to accomplish the same thing that your boss wants for you, and that's totally fine. He may ask you to raise test scores or raise teacher morale, and these might be also your truest desires for your school. That's totally fine, as long as what he wants is also aligned to what you want. So, when you intentional-dream up your vision of your legacy, this is about what you want; your deepest, biggest, wildest dreams for yourself and your school.

These will be accomplishments that you do not have yet that you've never accomplished yet and your brain is going to say to you, like, whoa, I have no idea how to do that. That's going to feel scary and intimidating. At a

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deep level, you went into this position knowing the impact that you wanted to create as a leader, and now is the time to tap into that dream.

For example, let's say that you have the dream of leaving a legacy of raising \$100,000 for your school so that you can build a new playground. You have no idea how you're going to do that, but you have this desire. You have this dream of leaving a long-lasting legacy of a beautiful new playground for your children.

You do, even though you don't yet know how, you have the ability to figure it out and make it happen. So you don't know how to achieve it until you go through the process of actually raising the money and building the playground. But this part of the process, this intentional dreaming, is not knowing how to do it. You're not creating a plan, a how-to plan of how to build the playground.

All you're doing right now is writing out the legacy you want to leave. So one way to do this – I just thought of this s- is to write a story as if you're leaving the school and somebody's singing your praises about all the amazing accomplishments you've created at the school. What do you want to be known for? What do you want people to remember you by? What do you want to give to your staff and your students and your school community? What is it that you want to be acknowledged for?

So, when you're creating this big picture vision, you want to make sure that it's focused on you and what you will personally achieve. It can be as mind-blowing as you want, as long as it's about something that you can take action towards and not about goals for other people.

Remember, you can't create results for other people. That is their job. You can work on inspiring people into action to create a result that you want for your school and your school's community. But you cannot choose goals for other people.

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So, if you say, I want to become a principal so that I can get all the bad teachers to want to become good teachers, your accomplishments are going to be a challenge for you because you're going to have less control over that outcome because it relies on other people's STEAR Cycle. It relies on their behavior.

Focus on goals that are impacted by your actions, not other people's. Now, when you're doing great big goals for your school, of course it's not going to be you alone doing them. You will be engaging with other human beings and other teachers and other members of society to build these goals and create them for yourself. But you're focusing on the actions that you want to take based on the legacy you want to leave behind. Do you see the difference? I hope so. If not, reach out and ask a question on that.

Number two, once you have daydreamed all of the goals that you want to have for yourself, the legacy you want to leave behind, and the intentional dreaming that comes with being a school leader, you must give yourself time to think and create and decide why this is going to be valuable in your leadership legacy.

This is where you intentionally schedule time for learning and brainstorming and answering powerful questions to answers you don't think you know how to answer. My master coach calls this power thinking. It's a technique that highly effective and successful CEOs and other leaders use to create amazing results in their lives and their businesses

So, the goal here for you is to focus on one of your visionary goals and ask yourself, if I knew how to achieve this, what I do next? How would I solve this problem? If I knew the answer to this crazy issue we're dealing with, what would I come up with?

You need to give yourself lots of time to process what you want, why you want it, and what answers you would have if you already had this goal.

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Like, what steps would you take in order to achieve this goal. You ask your future self, the part of you that already has accomplished this big dream, this big legacy. Like, when you look back at your life, what is your future self telling yourself right now? What is it saying to you?

Like, Angela, you've achieved this goal of serving 100 school leaders. This is how you went about it. This is the steps you took. You just tell yourself – and yeah, your brain's making it up. It's based on what you believe you think you have to do, but you want to empower yourself to come up with your own solutions.

Every time you stop and think that you need to ask somebody else outside of you or search for solutions outside of you, you are disempowering yourself. You need to give yourself time to think and process what you want, answer your own questions. And when you do this, you will be amazed at what your brain comes up with. Your body and your brain know the next best step. You don't have to know all the steps from A to Z. You only need to know the one next thing. So keep asking yourself, what would I do next if I knew how to get this result?

I want to talk a little bit about micro-fails and macro-wins. So, know that when you show up right now, every day, is what creates your legacy. Small steps, small daily steps lead to big yearly or decade movements. You are going to have failures when you attempt to achieve big goals, especially goals that involve leaving a legacy behind that you want. And that's okay.

In my book, *The Empowered Principal*, I discuss this idea of micro-failing for macro-winning. If you want to achieve big things and you want to create a positive legacy, you must be willing to experience micro-fails.

For example, if you're raising 100K for a new playground, you most likely will hear no when you ask people to contribute to the cause, or no when you ask them to volunteer their time. Every no is a micro-fail, but it doesn't

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have to be the end of trying to reach that goal. You have to keep going. For every no, you are one step closer to a yes.

And the more that you ask and hear no, the easier it becomes to ask, regardless of a yes or no, because one, you're more practiced in asking. You get more comfortable asking the question, and you're also more practiced in experiencing the no. So be willing to experience several nos is actually how you get to the macro-win, build that playground and you create the legacy that you want.

Your goal for your goals is to focus on the future but to take small actions every single day. Evolve yourself by taking one action at a time, by allowing yourself to intentionally dream and intentionally think about your legacy. And in time, that legacy will be created one small action at a time.

Even if your failures are a part of your legacy, it's what makes you real. You can be an inspiration to others by leaving a legacy of humanness and what it looks and feels like to be the example of what is possible.

So, I want you to plan out your legacy before you create it, because guess what, you guys, you're creating your legacy whether you intend to or not. You're creating a legacy. A legacy is just a way that people remember you and how they choose to perceive you. That's happening one way or the other. You might as well be intentional about and create some ideas and some planning around it, if you want that result of your legacy to be the type of legacy you want.

Okay, got it? Does it make sense? Alright. Join me next week. We're going to talk about something very different in the leadership realm. A client of mine has asked me to address the concept of leadership in crisis, and we're going to cover that next week. I'll see you then.

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