

Ep #84: Start the Year with an Empowered Mindset



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 84.

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 friends. How are you doing? Happy August. Are you happy it's August, or are you secretly crying? It is August, you guys. Welcome back. It is officially the beginning of the new school year.

Now, I know that many of you are just getting back into the office. You're getting set up, you're getting started. Some of you don't have kids coming until maybe even as late as September. But I know, in California, there are many school districts who start mid-to-late-August. So you are in the throes of going back to school.

So, welcome to the new school year. I am so excited for you. I hope you are excited. And I just want you to know that I am here to help support you in any way that I can. And this podcast is a wonderful way to get started. I record this on purpose so that you have weekly access to thoughts, ideas, strategies, solutions, and just to know that somebody out here knows what you're going through, they've been through it, they've been in your shoes, and we have your back, okay.

Be also sure to follow me on social media. I'm primarily on Facebook and Instagram. I'm also on LinkedIn and Twitter. And if you post any questions or you have something you need help with, please just reach out. I try to support, on a daily basis, ideas and thoughts and just quotes or helpful strategies to help support you in your role as a school leader.

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Now, before we dive into this month's theme on organization and productivity, I want to share with you a very, very exciting opportunity that I have for you and your school. I'm excited about it and I know you will be too. Here we go.

Because I have been asked by so many principals – like, when I went to the conference, the principals were coming up saying, “This is amazing, I am so in. Do you also provide professional development training support systems for staff members, for my team, for my site?”

So, because I had so many people asking for that service, I created an entire PD series for the 2019-2020 school year. That's not only going to provide support and community for you as a school leader. I've added professional development opportunities and personalized support for your teaching staff. Isn't that awesome?

It is a brand new way of approaching professional development for your site. And what I love most is that it's not just this, we come in at the beginning of the year, it's a one and done, or it's a make and take, or it's a get and go kind of approach. It's a full comprehensive yearlong support system where you have personalized support as a principal, your teachers get personalized support, and everyone will have access to trainings, to videos, and to coaching calls where they are going to get to progress at their own speed.

They'll get to select their own topics. They'll have access to additional materials and trainings including podcast workbooks for the monthly theme so that people can work on an individual level to grow their empowerment and capacity as an educator. And you can have access to it at any time.

I believe it's the best thing on the market. And because it's new, I'm going to offer it for a fraction of its full value, just this first year. So if you're interested in being a pioneer in trying out this new development program

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for your staff, an entire year of support, not just for you but for your team, and you're wanting to be one of the foundational leaders in empowered educators, then reach out to me. You can learn more by emailing me at admin@angelakellycoaching.com.

Okay, on with today's episode. We are going to talk about your emotional state as you enter into the new school year, how that emotional state will impact how you approach your year and some ways you can curb those emotions that get in the way of starting the year off with an empowered mindset.

So, let's start with those that are looking forward to going back to work. And typically, the people looking most forward to going back to school leadership are my brand-new principals. They're super excited. You're either year one, where you just don't know what you don't know yet and you're super excited and you're ready to jump in. Or maybe it's year two and you're like, "Okay, I learned so much last year, I'm ready to dive in and apply my new learning to year two."

Perhaps you're a veteran principal who has just got it under control, you're excited to be back, see all your people, that's awesome too. But there is a group out there who is absolutely looking forward to coming back, even though they've had an amazing summer and you're super excited to be here.

Now, as I said, most likely it's a new principal, and I'm going to focus on my newer leaders as we start this podcast because I want you to know that you have the support you need. And when you don't know what you don't know, you can enter the year with a lot of anticipation and high expectations and high levels of excitement and actually this nervousness, right, that comes with being new.

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So, even when you're happy and you're excited that you're starting out the year, you also can feel some levels of anxiety and anticipation which will bring about some stressful feelings. So even though they're coming from this excited stress, you will also feel stressed.

You might not be able to sleep, you might be having the work dreams coming back. And you can still be excited and nervous and a little bit worried all at the same time, that's all good.

So whatever this year feels like for you as you're coming back, if you're excited to be heading into the office but you find yourself swimming in a little bit of anxiety or stress about all the work that is to come or all the uncertainty that is to unfold in this year, we can certainly work on those thoughts that are creating the stressful emotions and level out that energy and focus.

So, when you're excited and stressed at the same time, you're simply just generating thoughts that have you approaching the job with a little bit of worry or anxiety or a little bit of fear. And sometimes, fear is not a bad thing because it motivates you into being proactive and taking massive action and preparing as much as you can.

But my guess is that the thoughts that are stimulating those nervous or anxious or excited feelings, they're something along the lines of, "I'm not sure how to, I'm worried about X, Y, Z, what's going to happen here?" Or, "I believe I want this to happen," Or, "I'm excited, I'm going to do this one thing, I'm going to be the next best principal." You know, all those things.

And these thoughts are just simply stemming from either you don't know how to do it and you are overconfident that you know how, that you feel like you know exactly what you're going to do. Or it can come from a lack of confidence and not being sure how you're going to handle certain situations

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or solve certain challenges; especially challenges that you know are there but you don't have the answer to. That can be pretty intimidating.

So, you want to counter those beliefs by neutralizing them. And by neutralizing thoughts, what I mean by that is you want to look at your thoughts and put them on a piece of paper and just say, "I'm having all these thoughts that's generating a lot of vibration, a lot of intense emotion in my body, a lot of excitement, a lot of anticipation, and a lot of nervousness. Maybe I'm not really sure how I'm going to get all of this done when I get into that leadership role."

You can neutralize those thoughts by, "Wow, this is just a thought I'm having. There's nothing about this thought that is true or false. It just is a thought." And if I'm thinking thoughts like I don't know how or I'm worried what's going to happen, you can just simply say to yourself that, "I'm not sure how to do this, but I'm going to ask for help," or, "I know I'm not going to know everything, and that's okay." It's okay to be excited and nervous and a little bit worried without having it drive you into a state of frenzy.

So, when you think about the idea of, "I'm worried about," that, any time you're worried about something, that worry stems from a future-focused mindset. You're anticipating future pain, like something bad is going to happen. Or you're thinking about the actions that you're not able to take in the moment, right? You're projecting forward.

And I want you to think of this quote by Eckhart Tolle, "Worry pretends to be necessary, but it serves no useful purpose." The way around worrying, if you're worrying about the year, and even though it might be an excited worry, there's still that anxiousness that comes with it, I want you to know that worrying just for the sake of worrying is eating up time and energy and attention and focus, and probably some sleep time if you're worrying in the night.

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So when I find myself doing this, I ask myself the question, is there any action that I can take right now? Even if it's in the middle of the night – if so, if there's something on my mind about the school year that's coming up for you, stop and ask yourself, is there any action that I can take right now?

If so, just take the action. Do it. Close that loop. Get it out of your brain. Put it down onto paper. Make it happen. Whatever that idea or thought or worry is, if you can take real action in real time, do so. That will dilute that worry.

If you can't take action, if it's just something your brain's kind of coming up with all these anticipated scenarios of what might happen at school during the year and you're just creating situations that really haven't happened yet but you're thinking, "This is how I'm going to handle this and this is how I'm going to handle that and I'm so excited here and here..." well, if you can't actually take action, then I want you to ask your brain to stop worrying or to stop thinking about problems that have not occurred yet.

So much of our time is spent worrying about future problems, worrying about problems that aren't in our present moment right now. And you can say to your brain, "I hear you; I appreciate you're trying to be supportive and helpful in anticipating a future problem, but right now, we're good. We're setting up our office, we're setting up our school. We're welcoming our team. We are having fun in this moment. We don't need to worry."

Now, when you think about what's going to happen if, that's definitely coming from fear-based thoughts. When you're feeling stress and anxiety about what's going to happen if this, what should I do if that, your brain will download all of the negative possible outcomes. That's also a future-focused mindset.

You're worrying about something that hasn't happened yet and your brain believes you're going to do it wrong, you're going to get in trouble, that something bad is going to happen. And whenever our brains don't know

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how or what to do, it generates a story that can keep us spinning on it for minutes or hours or days even.

And the way to combat that is to tell your brain, I thank you, I hear you, you're keeping me safe, but right now in this moment, all is well. Nothing is happening right now. We can handle whatever happens and we will handle it in the moment in which it happens.

So, I'm going to give you some amazing ideas for creating a very energetic and positive intentional mindset for your school year, but I want to address those who are worried about not looking forward to going back. So if you are a school leader who is clinging onto every last minute of your summer, I want to acknowledge you and I want to tell you, that's okay too.

It's okay to be grieving the end of summer and not really looking forward to the beginning of the school year. There's so much work. Your brain is really wrapped around – especially if you've done it before, you know what's coming. You know the pain and the work and the effort involved with training new teachers and putting new systems and routines in place with new people, training the kids to get on board.

Like, all of that training and effort and work that comes with that first trimester of the school year, I understand why you're anticipating it. And when you are not looking forward to it, I don't feel like a lot of people feel like they have – like, you see people joking about it on social media or in the privacy of your friendships.

You joke about not wanting to go back or, you know, the dread of going back. But really, as a leader, we don't feel like we have the option to say that, even when we're feeling it. And the problem with that is that we energetically don't feel excited, we're kind of feeling that low or bummed out a little bit of resistance going back to the work, but we're not admitting to ourselves that we're feeling that way or we're thinking thoughts that are

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creating feelings of resistance. Therefore we kind of deny that we're in this emotional state. But people can recognize that.

And the way that we approach the job when we're not looking forward to going back is very different than when we are very excited to go back. So, if you are not as excited to return, I want you to also think about your emotions as a product of your thinking and just know that they're just thoughts. They're not true. They're not false. They're just thoughts.

They don't have to mean anything's gone wrong. They don't have to mean you're going to have a miserable year. They don't have to mean that today's going to be awful, like summer is great and the school year is awful. You don't have to make it mean that. You can just notice that your brain is making it mean, it's choosing to think that and it's choosing to cling onto summer and not want to go back.

So, a lot of times, when we're not looking forward to going back, we actually suffer. We feel painful emotion. We think of things like, "I don't want to go back. I don't like to have to get all this up and running again. I don't want to be responsible to everyone for everything all year long. My freedom is coming to an end." Or, "I can't stand the thought of X, Y, Z..."

So when you're having these thoughts, like the I have to thoughts, I'm going to address this in a later podcast. But all the thoughts about I have to are really stemming from the belief that something else or someone else is in complete control of your actions. You believe that you have to because your boss said so or you have to because you need the money or you have to because a parent said something or a teacher needs something.

And your brain – it's not your fault – what your brain is doing is that it's kind of putting the responsibility of your work or your responsibility as the leader of your school onto the external people or external situations outside of you. And these beliefs are really disempowering because you believe that

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it's happening to you, that you have to do something versus I'm choosing to. I'm choosing to support my teachers. I'm choosing to follow my superintendent's master plan or his goals or whatever.

When you believe that you have to do things versus choosing, that's going to cause you to feel like you don't have control in your professional life, and your personal life by the way, which causes suffering. And the way you can simply shift those thoughts is change the words, "Have to," to, "I choose to," or, "I want to."

Say these three sentences and see how they feel different, "I have to manage the budget," versus, "I choose to manage the budget," or, "I want to manage the budget." See how each one of those feels differently? I have to manage the budget. That just feels like a burden. It feels like weight on my shoulders. It feels like forcing myself to do something I don't want to do.

I choose to manage the budget means, to me, it feels more like, okay I'm choosing to do this, even though I don't super enjoy it because I take personal ownership and responsibility and I have self-discipline.

And then, I want to manage the budget says, you know, I'm actively and intentionally choosing to want to manage my budget because I know the positive outcomes of that. I know that I will get to spend my professional development money the way that I want to, I get to budget accordingly for, you know, resources and materials for my students and my staff members. Whatever it is you're managing, actively step into that role and you empower yourself by actually wanting to do it.

So having to and wanting to, completely different mindsets. Just notice the difference in your language when you're talking about the year and you're getting ready for the year. And notice if you are saying things like, "It's happening to me, I have to do this, it's not a choice, I must," versus, "I want

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to, I choose to, I believe this is the best thing for my school.” And it really starts to shift the way you enter into the school year.

I don't want to and I don't like are sentences that state we are not willing or able to withstand the negative emotion that comes with self-discipline and ownership and responsibility. When we're focused on the problem, not the solution, is when we tend to procrastinate, complain, or justify our inaction.

So you can try using the same word-swapping strategy as I just mentioned. And oftentimes, when I'm coaching clients, they'll say things like, “But I don't really want to. But I don't really like it.” In that case, I'll say, “Try word-swapping.” They'll say, “But I don't really want to. I choose not to want to.”

And that's fine. They can always choose not to want to or not really like something. But in that case, I will ask them, okay, so do you have to want or like every single thing you do in your job in order to do it? Or are there things that you do even when you don't like them because you prefer the outcome that you believe you will get when you choose to do them anyway?

So we look for examples of times where the clients have done something that they didn't really like in the short term. And this is all about immediate gratification and long-term gratification. You can choose to do something that you don't really like in the immediate because you really want the outcome of the long-term gratification.

And being able to understand urges and short-term gratification versus long-term gratification and short-term goals versus long-term goals, understanding our ability to allow an urge to exist in our body and still take action in spite of it is really the key in creating the habits you want, the impact you want, and the legacy you want. It's so fascinating.

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So, getting ready for your school year – I'm going to show you a couple of ways to get your mindset in as high a vibe as possible. What I want you to do before your team comes back is this; I want you to plan the outcomes for the school year now.

I want you to start with the end in mind. And I'm not just talking about the results of your school year, like you want test scores to increase five points or something. I want you to look at the end of the year now and talk about the results in the sense of the way that you want to feel at the end of the year.

How do you want to have felt? What do you personally want to have accomplished? And why do you want to have accomplished those goals? Why do you want higher test scores? Why do you want a stronger school climate? What do you want a better relationship with you staff of your boss? What is it about those goals that you want them for?

Because I'll tell you what – the reason you want all of those things is because of the way you think it's going to make you feel and the way that you believe it's going to have an impact on the greater contribution to your school, which then obviously comes back to how you feel about yourself as a leader.

So it's really important to tune in very deeply to what your vision is, what your goals are, but why you want to feel the way you do. Why is it so important? And that will help you determine how to set your mind every day because you're looking at that end goal. You're building up your capacity to allow urges to happen in the immediate so that you can get to that end of the year and look back knowing, "I nailed this year. I did the very best I could. I supported my team. I supported my students and my parents. I rocked this year."

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So, why do you want what you want? Plan that now so that you don't get caught up in the minutia of the everyday and the chaos that pops up and the fires that come up in the everyday that is school leadership.

Second of all – really helpful for those that are extremely visual in how you process your goals and information. You've heard this before, but I am going to say it again; create a vision board. Explain to your brain through vision, through images that stimulate emotion.

So, for example, if you want to have an amazing relationship with your boss by the end of the year, maybe you have a new superintendent coming in and you want to establish a great relationship with her, put a picture of you and her, or you can take it out of a magazine and post-it a picture of two humans at work getting along beautifully.

Put that vision in your office somewhere, or you can have it at home, whatever, in a folder, something where you see it on a regular basis, but it sparks that thought of, "I want a beautiful and amazing relationship with my boss." And put that somewhere visually because every time you see that, it's going to trigger that thought. The more often you think that thought, the more often you feel that excitement of having that great relationship, the more likely it will be that you get the result.

And you don't have to force the great relationship. You just have to believe that the great relationship is possible through authentic connection and through the belief that you want it enough. So, create a vision board. Like, visually represent what you want in your job for this year and put a reminder somewhere in your office or in your school or in your home office, wherever it is that you spend the majority of your time working, and let yourself be reminded on a regular basis.

You know what, I want to say something; people who are super successful, they write down goals for the year and they review them every single day.

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That's the top 1%. If you want to be an empowered leader, get clear on your goals, get clear on the why, how you are going to feel when you accomplish them, and then find a way to visually represent those goals in a way that brings that thought up for you every single day.

You need to review them on a daily basis. And the more likely you are to do that, the more likely you are to achieve your goals. And it makes it so much easier because you're feeding your brain the thoughts you want to think versus the negative thoughts that it's going to default to if you don't tell it how to think.

Another way to start your year very empowered is to speak as though you've already accomplished the year. Never waver on your belief that it's possible to achieve any goal. This is how you practice it.

So, I'll give you an example. One of my mentor coaches is aiming for a \$100 million coaching business practice. She currently is at \$20 million. She wants to create \$100 million. Why? Not because she's greedy; because she's very aligned with her belief that she wants to make an impact and be the example of what is possible.

So, she never wavers on the belief that it's possible to achieve that goal. I want you as a school leader, especially you brand new leaders out there, I want you to speak as though you have had the most empowered year possible, you've achieved all your results, you believe they are possible, you're coming in with that passion and enthusiasm and excitement every day based on your vision board and that you speak as though it's already happening.

So, when you come in on a Tuesday and fires are happening and the day is going crappy, you still know that the end of the year is going to be the huge win. And that way, you can get through the hard days knowing that the big goal is on its way.

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And finally, I want you to focus on possibility versus doubt. So whenever a challenge comes up at school, whenever it feels like there's a problem that does not have a solution, I want you to say to yourself, "But it's possible. It is possible to solve this problem. There has to be a way. There's always a solution."

Focus on the possibility of what can be versus spending your energy and time focusing on doubt. Because the minute you slip into doubt, that is when you shut down your empowerment. You start to victimize your role. It gets too hard. There's too much to do. There's not enough time. There's not enough money. There's not enough resources.

We doubt ourselves. We doubt our teachers. We doubt our students. We doubt our parents. We doubt district office. Versus, "It's possible to build relationships with district office. It's possible to increase our parent involvement. It's possible to reduce tardies and absences. It's possible to raise test scores. It's possible to bring in project-based learning into my school. It's possible."

Focus on the possibilities and you are going to have an amazing school year. My fellow principals, welcome back to the year. I am so proud of you, especially if you are entering into your first year of school leadership, congratulations. I am so excited for you. Please reach out if you have questions, you need support, and be sure to reach out if you are interested in bringing empowered principalship to your school, for not just you but for your team. I can't wait to work with you this year. Have an amazing year. Talk to you next week; bye.

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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