

Ep #87: How to Increase Your Productivity



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 87.

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, hello, hello. Happy, happy Tuesday, happy end-of-August. I bet your kiddos are coming back. This is such a fun time of year. I hope you're enjoying the start of school, that you are getting organized, that you're feeling productive, and that you are practicing constraint and essentialism.

Okay, speaking of that, I'm going to keep this podcast short and sweet and I'm going to give you just a list of quick tips to increase your productivity and to maximize how efficient and productive and organized you are. This is just a list of ideas, suggestions, and activities that you can try on. Some you'll love, some you won't, just do what works for you.

So, number one – and this is why it's number one, because I love it the most – I invite you to get eight hours of sleep. My empowered leader, you cannot be productive when you are exhausted. And some people say, “Oh but I love hustling, I don't need more than six hours of sleep.” If six hours of sleep works for you on a consistent basis and you're feeling energized and your head is clear, go for it; go for six hours.

But the research shows that adults thrive on an average of eight hours of sleep per night. And if you believe that it's not possible to get eight hours of sleep per night, then you need to hire me because I deeply believe that sleep is one of the most important tools for productivity.

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I cannot function when I'm tired. I cannot make sound decisions, think with clarity. I take so much longer to get more done when I'm tired. I was exhausted as a school leader. I tried to stay up late and work. I woke up early. I tried to fit in the workouts and be a mom and go to the PTA meetings, both at my school and at his school and I just ran myself ragged.

Eventually, in the last couple of years, I said no. My sleep comes first because when I sleep, I'm a better mom, I'm a nicer mom, I'm a much nicer boss. I love going to work, I feel excited to see kids and teachers. And when I'm going off of six or five hours of sleep, I'm a grouchy bear.

So, prioritize your sleep. You know how much sleep your body needs and you need to tap into what it feels like to be super rested and what it feels like to be super productive. So, gage from your body, let your body tell you when it's time for bed. And it really does help if you have a morning routine that you follow fairly consistently and an evening routine that you follow consistently.

I have some suggestions in my program on a morning routine and an evening routine and I share those with my clients. If you want more information, reach out to me on a discovery call and I will share those with you. So, having some routines in place around sleep, super, hyper-important.

Number two, be decisive, yes or no. You spend so much time on the fence trying to decide, weighing the pros and cons, but you need to tap into your body. You need to decide from a place of feeling in your being whether something is a yes or a no.

Get your information, absolutely. Reach out to the constituents who's involved, but when it comes to your personal decisions, it's either a yes or a no. And if it's not a 90% yes or more, then it's an absolute no. You can list the pros and cons, but don't over-think them.

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You need to lean into what you believe is right at the time. And we've talked about this before, but make a decision. Don't spend time overthinking and belaboring your pros and cons. Get the information you need, make a decision, move forward. Close that loop. It will take up so much less energy the more you decide from a very decisive place, a very empowered place.

And you know what, guys, if you make a decision and it's not the one you want, change your mind, it's okay. Make a new decision. But decide, don't leave open cycles running in the background and make it a yes or a no.

Number three, saying yes to everything means you're saying no to everything. Basically, there's one you. The more you say yes to, the thinner you're spreading yourself out. And if you just continue to say yes and yes and yes to everything, it really just means you're saying no to all of it because you can't do any of it well.

I would rather you say yes to two things and no to five things than saying yes to six or seven of them because you won't be able to be productive and efficient and organized with so many things going on.

Number four, great versus good – you've heard it before, you're hearing it again, the enemy of great is good; meaning that if you want to be great, you cannot rest on your laurels. This does not mean that you should have the goal of being great at everything. The enemy of great isn't good as much as the enemy of great is unfocused.

Focus on one goal, even when your district has several initiatives, ask yourself, what's the one next action that we can do at our site to accomplish the goal behind all of these initiatives? Like, what's the bottom line here?

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Districts tend to throw several things at the problem, which tends to be student achievement, test scores, whatever. But they don't stop to consider that the idea of focusing on one thing and doing it well is much more productive than focusing on the everything, which creates unfocusedness. And that is the enemy of becoming a great school, a great teacher, a great leader.

Number five, we are unclear about what is unessential. We don't really know what to prioritize and not because there's so much going on. We have to stop from being busy and take the time to look at everything and ask ourselves what's the one thing we can do. I keep reiterating this idea of the one thing, and actually, Steven Chandler wrote a book called *The One Thing*, another fabulous book on being focused and organized. I highly recommend that to you guys.

But the idea that trying to do it all is the right answer is obviously not the right answer because we continue to do the same thing with the same results but we keep doing the same thing. And guess what, yes, it's insane. We want to get clear about what is unessential and what is essential and focus on the essential elements. There's so much in education that's unessential, you guys. It feels all very important when we get caught up in the latest and greatest, but really, just stripping it down to one thing and focusing on one thing is so much more helpful.

Number six, courage is the key to essentialism. You must tap into your courage and stick to what you value as essential and let all the rest go. And that feels very, very scary.

Number seven, how to say no gracefully. You need to be able to say no more than you say yes. So number one, you have to separate the decision from the relationship. The decision has nothing to do with the person. You can love them dearly and still say no. You do this with your children at home.

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Two, you have to choose to say no more often than they say yes. So you want to plan on saying no more often than you say yes. Number three, you have to admit when you don't have the bandwidth. You just say to them, I don't have the bandwidth right now. I would love to help you, but I cannot. I'm overcommitted.

And then, when you're making a decision whether or not to say no, you want to focus on the tradeoff. Think of what you're giving up. If you say yes to somebody then you're obviously saying no to something else. So what are you giving up when you say yes and what are you valuing when you choose to say no?

And allow it to be awkward. You can handle the awkwardness. People will forgive you when you say no if it comes from a place of love and respect and understanding. So, learn how to say no gracefully.

Number eight, you want to practice routine. And what I mean by this is that routine allows you to make difficult things become easy. It creates automaticity; it creates self-discipline. When you have routines in place, especially morning and evening routines, when you book in your day with morning routine and evening routines and you have a kind of set way of approaching everyday tasks of your job, it allows challenging things to become very easy.

So it allows you to release that mental strain of having to do it differently a different way every single time and automates that process. So, create routines that help you feel more productive, more empowered. Like, for example, I have so many technology aspects of my coaching job that come with being in routine and automating things and getting as much information to as many people as quickly as possible.

I have to schedule, in my workweek, time to learn that technology. Do I love it? Not necessarily. Does it feel like I'm getting behind when I do that? Yes.

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But I tell my brain no, I'm going slow to go fast. I'm going to learn this so that I can automate it, I can understand it so it doesn't have to take any more mental power to create it.

I try to create the best routines possible, so I want to be as productive and efficient and the way to do that sometimes is to step back, slow down, learn the thing, create a routine, and then it goes faster and it goes forward. So, create that power of habit. Create a routine.

And finally, I want you to consider this; do the most difficult thing first. When you're overwhelmed, ask yourself, what's the most important thing I can do right now? Let me tackle the hard thing. If you've ever read the book Eat that Frog, it's basically like, get the hard part done first and then the rest of your day just feels like a cherry on top.

Do the hard thing first, get it out of the way, especially if you're a morning person. Tackle your labor-intensive, your mental-intensive events in the morning. Or if you're an afternoon or night owl, schedule lighter activities in the morning and when your brain actually – my husband is this way. His brain doesn't kick in until about noon, and then he's super productive from, like, noon to midnight probably or 10 o'clock. He can stay up way later than me.

But get into your zone of genius, whenever that time frame is for you, and then tackle the most difficult thing at that point and know yourself well enough to know your fatigue needs, your mental highs, your mental lows, and do the most important thing in that time frame.

And finally, I want to close with this; clarity is the key to empowerment. You know yourself best. There are all kinds of suggestions. There's books, there's resources available on productivity and constraint, essentialism, minimalism, doing the one thing, focusing on less not more.

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I've shared a lot of information with you this month about this concept, but it really comes down to you choosing to decide that you're going to be clear. So if clarity were your emotion in the STEAR line, how would the day look?

If you decided to feel clarity in your day, what would you be thinking? How would you be approaching your day? And what would the results be if clarity were just the answer. Consider that. That is really the key to empowerment. Just deciding I'm going to be clear, deciding I'm going to be cohesive, I'm going to be rested, I'm going to make empowered decisions, I'm going to know that I'm going to have the ability to change the decisions, I'm going to slow down, create solutions in my mind, learn the way to effective routines and strategies so that I don't have to be bogged down with the minutia of my day.

Powerfully deciding to get really clear about how you are best productive is the key to empowerment. So with that, my friends, I hope you've enjoyed this month's podcast on productivity and efficiency and effectiveness and I look forward to jumping into next month's theme on team-building. That's what we're talking about next month. I can't wait to share it all with you. Have an amazing, productive, and efficient week. I will talk to you next week. Take care, bye-bye.

If you are enjoying the 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 personalized coaching and professional development program where we take concepts from the podcasts 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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