

## Ep #99: Time Fails



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With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 99.

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.

What is up? Happy Tuesday. What is going on with you? 99 episodes, can you believe this? I can't. I remember the first day I started this podcast, I was frightened out of my gourd. I didn't know what to say or how to say it or how to help people through a podcast. I had no idea what I was doing. And my amazing podcast producer, Pavel, he's so wonderful, was so gracious and so kind and so helpful, got me up and running, and here we are, 99 episodes later. I'm so excited. I love it.

And, by the way, as this podcast airs, you should be about one week from getting some serious break time. Okay, maybe not too serious, but at least you're getting Thanksgiving break. You're getting your first few days off as a school leader and I know that Thanksgiving, for me, was a milestone. I knew that I had made it through that first trimester of work, all of that effort and energy that goes into July, August, September, October, and all of November.

And here you are, a week away from getting a serious break. And I am so proud of you. I know the work you're doing is difficult, it's challenging, it's rewarding, but it's also exhausting and overwhelming. So Thanksgiving is on its way and it is a very welcomed respite from the intensity of that first trimester and I'm so happy for you and I wish you a wonderful relaxing and fulfilling Thanksgiving break.

I have to share with you that I'm taking this work that I'm talking about with you as it relates to time and time management and thoughts around time

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and mindset and I'm applying it to my own work and my own life. This work doesn't end, coaching doesn't end, self-coaching doesn't end, evolvment doesn't end, you guys.

It's something we have to choose to practice week after week after week, day after day after day. And I personally constantly have to work on my relationship with time and continually remind my brain that time is very abundant and the only thing about time that makes me anxious re my thoughts about it.

Mitch and I are, once again, making some significant changes in our lives and it has really triggered my time scarcity thoughts. Thought work on time isn't a one and done exercise. It's what I like to call a lifestyle; a mind-coaching lifestyle.

I have to remind myself that whenever I feel really scarce about time, or money for that matter, those two assets or resources in our lives tend to trigger or emote a lot of scarcity. And I have to remind myself that it's just coming from a thought I'm having. It's just a thought that it's scarce. Oh, how silly of me, I was really thinking that time was scarce or money was scarce or that I don't have enough of what I think I need.

That's it, nothing's gone wrong, I just need to slow down and recognize that I am doing enough, that I am getting enough done, that I'm serving the people I'm meant to serve and that it's my job to nurture my relationship with time. If you are really struggling to apply this month's concepts, it's okay. I understand. It's a practice that we all need to habitualize; is that a word, habitualize? I think so, if not, I just made it up.

Anyway, we need to make it a habit and we have to revisit our thinking and our feelings, really, from time to time as it relates to time. So in the spirit of ongoing reflection, today, we're going to talk about time fails, or time failures, and how to recognize them in our thinking and what to do about

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them. And we want to think about why is it that some days, we nail it and it feels great, and other days are just a train wreck. Let's dig in.

Number one, shifted thinking – shifted thinking is when we have a series of thoughts and we plan accordingly and then another series of thoughts comes along and then we plan that and then we shift into that line of thinking, and then another series of thoughts comes and we prioritize that and we get into that line of thinking and we plan for that.

So it's when we get distracted, we lose our focus, and we're constantly shifting our priorities. I know that this happens in schools all of the time. We say priority, but the word priority means one, and I don't know of a school district and I haven't worked with a client whose district truly has one priority.

So what's happening is this is the priority until this shifts into the priority, and then you shift into the next priority. And then you're jumping around, one thing to the next, in order to try and get it all done. And what happens is that we don't get anything completely done because the work that we're doing is very choppy and haphazard.

You don't have any flow. You don't have any consistency, any congruence from, you know, one week to the next or one month to the next, or even one day to the next. And basically, what we do is we bounce around from one thing over to here, over there, and we dabble. And it can feel very productive to the brain because it's like, "Oh we're doing a little bit of this and we're doing a little bit of that," and I have my attention on many, many different things, but it does not result in a completed task that are very congruent and very well done.

So notice , are you shifting your thinking and priorities all over the map? Is the district shifting your thinking and thoughts all over the map? If so, you have the ability to hone in and just focus on what aspect of those priorities

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you want to work on and try to maintain some consistency in terms of shifted thinking, making sure that your eye is on the big prize, the one main goal, the one priority that you have is critical to feeling like you're gaining or making progress or that you have continuity.

And really, what we're going after is we want to feel productive. We want to feel accomplished. We want to feel that we're contributing, that we're making progress, that we're improving, that we're helping out and it doesn't feel that way when we're shifting our thinking and our priorities all over the place. So keep that in mind.

Number two, not 100% committed. Now, this is a tricky one. We all think that we're 100% committed to our work and to our goals, but our results, what actually is happening in our lives, it calls us out every single time. And it's really bitter for me to swallow that pill when I say that I want something and I say that I'm 100% committed and then I don't get that result or I haven't achieved it yet. It feels like, "But I've done everything I know how," or it feels like I should have it, but when you don't have it, it burns, it kind of feels bad not to get a result that we said we wanted to and that we were committed to.

If we aren't achieving what we want, there's probably a chance that it is because we are not fully committed to achieving the goal, regardless of the amount of time, effort, energy, and problem-solving it takes. So I want to share this example with you.

My coach is always testing our commitment to our business goals. When we state a goal that we're trying to achieve in our business, she will always ask us, how committed are you to achieving it? And every time, we say, "Hello, 100%, we set the goal, that's what we want." And then she'll say something egregious like, "Okay, will you pay me 50K if you don't achieve that goal?" I'm wavering on my commitment, right? She's like, "Will you come up here onstage naked if you don't make your goal?"

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Now, I get it, she's pushing our buttons with ridiculous requests and really egregious remarks, but what she's pointing out is that what does 100% commitment mean. When you say you're fully committed, I'm going to do this no matter what, no matter how long it takes, no matter how hard it is, no matter what obstacles come up, she's letting you see how your brain's like, well, I'm committed, but not 50K committed, or I'm committed, but not get up on stage in my birthday suit committed.

So when we say we're 100% committed and when she is asking us, like, what are you 100% committed to, what she means is that you're going to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to get to that goal. You're not worried about what others think. You're not worried about their judgments or their criticism. You're not worried that you're going to experience failure along the way and you're not putting a time limit on it.

You're not just saying, "It's been a year being a principal and my test scores didn't go up, so guess what, must not be a good principal, guess I should quit." So when we believe that something should get done in a certain amount of time and it doesn't, quitting is the worst thing we can do.

Now, I am experiencing this in my business right now, like, I had financial goals, I had the number of clients served goals. I had like tangible, measurable goals that I've had in my business and some months I hit them and some months I don't. But when I look at my goals overall, and if I thought to myself, "Well, people must not want my service or I'm a crappy coach, I must not be meant to do this, I guess I'll just give up," and I do it after a month or after a year, I'm not giving myself the opportunity to evolve myself as a coach, evolve myself as a business owner, evolve my clients and give them what they're looking for, which is different results.

They're wanting to feel better. They're wanting to gain confidence. They're wanting to make an impact. Or they're wanting to do something else with their lives. But whatever their goals are, it's my job to do this job long

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enough to help them get the results they want, which in turn gives me the results that I want.

So when we believe that we should get something done by a certain amount of time – think about this, let's use an example. If you ran a marathon and your goal was to reach the finish line in 4.5 hours and you're running the race, and at the 4.5 hour mark you realize you're only at mile 25 versus crossing the finish line at 26.2, are you going to stop because you didn't reach the finish line yet?

No, you're going to finish that race in probably like 4.7 hours and you're going to be really proud of yourself that you finished it. And for sure, you're going to want to review your training regime and you're going to just, you know, how you can increase your speed a little bit to hit that 4.5 hour mark, but you're not going to stop a mile before the finish line just because you didn't meet the time goal. Do you see that?

So a lot of times, our brain is so impatient. It wants the result right now and we put time limits on it and we tell ourselves, if we don't meet the time limit, then we've failed and we don't reach the goal. But guess what, when you give up, you don't reach the goal anyway. So quitting, when you could be one millimeter away from success, is not a good decision.

Now, on the flipside of this is being 100% committed to your time goal. So there are goals where you have basically a task goal, like the goal is to achieve the task, like finishing the marathon, that's the priority, versus the time priority. So when you have a task priority, the goal is to finish the task no matter what, even if you don't meet your time deadline.

On the flipside of that is the time priority, the time commitment. And when you're 100% committed to getting something done in a certain amount of time or at a certain deadline time, then the time becomes the commitment and what you do is that when you're 100% committed to a time goal, you're

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going to commit to finishing that task in the amount of time it takes, no matter what.

So I do this with my writing. Before, I just like let myself write and I would write for as long as it took, and guess what – I never put a parameter around it so it took forever. Half of my coaching week was spent writing while the other half was coaching. I was like, I don't have time for this, I need to constrain my writing so I have more time for clients.

So, I give myself a certain amount of time to write a podcast or a chapter in my book or copy for my Facebook ads or whatever it is, and when I give myself a very specific time and I put that time on my calendar, I have the time, the date, the duration that it's going to take me, it gets me very focused and very tuned in and very clear about what I need to get done within that hour, let's say.

So I ask you, practice committing to a time limit. Have fun with this. I think it's a race. How much can I get done within this hour? How fast can I write this podcast? And guess what, if I get it done early, I give myself either the extra time as free time, or I build it up and I give myself a little treat, like I let myself stop working an hour early that day and I dive into whatever fun book I'm reading for the day, or I let myself just veg out, it doesn't matter.

What I'm saying is, try it, it's really fun. Give yourself a time, give yourself a duration. Commit to that time limit no matter what. You get done what you get done and that's it. A B-plus podcast is better than an A-plus podcast that never gets done or that takes up two weeks of your time, right? So, give yourself time. That's it, the limit happens, and if you make it or you get ahead of it, celebrate.

Number three, this is a huge time failure thing and this leads me, this conversation about getting it done on time, leads me to the third time fail; believing that it should feel good all of the time. This belief that we should

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feel good when we're doing our work 100% of the time is why our brain avoids, procrastinates, and distracts us.

Getting things done requires us to work. It requires us to think and concentrate. It requires us to problem-solve and overcome obstacles and generate solutions we have not yet tried. This does not feel good to do this. It doesn't feel good to the brain to extend itself because our brains are lazy. They're lazy in the sense that they don't want to have to put out extra effort or work or have to concentrate or do something uncomfortable.

And when we think we should feel fun and happy and good all of the time, and then the reality is that it doesn't feel good and happy and fun all the time, then our brain's like, okay, we're moving on to something else that feels better because we want to relieve ourselves from that discomfort, from having to feel and be uncomfortable.

And if there's any one thing that I can teach you on this podcast, it's that life is 50/50, no matter what. Things are going to feel good about 50% of the time, and things are going to feel uncomfortable or difficult or challenging the other 50% of the time. Our brains want to argue this theory so badly. No, it shouldn't be 50/50. It should be 80/20, or 70/30, or 90/10.

Our brain so strongly wants to believe that changing our situation is going to make things so much better. So we think that oh, if we quit the job that sucks, it's going to make us so much happier. Or, if we just made a little bit more money, everything would be better. Or, if we buy a bigger house, life is going to be so much more glamorous and easy.

We all do this. Our brains are funny. Life is fun, right, guys? We all do this and we've all been there before. Hey, think about this. We have been in the before and after of our lives. No matter what situation you change, you know that you're still going to have challenging days and challenges that come up in life.

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Before you were a school principal, you thought that being the principal was going to be the bomb. You knew that you wanted to implement change, you felt like you were going to have more control and more impact, and you believed that you're going to have a little more time and flexibility being outside of your classroom. That was the before.

You envisioned the change of situation to be the cause of your happiness or that things would be so much better. Now that you're in the position, you have a whole new list of 50/50, right? Many of which you did not see coming or anticipate. So when we're in the before stage, we don't realize there's going to be a whole 'nother list of 50% unhappy.

So when you know that every situation is 50/50, it will help you accept and allow for the uncomfortable, no matter what your situation is. And in doing so, in just acknowledging that oh, this is the 50% part that isn't so great, and when you acknowledge that, it helps it make it not so bad.

You're like, oh, I get it. Here's the 50% part of my day that's kind of on the negative. I see you. I know it's not going to last. It sucks right now but we're going to get through it. And I realize this is hard to believe because we have spent so much time believing that our circumstances are what create how we feel.

But you can use your past to help you see how changing your situation has never ever equated to 100% happiness. Happiness comes from inside your brain. It comes from your thoughts. And your goal is not to think happy thoughts 100% of the time. The goal is to know how to feel negative emotion without making it mean something is wrong with you or that something has gone wrong, or that something is wrong with the situation or other people or the world.

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Knowing that it's 50/50 just means everything is as it's meant to be. There is balance in the universe, in the world, in our jobs. It shouldn't be happy all of the time. That is just the way it is.

Number four, scheduling too much or expecting things to take much less time than they do. So you could just put down, oh, it's going to take me 15 minutes to do this, 20 minutes to do that, an hour to do that. You can pretend and fake it and tell yourself it's not going to take much time at all, but you're going to be very frustrated when you realize, no, that actually does take two hours.

So this next time fail is a big one for me because I always think I'm able to get more done in one day than I can. And that's why assigning a time and a duration to each task is so helpful. It shows your brain what you can actually get done in a day's time, which then helps you get more clarity about what is actually a priority.

And it also helps you learn to approximate how long something actually takes. So you're not faking yourself out. And you actually get better at scheduling your day. When you over-schedule, like I talked about earlier, you're going to get frustrated and you're going to stop wanting to schedule.

So just notice and adjust and be honest with yourself about what you're actually doing with your time. So let's be clear. Are you focused and working, or did you really during that one hour you gave yourself to write your email to the staff, answer a couple of text messages during your writing block?

Which I have to tell you, that is what was happening to me as I wrote this podcast. I'm being a very terrible example of focus and time constraint. But to my credit, I will say, it was fine, I extended my time because my friends are up in the Kincade fire and they were evacuating while I was writing this.

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So it was true but I have to be serious. For every one thing that you spend your time on, something else is not getting done, and that's the truth. When I only make a to-do list and I stop with the to-do list, my brain believes it's going to get everything on the to-do list done. And then it becomes very disappointed when that doesn't happen.

So what happens? I made a new to-do list the next day with most of the same things from the first day, and the day after that, the day after that, and what ends up happening is I look at the list and I just pick out the ones that feel good in the moment, that are easy to do, and the things that aren't as fun or are more challenging or will take more time kind of get pushed to the end.

And if we're not careful and we don't prioritize them and commit to doing them at a particular time and duration, we will not do the things that end up giving us our big results. Our brain will choose that immediate gratification every time.

It will see the task on the list that is fun or easy or fast, and we're going to want that hit of dopamine that comes with checking something off the list. Even if that task has no significant meaning or movement in your life or your career goals, it feels so amazing in that moment to be like, check.

So be mindful of your goals and be willing to do the work in the moment versus giving into that instant gratification. Your future self will thank you very much.

Number five, don't schedule in interruptions or breaks. I've said this time fail before and I'm going to say it again, and most people still don't do it. When you fail to schedule in interruptions and breaks, you are not giving yourself and your calendar some breathing room.

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You pretty much know when you take your breaks and for how long you take them. And if you don't know, then you need to put some routines in place and create a systematic, kind of time and place that you typically take a break, you typically eat. You don't have to be on a regimented schedule, but give yourself time to eat. Your human body needs food.

Give yourself time to use the restroom. Give yourself time to take a stretch break. Allow yourself those human needs that keep you going through your day. Do not schedule every minute of the day with no breaks. I used to do this and what happened was I'd either push through and my body would be very unhappy with me, or eventually she would just take over and I would find myself totally wasting my time, really long breaks or not very focused work.

So just get into the habit of putting in a little bit of time for breaks. And when it comes to interruptions, I know you're not going to know when the interruptions will actually happen, but if you just decide to put an hour into your calendar with nothing scheduled every single day, somewhere in the day, doesn't matter when, your brain can relax a bit knowing that when you do get interrupted, you can tell your brain, hey, we scheduled some time for this, it's okay.

And the beauty of scheduling time in for interruptions is that that one day a year when you actually don't get interrupted, you feel like you've been given the gift of time. It's awesome. But seriously guys, put in some kind of buffer for interruptions. That way you won't be irritated when they happen and you won't feel like you cannot run to the bathroom or cannot take a 30-minute lunch break to give yourself some uninterrupted time for eating.

Number six, this is one last thing I invite you to consider when you feel like you're not making forward progress. And that is allowing and scheduling time just for thinking. My coach calls it power thinking, like getting deep.

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Scheduling intentional think time. This is the time when you stop and deeply think about your goals and ideas for how you might reach them.

And it's time for sitting with yourself and sitting with your feelings about your job, yourself, your school, your life. My coach really, really pushes us to schedule in power thinking. I see her do it. She gives herself plenty of time to stop and think about all the books she's read, what she's learned from them, what she's experienced, how she's applied this material, how she wants to create it, how she wants to support us in our learning.

And when you do this, and I have definitely added this into my week, and I can honestly tell you it is one of the most profound practices I have implemented because the breakthroughs that you have and the awareness you gain is beyond your expectations.

Every obstacle we ever have is only a thought. It doesn't feel like that's true, but when you get to the obstacle and you achieve it, you realize it was the way you were thinking about that obstacle. And I know, it doesn't feel like it in the moment, but when you give yourself time to dive deep into your thoughts and really feel your emotions, you're going to see how the painful points in your life are coming from what you're thinking and what your brain is making any given situation mean.

It is really as deep as coaching gets, my friends. And if you want support with this think time and deep-level power thinking, I am here for you. Alright, those are some of the time failures. I practice time failing regularly. I practice time mindset regularly, and I really have created a much more abundant and happy life. And you guys, you know what comes of this?

I'm not working myself to the bone. I'm allowing myself to be done for the day. I allow myself to have think time, to have break time. I allow myself some flex time. And I just get done with what I need to get done in less time. It's so cool. It's like a game for me. I love it.

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So have fun with this. And next week we have a very, very special guest coming on the podcast, and it just so happens to be that it aligned with the 100th episode of the *Empowered Principal* podcast. I am so excited and I want to thank you guys again so much for being a valued listener to the podcast.

If you love the podcast, share it with those you know and I'll see you next week. Take care. Bye-bye.

Hey there, my fellow educator. Are you yearning to go a little further with these concepts and learn how to apply them in your everyday work situations? Do you want to feel understood and more connected with likeminded school leaders? If so, I'm super excited to offer you, for the very first time ever, the Empowered Principal Mastermind.

It's a safe space where we can talk about the real issues that you face on a daily basis and support you in evolving your leadership and your life to the next level. For more information, simply go to [angelakellycoaching.com](http://angelakellycoaching.com) and click on, "EP Mastermind." We start this January. I can't wait to see you on the inside.

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.