

Ep #112: Thinking Vs. Doing



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Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals. Welcome to Episode 112.

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.

Happy Tuesday, my empowered leaders! And, you know what? Happy President's week. Hopefully, you were able to experience another long weekend, and for some of you who live in California, you may be on a full week break this week. That is so fun! I loved February break. It was always on my birthday, or most of the time on my birthday, and it's so fun to have that week off.

But if you just had three days, yay for you too! Working is fun and having a break is fun. It's all super fun. And hey, if it's not fun, if work isn't fun for you, there are some negative thoughts sneaking in. Keep practicing towards making every day as fun as possible. It's amazing what asking myself, "How can I make today fun?" what it's done for me.

It's helped me do tasks that I've been avoiding forever. It's allowed me to stop working 12-hour days and have more fun, not just working, but in my personal life too. I'm truly having more fun because I'm so focused on creating it. If having more fun at work sounds good to you and you'd like to learn more, be sure to join us this afternoon for the free Mastermind training at 4:00 Pacific time. The registration link is in the show notes.

We're going to be having fun and I would love to see you there. I'm going to break down the concepts that I'm teaching you in the podcast, so be there live. We're not offering replays of the trainings. You have to be there live, because it's more engaging, you'll be more focused, you will get the

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experience of what it feels like to understand these concepts and start applying them right away, so be there live.

Okay, it has been really fun to connect with you all through these trainings and to help you feel better about yourselves and the work that you're doing in schools. This really is the way. I know that we think that how we feel, and how we show up, and who we are as leaders is based on the circumstances of our situation, of whatever it is that we're currently experiencing in our jobs.

Our brain has been trained to believe this, longer than anything else that it's believed, so it's really hard to shake it up and to think in new ways, but it really is the path to enjoying your job more, or finding a career that better suits you. It helps you manage your time and your life better, leading with influence, building honest relationships, taking good care of yourself, all the things.

It's so simple and yet so hard at the same time, and that's what we're going to talk about today in this podcast. We're going to talk about the idea or the concept of thinking versus doing. As leaders, especially as school leaders, we are very good at doing. We want to get busy and get to doing all the things we need to do.

We plan, and we schedule, and we dig in. Teachers do it, leaders do it. We are busy at school. There's a lot to be done and we're doing the work. I totally thrive on accomplishment and doing. I loved it as a teacher. I love the feeling of accomplishment with the kids, and being prepped ahead of time, and having all my ducks in a row.

When I went into school leadership, I tried to do the same thing. I tried to create my emotions from action, from doing, and I was completely thrown off. I was completely confused as to why I couldn't keep up, and why I

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wasn't doing enough, and the doing, and the doing, it's almost an addiction for me. I love the doing part, and here's why.

Because it's such a rush to check off all the boxes on our list, and to feel accomplishment, to feel successful, to feel good about the work that we've put in for the day. Accomplishment is one of my favorite feelings. It's a drug to me. However, I've learned that there are two kinds of accomplishments.

There's the kind where we do, and we chase the feeling of accomplishment through our actions, and then there's this kind where we think, and we create that feeling of accomplishment through our thinking. And let me explain this, let me break this down.

Our default is to do, to react, to do more, because we believe that doing equals emotion, so we focus our energy and attention on all of the things we need to do. We jump into action and we do as much as we can. And then we finish the tasks that we wanted to finish, and when we do that our day feels really good.

We say we've had a good day when everything went the way we wanted it to, when the reality of the day aligned with our expectations and our schedule and our plan. And then it feels like we had a good day, and we feel really good, and we go home, and we say we had a great day. But on the days we get interrupted, and we get sidetracked, or someone comes at us sideways, people are angry at us, and we wanted to get all these things done and nothing got done –

You had to do a behavior investigation or whatever, and things didn't go as smoothly as we wanted to, or we didn't get anything done, or we feel like we sat and spun, and we sat at a meeting for eight hours for goodness sake, and we didn't get anything done on our campus, then we say we had a bad day, or it was a frustrating day, and the day feels bad.

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When we're focused on doing things as a measurement of success or failure, and as happiness or frustration, that is because we are buying into a belief or a thought that the action of doing things is what creates our emotion of accomplishment. And it feels really true in our brain because when we feel accomplished, it's because we're thinking we're accomplished.

We forget the thinking part. We just believe that we did all these things, therefore, that equates to the feeling and the emotion of accomplishment. So, we keep doing more and more in an effort to improve the way we feel about our work. We think that if we get more done, we'll feel even better.

I just had a client the other day say that. She wanted to get more done, and she realized, "Wait a minute, what am I doing here? I'm trying to feel better about ourselves by doing more," because we think that more, the action of more, equals the feelings of accomplishment and of success and achievement and being a great leader. We feel good about ourselves, we feel good about our work, right?

So, as you and I both know, there are days in school leadership when things get done and you feel great, and there are many, many more days of the year when the things you planned on getting done, or that you wanted to get done, do not get done.

So, over time, our overall vibe, kind of like the average emotional state that we're in on the day to day basis, becomes more disgruntled than enthused because we've set ourselves up for failure and we feel terrible about that because we expect that doing things and finishing them is what is going to make us feel better and feel good about ourselves.

I'm not judging anybody who's caught in this trap at all, because I'm totally in the boat with you on this. I still catch myself believing that if I get all my coaching calls done, and write two articles – Not just one, but two, and

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record a podcast, that it will have been a good day. I will have accomplished all of my work. So, I totally understand why your brain is doing that.

That hit of dopamine that we get at the end of the day when we complete the tasks we wanted to, especially if we got something more done than we wanted to, how exciting is that, and we get to check it off the list, it feels amazing. But it's because we believe that the accomplishments are amazing. It's a thought in the back of our head.

And let me clarify something. There's nothing wrong with wanting to complete tasks. Being productive and effective and time-efficient is all part of being an excellent principal. You have to go to work and do things. That's what you're getting paid to do. You're providing value to the school and your district through your actions.

The distinction is what is driving your actions. The belief that doing and checking off all the boxes creates your happiness as a leader will always in mostly unhappy days, because the reality of this job is that we don't ever get to all the things we want to get done, ever, ever. There's always more to do. There's always a problem. There's always something to solve.

There's always a meeting. There's always a parent. There's always a kid. There's always a teacher. There's always something and someone to take care of and to manage and to do work on, always. So, the belief that our actions equal our emotions is why we feel burned out, and frustrated, and exhausted, and unaccomplished, because there's a disconnect, right?

We think that the actions create the emotion, and we take tons of action, and when it doesn't create that emotion, we're frustrated because there's a misalignment. And we spin our wheels, trying to do more and more in order to feel better, and the way we feel about ourselves and our job, we feel

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victim to it. We feel like we're victim to how much we get done in a day based on the interruptions or the unexpected issues that come up.

But we know, every single day we go to work, there's a high chance that something's going to come up that we weren't planning on, or that we overscheduled our expectations for how much we were going to get done. So, there is another way to approach the goal of feeling accomplished, of having the feeling of accomplishment in your body, and it isn't going to sound realistic or true to your brain.

So, stay with me for a minute and allow this idea to sink in. Be open to the possibility that it could be true, that it might be the one thing that helps you move forward. And what I'm about to share with you, it's different than what any other educational consultants or mentors or trainers will tell you. My training and expertise is different from any other coach I know, or any other consultant I know, or any other article I've ever read.

Because what I do, is I teach you how to think in order to take the actions that you need versus telling you the how or the actions that you should take. You already know 200 things that you can or need to do as a principal, or that you can do. You know you need to have a mission, and a vision, and build relationships, and get input with stakeholders, and be an instructional leader, and plan effective meetings, and get the PD you need.

And hire a coach, and hire teachers, and manage all of them, and manage everybody on your campus, and meet with parents, and use data to drive decisions, and all of the other things that great leaders do. You already know. You can go to NAESP and read the articles about what you should do and how to do them.

Being a great leader is not only knowing what to do, what actions to take, it's about knowing how to think and how to navigate your thoughts and your emotions so that you can take the actions you know you need to take even

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when you feel scared, even when you feel confused, even when you're feeling uncertain, or doubtful, or fed-up, or whatever emotion is coming up for you.

Nobody's teaching our leaders how to think, and that's what I teach. That's what's different than any other information that's out in education for leaders right now. There's taking action and doing, doing things, that is fueled by the belief that doing things is what makes you feel good.

When you're fueled by this, by this belief system or thought, you will subconsciously fill your schedule with things to do, and the actions that you choose to take, the priorities that you end up making, will be the ones that are easy to accomplish or that will just keep you really busy throughout the day, day after day after day, so that you feel like you're being productive.

But what's really happening is that you're filling the day with tasks that are comfortable, things you know how to do, things that aren't necessarily scary or hard, and things that you have a low chance of failing at, because you want to feel accomplishment. Your goal, your belief is that actions equal emotion, so my actions are going to have to equate to feeling accomplished.

So, I'm going to choose the actions that make me feel accomplished at the end of the day. Do you see that? So, you might have spent your day answering emails, planning your staff meeting, attending a couple of IEP meetings, helping out with lunch duty, following up with a teacher or a parent, and maybe dropping off some paperwork at HR on the way home.

And you're thinking, "Wow. Boom. I did a great job today. I was really accomplished. I got everything done on my list." And maybe they were things you really wanted to get done, so at the end of the day, you're thinking, "Whoo! I was productive today," and it feels really good in the moment.

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But, when you do this over and over, it can trick you into thinking that you're being really productive. And, you know what? There are days when those things are exactly what you needed to do and it's all good. But when we perpetually choose tasks, and when you choose these tasks, it happens at a subconscious level, so we have to bring awareness to it, but when we perpetually choose these tasks that we know will give us that good feeling at the end of the day, we're chasing the emotion we want to feel with our actions.

We get caught up in this, and at the end of the year, we then wonder why we didn't get the results we wanted to, and then we're frustrated, and then we make that mean that we're not good at our jobs or at the job is too hard, or that we better do more action and take more action next year to feel more accomplished. So, basically, what's happened is that we believe action fuels emotion, so we focused on taking actions that feel good instead of taking actions that get us results.

Yet, when we get to the end of the year and we don't achieve the results, because we've been chasing emotion versus focusing on results, it makes us feel bad, and then we go back to taking more action in an effort to feel better, or we believe we have to change our situation, that we're not a good principal, or we need to change schools, or we need to go back into teaching, or we need to leave education altogether, and it becomes a vicious cycle.

The way to get out of this cycle is to learn how to create the emotions you want to feel before you take action. You have to be willing to drop the belief that action equals emotions. I know, right now, your brain is arguing with this. You're rolling your eyes. You're thinking, "Yeah, whatever. That's not true. That doesn't make sense."

But listen, if our actions controlled our emotions, then we would only participate in actions that felt good and we would not be able to feel good in

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spite of nonaction or having to take actions we don't like. So, how is it that we can feel amazing about going on vacation before we've taken the action of going on vacation?

Or, on the flipside, how do we give birth, get through college, or take out a jumbo loan to buy our first house, or another house, which is what I'm in the middle of right now, when all of these actions bring us some amount of pain or fear? You see, we feel excited about vacation, not from the action of planning and going on vacation, we feel excited about vacation because of what we're thinking about the trip.

We feel excited about the thought of not having to work, and sleeping in, and having warm sunshine, and drinking a Mai Tai, and going snorkeling, and getting a tan, and having fun with our kids. All of that, that's what makes us feel excited about vacation.

And you know this, because sometimes when you go on vacation, the reality of it is not even as fun as your anticipation of it, right? And the flip is true. We get through childbirth because we think about how amazing it's going to be to meet our new baby, and hold him or her, and become parents, and feel so much love as a family.

We are willing to experience negative emotion and pain in order to get on the other side to a result. We do this with college too. We go through all the hoops that college and teacher credentialing programs throw at us, because we believe that we want to be teachers and change the lives of children. And we think that before we're actually taking the action of doing it.

We take out jumbo loans for houses even though the numbers scare us to death because we're thinking about how wonderful it will be to have a home that we love where we can invite over family and friends. Our emotions always come from our thinking. Always. To become a truly

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empowered, influential, and excellent principal, you need to harness the power of your thoughts and spend more time focused on what you're thinking than what you are doing.

It is more important to focus on what you're thinking than doing. The thoughts you consistently think are what drive every action you take. I have never experienced otherwise. When you practice the awareness of your thoughts and how they're impacting your leadership and your life, then you will be able to approach the job with the feelings of accomplishment and success regardless of how much you get done from one day to the next.

I know, I know, allowing this to sink in as even a possibility is the hardest part. Just considering that this might actually be true is the hardest part. It's the hardest part for my clients, it's the hardest part for me. It's the hardest part every time we believe something to be super true.

Let me share with you how to start shifting in the direction from doing to thinking. Are you guys still with me? Hang in here. I'm going to tell you exactly how to do this. First of all, practice generating high-vibe emotions in your body. In order to give your brain evidence that this is true, you have to spend time working and thinking thoughts that get you into the full emotion, that physical sensation and emotion of what you want to feel.

So, let's take accomplishment. Start with how it feels in your body. What does the feeling of accomplishment actually feel like for you? For me, I feel a real sense of satisfaction. I feel pride. I feel completion. My body smiles when I feel accomplished. It relaxes me. I feel certainty. I feel stable in my body. Even though my body's relaxed, my energy is increased. My chest fills with air. I feel pride in my chest, and I feel all tingly.

And I want to celebrate. It makes me want to kick into action. I want to share this energy and my feelings of accomplishment with my husband. It feels so good, and I can create that emotion right now in my body, as I'm

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speaking to you, just based on what I'm thinking. So, when you can get your body into that state, then you say, "Okay, what were the thoughts I was having that generated this emotional vibration in my body?"

For me, the thoughts that come up is, "I do what I set out to do for the day. I honor my commitments. I follow through. I value my work. I celebrate my work. My expectations matched my output. I feel aligned. I am aligned." Those are the kind of things, the thoughts that bring up feelings of accomplishment.

When I'm feeling accomplished, I'm feeling very aligned, I'm very in tune, I'm honoring my commitments, I feel disciplined. Those are the thoughts that are creating the feelings within my body. So, once you've been able to identify and create the emotion in your body, sometimes the tricky part is what were the thoughts causing that, just tell the story.

Think back to a time when you felt a lot of accomplishment, and write the story of what that was. You'll see the thoughts come out. Write the thoughts down and then you think them throughout the day on purpose. You can give your body that little hit of feel-good-ness no matter what's going on in the day or what actions you're actually taking.

You can stop yourself and think, "How does it feel to feel accomplished? I want to feel accomplished right now. I want to feel amazing. I want to feel successful." Regardless of whatever's going on at work right now, what thoughts bring that up? "Oh, what does success mean to me? How am I successful?" You can raise your emotion vibe. You can raise it back up.

Now, the goal isn't to be in this high-vibe 100% of the time. I don't believe that that's a realistic expectation in the sense that you could try to be in euphoria all day long and believe that 100% of the time you're going to feel good. But I'm a true believe that life is 50/50 no matter what, and we can

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up-level ourselves and we'll have a new set of challenges that bring up new sets of negative emotions, and then we have to work through those.

So, it's not about just feeling good all the time or chasing 100% happiness, it's really about knowing that you have the control and the power within yourself to generate an emotion at any time, and that you're not victim to your situation, to your school setting, to your staff, to your kids, to your spouse, to your parents, or your school board. You have the power within you to generate any emotion you want to feel.

And here's what's so great about spending time learning how to do this. When you start to believe that you can create the emotions you want to feel, just with your thoughts, you can get into that high-vibe emotional state from there, and then what happens? Here's what happens. You take action from that heightened state, because emotions drive actions.

Actions don't create emotions, emotions drive actions. So, when you're feeling accomplished and amazing and successful, and you've put your brain and your body into an aligned state of amazingness, how are you going to show up at work? What tasks are you going to be willing to take on and schedule in your day?

Are you going to want to hide behind the easy, like, "Checked my email today," or, you know, "Walked around campus looking busy," or, are you going to be willing to take on the bigger, bolder actions that put you in the ring of exceptional school leaders, that get you the results that you really want at the end of the day, that you can override your urge for immediate gratification and the little checks that come with the easy accomplishments and get real accomplishment, bigger accomplishments?

When you take the time to develop the skill of thinking and creating emotions versus doing to try and generate emotions, you actually end up spending your time on tasks that bring you more accomplishment. Here is

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the simplest way I can say this. Doing before thinking is just reacting. It's reacting in the moment to try and generate an emotion that you think the actions are going to create.

It's living in constant instant gratification and it's being victim to the actions that take place during your day and it's giving up your empowerment and responsibility and ownership of your emotions. On the other side, thinking before doing allows you to set the tone for your brain. It connects your brain with your body. It aligns you to your values and your desires and your goals.

Then, from this place, when you're already feeling accomplishment, you decide the priorities of your day and then you do your best to honor them. The more you practice this, the more you will trust and believe in yourself, and believe that you're already an accomplished and successful leader, even on the days when things blow up.

And things could blow up for an entire week, and you might get nothing done for a whole week, but you can still choose to believe that you're accomplished and successful. You can choose to believe that you honor your commitments and that sometimes, those commitments include unexpected actions and tasks, which is the gist of our job, right?

And sometimes your commitments can be unexpected and take priority over other commitments, not just for a day, not just for a week, sometimes for multiple days on end. You get to decide what accomplishment means.

You could make it mean that each day, you need to get a certain amount of accomplishments done in order to feel accomplished, or you can make it mean that you think like an accomplished leader, that you vibrate as an accomplished, successful leader, and therefore you align your actions to being accomplished.

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Do you see the difference? If you can learn and practice this one skill, it's simple but it's hard. Do you see that? And thinking before doing, which is the skill, if you can just practice this one thing, you're going to have so much more control over how you feel in your principalship.

Even when things get hard, or there's a struggle, or there's a conflict, you can find a way to love your life and your job just as it is, and accept it without having to change anything. You can feel accomplishment when things blow up. This thought that I'm going to share with you has been really helpful for me every time I'm in a situation where my brain starts to freak out, or it starts to slip back into believing that actions equal emotions.

This is what I say to myself, "I love the stage of where I'm at right now, because I don't get to be here forever. There's going to be a time when I'm a veteran principal and I won't have all of this learning curve to be enthusiastic about. I like being new at my job because it's exciting to learn and to grow my capacity to lead."

"People are grateful that I took on this job and that I'm new and that I'm asking lots of questions, and that I'm making mistakes. It's all okay, because one day, this will be gone. It's a magical part of the journey." That's what I had to tell myself when I was a new principal and I was feeling miserable.

But it helped me. It helped me embrace the exactness of where I was. I didn't need to change schools or change my principalship and go back to teaching, what I knew that I loved. I could create love for it right there. And on the end of my journey, as a veteran principal, these are the things you can think of.

So, if you're a veteran principal and you're feeling burn-out, or you're feeling mundane, you're just feeling over it, and you want out, but you don't

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want to leave, and you do, and you're stuck, and you're just feeling like you're trapped, you can also think the thought.

"I love exactly where I'm at right now. One day I won't be a principal anymore. I'll either retire or move on to something else, and I'm going to miss all of the fun that I did have here. I'm going to miss the connections with the kids, I'm going to miss amazing teachers that I worked with. There are some families I'm going to miss."

Maybe not all of them, but some of them. But you can generate appreciation and gratitude for exactly where you're at right now even when it's hard, because you won't always be in this position. And I promise you, and I know from experience, personal experience, I practice giving gratitude to that job because now that I don't have that job anymore, I do miss it.

I miss the connection. I miss the buzz and the excitement. I miss the routine of the school year and the calendar, and all of that good thing. I miss that. I love my life now, and now I'm in a whole position where I'm having to say –

"Okay, I love where I'm at now. I'm building this business. People are just learning to understand and they're just beginning to get exposure to this new way of thinking, but eventually I won't be a newer coach anymore. I'm going to be a veteran coach, coaching lots and lots of people, running a company who has coaches coaching other clients and I won't get to be in this fun part where it's just me and my business and I'm learning all the things and it's super fun and super hard."

"One day, I'm going to be hiring people to do all of this for me, so I have to appreciate exactly where I'm at now, because I won't get this opportunity forever." It's like if you have your own children, you've got to embrace toddlerhood, as stressful as it can be, because they're not two forever. And

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I look at my 20-year-old and how much fun would it be to have him be two for one day again? So, embrace the now. Embrace the beauty that is.

Repeat this with me. “Thoughts create emotions. Emotions drive actions. It is not the other way around.” So, practice appreciation for all of it, the good, bad, and the ugly. This is what will really get you into an emotion that you will love, which will drive your actions to come from a place of love. So, get to thinking before you get to doing. Have an empowered week.

Hey, if you love this podcast and you want more, be sure to check us out today at 4:00 PM Pacific time. I’m offering a free Mastermind training during the month of February where I’m teaching this exact concept. I’m breaking it down and offering coaching to individuals on your specific situation, so that you can begin applying this work to your life today and start feeling more accomplished right now, in this moment. I hope to see you there. The link is in the show notes. Take care.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit 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.