

Ep #102: Self-Care Discipline



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals, welcome to episode 102.

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 empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday. How are you guys doing this week? Welcome to December. The rain is nonstop here in Northern California. I cannot tell you how much rain we are getting. It has been raining and raining for days. And I'm not talking like a sprinkle rain. I'm talking downpour for days.

So, here at the beach it's wet and I know there are storms all across the nation. So I hope you are safe, that your students and families are taking good care of themselves in this inclement weather and that although winter has arrived, we are going to take it with grace and style.

If you're new to the show, welcome. I'm so happy to have you in our Empowered Principal network here on the podcast and I'd really like to take a moment to shout-out to one of our listeners. His name is Ben and Ben hired me as his coach as a result of having listened to the podcast.

I'm so honored to be his coach. Ben started out our sessions together feeling really overwhelmed by the intense needs of his school and he listened to the podcast for several weeks before deciding to reach out and work together at a very deeper level.

Over the last few weeks, Ben has shifted from feeling dread about going into work every day into feelings of excitement and enthusiasm about the opportunities that he now sees in the work to create impactful change for

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his students and his staff. He is such a joy to work with and I am so excited for him as he builds up his school and his team's ability to offer influential instruction that will hopefully create the changes that he ultimately wants for his students and his staff and himself as a leader. It's really fun to work with people at a one to one level.

So, shout-out to Ben. I know you're out there listening, Ben. Kudos to you. I love working with you and thank you so much for embracing the STEAR Cycle and really taking it to the level that is your individual school's needs. It is so fun to work with you, so thank you so much.

And I also want to say thank you to all of you for the outpouring of love and support regarding the passing of my mom. It has been so comforting to know that our tribe is growing in numbers and that we feel connected regardless of where we live or what school we lead.

I have listeners from all across the nation and in countries outside of the US. So being together, talking about school leadership, and knowing that while school leadership can feel very isolating, it's really helpful to know that we are all out here together and there are people who understand the work and the lifestyle that we lead. Thank you so much for your kindness and your sympathies and I thank you for being valued audience member, listener, follower, and client of The Empowered Principal work that we are doing.

So, last week, we talked about what self-care is, why we don't naturally self-care as part of our routine, and steps towards taking some authentic care of yourself. Today, we're going to talk about how you build up your self-care discipline and set some boundaries with yourself and others so that self-care becomes a daily practice and one that you value as much as the work that you do for students.

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So we're talking about what we value. And I know you value the work that you do, but I also want you to value you and the care that you need as a human being.

So, if you don't first see the value in self-care, you are never going to spend time in acts of self-care. You can say that you wish you had the time, but you won't really do anything about it, you won't take the action you need to take in order to self-care.

So what you'll do is you'll carry on week after week, year after year, saying you wish you could get more sleep, you wish you could get to the gym, you wish you had more energy, you wish you could go and see a movie or get a facial, but you're not going to prioritize it and put it on your calendar. So the very, very first step in self-care is having the awareness of what you actually believe and practicing that you believe you are worth it, that taking care of your personal needs is worth the time, money, energy, and investment.

If there is any gift that I could give to all of you, it's the belief that you are worth caring for. There is no one else who can provide you with the level of care that self-care provides because you're the only one who knows what you need in order to feel your best.

Expecting others to know what you need or to take care of you is setting yourself up for disappointment. The biggest step in the self-care process is fully believing that self-care is essential and that you choose self-care because of the benefits and that the benefits of taking care of yourself override the cost associated with it.

Say it with me; I value self-care. I believe self-care is essential. If these thoughts are too far of a stretch for you to believe, try this on; self-care allows me to be my best for myself and others. Self-care isn't just about you and it can feel selfish if you believe that self-care is just about you.

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What self-care really is about is about the people that you serve. It's about every student in your school. It's about your staff and your community members. It's about your own family and your kids. It's about your girlfriends, your boyfriends, your mom, your dad, your siblings, all of the people in your life including you.

And you can only contribute to others to the extent of your capacity to self-care. Self-care expands your capacity to serve others and to love others. It's not just about self-love. Self-care is all about creating abundance in your life all the way around.

Okay, so I hope I have convinced you that self-care is a nonnegotiable. If not, practice that. Step one is awareness. Step one so believing and choosing to believe and prioritize yourself and self-care. That has to be a nonnegotiable. No you, no other problems. If you don't take care of you, there will be no you to have problems to solve and to have schools to lead and to have people to love in your life. So, please be convinced that self-care is a nonnegotiable.

The next step is to be intentional with your self-care actions. You need to actually engage in the act of self-care. This means that you need to know the kinds of actions that will fulfill you and keep you performing at your highest self.

I like to make a list of all the self-care ideas I can come up with. I write down everything, from the basics, like getting eight hours of sleep, to other things that I deem as wildly indulgent but that I really want to experience, things like long massages. Not the 50-minute massage, but the 90-minute massage. I love high-end facials. I want to go on dream vacations. I want to experience travel for fun and pleasure, not just for business like I have been doing this year.

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So, keep in mind that self-care includes caring for your brain, your heart, and your body, your entire body. And what I mean by this is that self-care isn't just about your body's physical needs, such as sleep and exercise. It's about tuning into what you desire to learn, to read, to explore, to experience. It's all of the ways that you want to feel fulfilled; music, painting, traveling, time with your friends and family, whatever makes you feel full and alive.

So what I do is I dream up 100 ways that I can take amazing care of myself. It's not only fun to create the list. It's really exciting, by the way, because you get crazy with it. You're like, 100 ways, this is so much fun. But it also helps you to identify any upper-limiting beliefs.

When I write down eight hours of sleep on my list, I don't feel extremely judgmental about wanting to allow myself eight hours of sleep. It seems reasonable and normal to schedule in a full night's sleep. Now, I don't always get to it, but it doesn't seem like out of the realm of what I should be asking for, for myself, is getting some decent amount of sleep.

But having to come up with 100 ideas, like if I just wrote down one or two things for my body, it's like, okay, no big deal. But when you have to get creative and list 100 ideas, that starts to make your brain have to think about things that require more time, more energy, more money, and that quickly taps into my limits as to how much time and money I feel I should, quote en quote should, spend on my self-care.

Sometimes I feel panicked when I look at the list and see things I'd like to experience, but they feel so out of reach. And I can also notice myself judging myself for the things on the list. Have you done this? My brain will look at that list and say, like, that's ridiculous. You absolutely do not need that. That is not self-care. That's indulgent.

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And it starts judging the heck out of my 100 list. I have to stop and tell my brain, look, it's just a list. I can put down on the list whatever my heart desires. Don't worry about it. We're not doing it, we're just planning it. We're thinking about it.

You have to dream beyond the way you currently self-care. The current way that you self-care right now, this school year, is what got you to this point. So if you are feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, depressed, in a funk, unhappy in any way shape or form, if there's something that you need that you know you're not getting to, the way that you're approaching self-care right now has you to this point.

In order to evolve yourself and your leadership and your life, you have got to think much bigger. You've got to push your thinking. You've got to stretch it past the point of what you currently believe is acceptable.

To get your brain thinking bigger, you need to ask yourself some questions, and this is what I love to do. It's so fun. And I'll put this in the workbook. For those of you who are clients, you will get a copy of this month's theme on self-care.

So, some of these questions are, what types of self-care acts does a wealthy successful high performing principal engage in? What does she treat herself to so that she can lead her school with energy, focus, and clarity? He or she, by the way. What does he or she value and how does he or she spend her time and money? What does she think of herself and how does she treat herself?

Imagine the principal who has it all. What kind of life does she lead and how does she treat herself? Put those things on your list and work to believe that you are worthy of them.

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You have to think about what does your future self do for self-care that you're currently not doing now? And what do you want? What do you crave and desire? There is nothing off topic. There's nothing off the list. There's nothing that shouldn't be on the list. You have to take the judgment out of it and think about what would somebody who has an ideal situation at work be doing for herself?

How is she showing up? How is she self-caring? What kind of boundaries is she setting around her self-care schedule? Which gets me to my self-care schedule.

So, the next thing I do is place self-care tasks on my calendar. If you aren't used to doing much for yourself, start with one small thing per month. So, for people who do not practice self-care on a regular basis, it's going to feel highly uncomfortable to put something on the calendar and honor it.

So you want to start by doing something very tiny that doesn't feel too scary to the point that you'll avoid doing it, that you'll skip over it. So if you already get your hair done at a salon, maybe add getting a coffee afterwards might be the next step. It's not going to trigger you too much, right? Or maybe you pay a little extra to have it styled.

Add a little something more than you normally would and see how that feels. And what's funny about expanding your self-care is that you're going to experience some discomfort at first. It won't feel right to do something for yourself that feels excessive. That's okay, allow the discomfort.

You either are going to allow the discomfort of trying something new for self-care, or you're going to allow the discomfort of not taking care of your needs. Choose the discomfort. But I invite you to choose the discomfort of doing the next thing that feels right to you and taking absolutely amazing care of yourself.

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So, you might start with feeling a little guilty for liking it. That's totally me. My body is saying, like, I absolutely love having a longer massage. But my brain is saying, yeah, and it's costing this amount more money and it's taking so long, we don't have the time to be having massages this long. You've got to get back at it.

So, if you are like me and you find your brain chattering and judging you, just gently tell it, not now, it's okay, not now. This practice is about slowly expanding your comfort in taking excellent care of your body, your mind, and your heart.

The goal for self-care is to feel like it's a routine part of your life, that it's just like eating, showering, breathing, going to get groceries, getting enough sleep. All of that stuff, it should be just a part of your routine. And as you lean further into the belief that self-care isn't only necessary but that it's meant to be enjoyed, you can add more self-care tasks to your calendar; once a month, once a week, once a day, up to multiple times a day.

And remember, self-care isn't all about the expensive or the time-consuming acts. It's also very much about taking a deep breath, giving yourself the opportunity to have some lunch, and go to the restroom and schedule time in your workday to finish a project or visit classrooms. It's all of the little things in your day and the big things in your life that help you feel your best and allow you to bring joy and pleasure into your daily routine.

Part of self-care involves setting boundaries for yourself and others. If you're a people-pleaser, you will most likely feel highly uncomfortable prioritizing yourself over other people. You make yourself available as often as possible, am I right? If so, what's happening is that it's taking away time from practicing self-care. And it really feels like being available is the right thing to do as a school leader.

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And of course, it's necessary to be available to some level as a leader, but I caution those who make it the reason that they don't self-care. So there's a difference between being available as a leader and using it as an excuse as to why you can't schedule in any kind of self-care into your day or your weekend or your evenings.

To be an effective leader, you must be willing to set boundaries around your time as it relates to self-care. And there are two sets of boundaries you'll need in order for you to establish discipline in self-care. One is with others. And the other is the one you set with yourself.

Before you reap the benefits of prioritizing self-care, you are going to have to practice believing that self-care is essential and that you're worth creating time and space in your life for acts of self-care. You'll also have to be able to identify the difference between intentional care and indulgent care.

This means that you will have to set some boundaries with yourself. And let me start by sharing what I mean by a boundary. A boundary is a limit you create for yourself based on what you value. It is an action that you take when you fail to honor your self-care commitments or when someone else has crossed a boundary that impacts your commitment to self-care.

Setting boundaries is not what you think that other people should do in order to maintain your boundaries. What it is about is what you will do, what actions you will take in a response to a boundary violation. And when I say violation, I'm not meaning that others intentionally try to violate you or your self-care. Most times, people have no idea what your self-care routine is, nor do you personally intentionally sabotage yourself when it comes to your own self-care.

We tend to get off track from time to time and setting a boundary with ourselves and others is how we're going to ensure that we prioritize our

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self-care and that it stays a priority for us and becomes a routine and that we expand our capacity to accept and receive that self-care is an essential part of life.

When you decide you value self-care and you focus on the benefits of taking excellent care of yourself and you believe and you practice believing that taking care of you isn't just to feel good, that it allows you to create a bigger result in your life. It doesn't feel negative to establish limits with yourself or others.

Just like when you believe that being in classrooms on a regular basis improves your relationships with students and teachers and that you're committed to this practice of regularly visiting classrooms, saying no to less impactful practices in your day doesn't feel negative. It feels empowering.

Committing to your self-wellbeing and honoring your commitments and saying no to yourself and redirecting back to self-care when you fail to schedule it in or you blow it off is going to feel like you're in control, like you're assured, like you're certain, like you value yourself, that you are important and that is empowerment.

And the same holds true for setting boundaries with other people. Oftentimes, when we talk about boundary setting with others, we usually think that it means that you tell somebody what to do if they cross a boundary with you. Now, that doesn't work because it relies on somebody else's actions.

When you set a boundary, it needs to be about the action that you will take if someone crosses a boundary. It's not about what they should do. You can't control them.

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If we had the luxury of controlling all the humans in our lives, we would not be having to self-coach and we'd be getting amazing results. But that's not the case. It's not about what they should do. This gets you into trying to control behavior.

Setting boundaries is all about taking responsibility for your own wellbeing versus expecting others to change their behavior so that you have time to fit in your own self-care. Do you see the difference?

Okay, so what are some boundary setting steps? Number one, have a clear understanding of your values and what you are willing to commit to in terms of self-care. Identify what it is that your body, heart, and mind need to feel cared for. Before you can set a boundary, you have to know what your boundaries even are.

You have to write down your expectations and your limits. What do you expect of yourself and others? What do you want for yourself? What are your limits? What are you willing to do? What are you willing to allow? And what are you willing to schedule for yourself? And what do you find unacceptable?

Like, if eight hours of sleep is your goal and you hit seven, you might find that acceptable. But if you're regularly shooting for eight and you're getting four or five, you might just ultimately decide this is unacceptable, I need to prioritize this, something has to give.

So, if you know you tend to flake on let's say after-school workouts and that afternoons you're just too tired and every time you schedule it for five o'clock or six o'clock you just drive straight home because you're so tired, are you willing to get up early to fit in a walk or a quick workout before school when you're more alert?

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Are you willing to allow PTA to schedule an unplanned meeting with you in the evening when you have a scheduled dinner date with your spouse? Are you willing to do that? Most times, people will cancel the dinner date over the PTA meeting.

So get really clear on what works for you and what doesn't work for you and what you're going to do, which is step two. Decide ahead of time how you will respond to yourself and to others when a boundary is being tested or has been violated. What will you do when you notice that you failed to honor your own commitments to yourself and what will you do when other people's demands for your time and focus impact your ability to schedule in time for self-care.

What are you going to say and do? Know this ahead of time and have it planned so that when it comes up, and it will, you have a plan of action and you can just rely on, okay, I got off track, here's what I'm going to do to fix that. or, whoa, I'm noticing people are taking advantage of my open-door policy, I need to set some boundaries around my time so that I can get the things done that I need to get done.

Step three, know that a boundary only needs to be communicated with another person after a violation has occurred. So, for example, you don't run around saying to people, "Do not schedule a meeting with me when my husband and I have a dinner date." You only mention it when the boundary is an issue.

If somebody schedules an evening meeting and you have a commitment with your spouse, you can say, hey, I'm sorry, I'd love to meet with you but I can't meet at this date and time, I have another event scheduled that I need to honor, can we find another time? You just let them know it's not going to work and when can we schedule another time.

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You've honored your commitment to yourself. And let me tell you something else; the more you honor your commitments to yourself, the greater your belief grows in trusting your leadership, trusting yourself as a leader, trusting yourself as a person.

So many times, we are the worst offenders of our own self-care and we lack the discipline of committing and sticking to the goals for our future self. So our future self never trusts us in the moment because she's saying, well what difference does it make? You're not going to really commit to it, or that doesn't really matter or I don't really matter. So in the end, I'm going to key to other things be the priority instead of myself. Can you see that, how that happens?

So it's really important to honor your own commitments because that's really how you build your capacity to believe in yourself as a leader and so that others will believe in you as a leader.

Or, if you violated your own boundary – let's say you committed to getting eight hours of sleep per night but you find yourself staying up late watching TV or working and checking email incessantly and you're really only getting about six hours a night, you need to get honest with yourself that number one, you're violating your own boundary, and number two, explore why you're not following through with what you said you wanted.

Acknowledge the truth of the results you're getting, so if you're only getting six hours of sleep, be honest with yourself. Don't tell yourself, you know, I'm getting seven or eight when you're really getting six. It is what it is. It's the situation. It's neutral. Just acknowledge it.

You can also take a look at what you said you wanted and ask yourself why you're not doing the thing you said you needed. If you checked in with your body and your body communicated with you that sleep is a priority for it and it really wants to be more rested, and then you aren't changing your

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behavior to get more sleep, that's because there's a thought somewhere in your brain that is telling you that something else is more important than sleeping.

Notice what it is you're doing and if you like your reason for not getting eight hours of sleep, that's fine. But if you don't like it, you need to adjust. So, for example, if you missed one or two nights of sleep because you stayed up late helping your child with a school project and you're totally fine with having helped them to choose that over sleep, then no worries, absolutely.

But if you notice that you're staying up late just worrying about work but not bring productive or buffering with TV or snacks or complaining or working past your bed time and you don't want to be doing these things, then you need to explore the thoughts that are currently causing you to do something against your own will and brainstorm some thoughts that will help you override your brain's desire for that instant gratification of working or staying up or buffering and help you commit to taking action now for the benefit of yourself tomorrow as a school leader who wants to be rested and energized for the day.

There has to be this balance of what I want right now in this moment, that instant gratification, kind of thinking from the base of your skull, which is that primal fight, flight, or freeze response, versus tomorrow I'm going to feel so amazing when I'm fully rested having eight hours of sleep. And that's the kind of leader I want to be. I want to have a clear mind, a focused brain. So be thinking about what your future self needs in order to find thoughts that are going to propel you into the action of getting the self-care that you need to be the best version of you.

So, in summary, I want you to practice valuing self-care. It's really the most important step in this entire process because you are not going to take action until you believe that self-care is valuable. Two, identify all the ways

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that you can self-care and notice which ones appeal to you the most, and nothing is off limits. I promise you, practice expanding your capacity to receive self-care from yourself.

And then be sure to calendar it into your day, just like we talked about time management, I want you to remember that, as a part of self-care, putting it on the calendar and honoring it is extremely important, otherwise it's just a wish and a dream and nothing happens.

Then you have to identify your boundaries and your values and set limits for yourself and others and gently get yourself back on track if you are not honoring your commitments or if you notice that the people-pleasing has kicked in and you're saying yes to people when you had scheduled for self-care. Finally, have a plan to respond when those boundaries are being tested.

And finally, you guys, if you're interested in prioritizing your self-care, I'm going to be hosting a series of free trainings this month that will model how to get started. I'm also going to share a peek into the exciting new ways that you can get the support you need to lead your school and your life with so much more confidence and energy and enthusiasm. You won't want to miss out.

We're going to get into 2020 with some amazing tools for planning, preparing, and executing your ideal professional and personal life. Be sure you're on my email list so you'll get access to all of the training links. I can't wait to see you there. Take care, have an amazing week, 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.

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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 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 where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.