

Ep #129: Rungs of Belief



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, Empowered Principals. Welcome to Episode 129.

Welcome to *The Empowered Principal Podcast*. A not-so-typical educational resource that will teach you how to gain control of your career and get emotionally fit to lead your school and your life with joy by refining your most powerful tool, your mind. Here's your host, certified life coach, Angela Kelly Robeck.

Well hello, my leaders. Happy Tuesday. Don't the weeks fly by? I can't believe it's been a week already. I hope that you are well. I hope that you are healthy. And I hope that by the time this podcast episode airs, our lives are becoming more mobile and we are able to meet up with our friends and family and spend more time out in the fresh air.

I have to honestly share with you that I've really had to double down on my efforts to manage my thinking around this shelter-in-place. It feels like it's been going on for eternity. And I know that it hasn't. My body just feels intense urges to be outside without a mask or to, like, just jump in the car and drive to a friend's house.

And when I feel like I'm going to burst out of quarantine and throw COVID to the wind, I have to get still with myself and remind my brain why we are doing this in the first place and the gravity of the actions. Should I give into those urges to go and socialize?

I've also been giving myself a lot more time for things like meditation and yoga and just some downtime, just some brain-free activity so that I can allow myself to feel and give myself some permission to basically be less productive and use some of the time that I would be being productive on simply being, just thinking and feeling and just sitting there with those thoughts and emotions.

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And I'm guessing that many of you are feeling the same way. It feels like, at the beginning of this, I had this huge surge of energy and content creation and this desire to help people as much as I could, as fast as I could. And I had a lot of momentum in my thinking and in my actions.

And as time has gone on, I'm feeling this fatigue and I'm sure you are feeling the fatigue of leading your school from kind of the moment that we realized something big was happening, to kicking into automatic pilot mode and just figuring things out on the fly and rushing and working these hours on end. And now, we're kind of settling into this being life and this is normal life, and how are we going to respond?

We can't just stay on that super-high emotional response to the initial reaction of the pandemic, of the crisis. And so, now we're having to settle into, like, "Okay, I can't keep this pace up forever. How can I still be present and be the best version of myself while being less productive or less routine-oriented or allowing myself to start slowing down and working a little bit less?"

And if some of you are out there feeling this way, I am with you. I am feeling this as well. So, please, remind yourselves to recharge and refuel and that doing so is equally important to working long hours and helping all the people.

It really is a part of your workday. And I know that sounds counterintuitive because our logical pragmatic thinking is so much louder, it's so much stronger. That voice is so much bigger than our intuitive and centered thinking. So, we have to balance that a little bit.

Okay, with that said, I want to move onto possibility. This month, we have been talking about tapping into your brain's ideas and just swimming in all

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that could be possible. And if we have to live in the unknown, why not spend the time and energy thinking about all the fun ways this could be possible and all of the fun things we can do, the amazing ways to feel possibility and change versus all the doom and gloom?

I mean, it doesn't really matter what ends up actually happening. We might as well think of the good stuff and feel good and feel energized by possibility than thinking about all the things that could go wrong and how things have changed and how it's not the same and how we're sad. You can decide either way. And to me, I just think that being an empowered leader is all about leaning into the possibility of what we can do with this crazy time in education.

So, a concept that I want to share with you today is something I just got off the phone with, I just finished coaching a client this afternoon and we talked about this concept. And I told him that I was creating a podcast on this very topic. So, I'm excited to be in the energy of just having coached him and to be sharing this with you now on the podcast.

So, what I shared with him was this; there is the current STEAR Cycle that your brain is running. So, you are having thoughts in your mind, and those are creating your current reality. So, if you're experiencing a lot of anxiety or stress or worry or doubt or confusion or overwhelm, you have a series of sentences that is playing, you know, a story over and over and over in your head.

And that story is creating an energetic and an emotional, vibrational response to that story. The way you're feeling is impacting how you choose to show up, the actions you take, the decisions you make, all of that is creating a current result in your life right now.

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So, you can see how the thoughts you're having creates a result and that result proves the thought true. That's why it's a cycle. So, what we have to do is acknowledge that that cycle is happening. We're not beating ourselves up for it, you guys. We're just acknowledging it. And that's why I insist you put it down onto paper because it gets out of your head and you can look at it as an observer.

It's like you're a teacher, looking at somebody's paper. You didn't write the paper. You didn't come up with the ideas on it. You're just reading it. That's what you're doing when you're putting it into the STEAR Cycle.

And then, on the flipside, there is this highly desired belief that you want to believe. So, you have what you're currently thinking, which usually it's creating negative feelings or feelings you're deeming to be uncomfortable or negative. And you have this idea of a belief you really want to believe because you think it will make you feel amazing.

So, in the example I'm going to use, I want to help you see how you go from believing you're highly ineffective to believing that you're highly effective as a leader. And many new principals struggle with this. So, when you first get into the position, you're trying to pump yourself up and you're trying to think thoughts like, "I'm an empowered leader. I can do this. I'm capable. I'm going to be amazing. This is going to be a really effective first year."

And on the inside, your brain is like, "Womp-womp." Don't really believe that. You're thinking the positive thoughts. You're trying to, like, will your brain into believing them. But the truth is that you don't, and that's okay. I feel like we try to positive-talk ourselves into, like, forcing our brain into believing a thought, but we don't truly believe it in our core, in the way that we feel, in our bodies.

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So, when you say to yourself, “I’m a highly effective leader,” but you don’t believe it, you can feel it in your body when you don’t believe it. It’s like you’re telling your body a lie. Your body is like, “Yeah right, sure we’re an effective leader, whatever you say...”

So, how do you get from one thought to the polar opposite thought? Sometimes, you can flip your brain pretty quickly. You can create evidence for both sides. You can see how a thought is true and how it’s not true. And you can see how the desired thought is sometimes true and sometimes not true.

You can kind of like reach there. But many times, it’s like you’re on a monkey bar set, out on the playground, the little monkey bars where you have that horizontal ladder that you have to go across. And I think of my new leaders as being on one end of the monkey bars and they want to be on the other end.

But they can’t reach the other end in one fell swoop. They can’t reach with their hands all the way over to that end. So, they have to use the rung. They have to hold one rung at a time and they have to hold onto one rung and then they have to kind of swing onto the other and they have to hold both rungs for a while until they can freely let go of that second rung. And then they put their hand on the next one. And then they let go and then they swoop until they eventually get their way all the way over to the end of the monkey bars.

I believe that the way to go from not believing something into believing something is to create a series of beliefs that you can hold onto until you get to the belief, until that feels true within every ounce of your body.

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So, let me use this example. If a thought you want to think is, “I can effectively manage whatever comes my way as a school leader,” like you want to feel like you’re a boss, that you’re killing it, that you know just what to do and how to do it and when to push and when to support and you just have the nuances and the suave of an amazing effective school leader, you want to feel that way.

But it’s your first year and you’re thinking to yourself, “I want to be effective. I want to think that I’m effective and believe that I’m effective so that I can show up in an effective energy,” but you really don’t believe that you are. You’re like, “I don’t know what I’m doing. I’m totally new at this. I’m a first-year leader, I’m super-anxious and nervous. I’m worried what everybody’s thinking about me. I don’t have any of the answers. I don’t have the skillset. I’ve never done this before.”

That’s what your brain is really believing. So, let’s just get honest with ourselves and be like, “Okay, here’s what I want to think, but here’s where I’m currently at.” And veteran teachers out there, by the way – I’m sorry, veteran principals out there, and teachers if you’re listening – you might be thinking, “I can’t wait to retire.”

Right now, your current belief might be you’re super-burned out and you want to not be burned out, but it feels like way too big of a stretch. Or you go from hating the job to loving the job. It just feels too much of a stretch. You can create these rungs of beliefs to get you from A to B, or A to Z, right?

So, I just want to put it out there. This is for everybody, but I’m using new principals as the example. So, new principal, you want to believe you’re highly effective, but you currently think, “I’m actually ineffective.” And you

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whisper that to yourself because you don't want others to know that you think you're ineffective.

So, the first step is to make the belief neutral. You have to neutralize it because it's really emotionally charged when you believe that you're ineffective because your brain has tons of evidence to prove that it's true that you're ineffective. And that's fine. And maybe there are times where you are.

Okay, let's acknowledge that. Sometimes you're ineffective. But let's just bring it to neutral. Let's start with the belief that, "I am a principal." And the beautiful thing about this belief is that it's equally true.

You might strongly believe that you are ineffective or that you're highly burned out. But it's also true that you're just a principal. Like, right now, in this moment, you are a school leader. Yes or no? It's a yes. But it doesn't feel super-emotionally charged. It's neutralized. It just is. It's just the truth of what your life is right now. So, you bring it down to the most neutralized thought that you can come up with as a school leader. So, "I am a principal."

Now, from that state, you're going to think about thoughts that you can hold onto right now, that still ring true but they feel better than the thought, "I'm ineffective as a principal."

So, some examples of rungs of belief might be, "I'm willing to be ineffective so that I can learn how to become effective." You're not denying. You're still holding onto the rung belief that, "I'm ineffective." But you're holding onto a new one with the other hand, saying, "But I'm willing to be ineffective because I know it's growing me as a leader." Both thoughts you're holding onto.

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Both are true, but that one step further thought feels a lot better, “I’m willing to be ineffective to grow my skills as a leader.” See how empowered that feels? You’re not denying the other thought, but you’re also holding onto the new one. And the more you believe, “I’m willing to be ineffective, I’m willing to get in the ring and make some mistakes and get punched around a little bit and have people be mad and have to regroup and have to figure something out, I’m willing to do all that craziness in order to get effective. Okay, I can believe that.”

And then, you go to work every day practicing that belief until you’re like, “Yeah, I am willing to do this. Look at me go. I’m in it to win it. So, you start to believe that. And then, all of a sudden, you’re letting go. You’re not thinking the thought, “I’m ineffective as a principal,” anymore.

You are literally holding on with both hands to the thought, “Hey, I’m willing to be ineffective.” And then, the next thought you start to notice is, “Wait a minute, I’m growing as a leader.” So, the next rung is, “I’m growing as a leader.”

What else is happening? Every thought is creating a different emotion. So, when you are back to ineffective, you felt terrible, right? You felt lousy. But the neutral thought, “I’m a principal,” is kind of like, “Yeah, that’s true. I’m neutral.” That is true, but it doesn’t generate a lot of emotion.

And then you go, “But I’m willing to be ineffective.” It’s like, “Okay, that kind of sucks. That kind of stinks. I don’t want to be ineffective. But I’m willing to, to become more effective.” And the more you step into that belief, the more you feel kind of energized by the thought, kind of like, “Yeah bring it on,” right?

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And then, you step into the belief, “I’m growing as a leader.” Now you’re feeling what? You’re feeling a little more energized. You’re feeling a little more empowered, “I’m growing as a leader. Like, right now in this moment, I’m watching myself grow as a leader.” It feels really exciting, right? It’s like, “Hey, that’s pretty cool.”

And then, you branch to the next one. The next thought might be something like, “I can see my capacity to be an effective leader.” Now you’re getting a glimpse of the endzone, or the last rung on the monkey bars. You can see it. It’s in the distance. But you have this faint sense that it’s in your trajectory of happening.

It’s becoming probable. Like, it went from impossible thinking to possible thinking, like, we talked about in the previous episodes. So, you’re like, first of all, it wasn’t even in sight. And now, it’s in your line of vision, even though it’s way down the road.

“I can see my capacity.” Which kind of gets you in alignment to be ineffective. You’re holding the two rungs. And then all of a sudden, boom, “I can totally see my capacity to be an effective leader.” You step into that full belief, and now you are hanging on just to that thought.

You create a new thought, “I have days where I am effective or that I feel effective,” whatever works better for you. And then, you’re holding onto that thought. You’re starting to create evidence to prove that it’s true that you have days where you are an effective leader.

You might be wobbling. It’s kind of like riding a bike. You’re on the bike and it’s wobbling a little bit, but you’ve got it. You’ve got some days where you’re like, “Yeah, I handled that well. I’ve learned my lesson. I’ve done

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some things. I've been around the block." And you go on and on until you can hold onto the rung where you're starting to believe that you're effective.

Other thoughts, "I know what I'm doing most of the time. I'm competent in my leadership skills." So, courage, and then competency, and then confidence. Confidence comes last. Confidence, when it's 100% done and done that you know you're an effective leader. It's mastery. Confidence is mastery.

Courage is the beginning. It's what you need to be able to jump into the pool to even get started with being a principal. So, courage, and then you grow your capacity, and then you grow in competency, and ultimately you create confidence through mastery.

So, you go down the rungs until you are like, "Okay, I'm pretty confident in my leadership skills. I'm pretty effective here. I'm starting to see some results. I'm believing harder. I'm believing more. I'm really stepping into who I am as a school leader. And not only am I effective. I can handle whatever comes my way. I have the confidence of a badass *Empowered Principal*."

I want you to see how that works. And you can feel the energy gaining momentum. I want you to notice how each thought feels. Notice the emotions that come with each thought and that each one feels a little stronger and more fulfilling and more true and closer to the desired thought.

So, the goal is to find thoughts that ring true for you and that feel good to think about. That's the key. They have to feel good and they have to ring true. You can't jump to the end rung and be like, "I'm amazing," if you don't really believe that because you'll never feel it in your body and your brain will just confirm through evidence, it will seek out evidence to prove you

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wrong because the truth is, “I really don’t believe that.” Do you see how that works?

So, this week, I want you to play with these ideas. I want you to come up with thoughts that ring true for you and feel better than the thoughts that make you feel terrible or sad or anxious or worried. Okay, got it? Work on that. Let me know how it goes.

Have an amazing, empowered week. I will talk with you guys next week. Take care. Bye.

Hey, principals, listen up. I’ve created a professional learning program for you and your team to build your capacity and lead your staff through the empowerment process. I’ve designed personalized growth experience for you and your school. You’ll learn how to apply the leadership triad to empower your staff and students.

This is the moment where the perfect time and opportunity meet. Education will never be the same and I have the tools to help you navigate the change. To learn more, sign up for a free consultation at angelakellycoaching.com/programs. I’ll 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 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.