

Ep #141: Agreeing with Your Reason



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello, empowered principals. Welcome to episode 141.

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.

Hello my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday and welcome to the show. I am so happy to be here with you today and I have to tell you that a good friend of mine called today and we basically call each other once a day to check in and see how we're doing mentally, emotionally, and physically of course, but mostly mentally and emotionally through this shelter-in-place.

So she called me and she said that she made dinner reservations at a place up in Lake Tahoe, a place that's outdoors and it's socially distanced, and she was super excited to go because they had to do reservations weeks in advance and there weren't many tables available because of the spacing that they are required to do.

And she said she was going for a birthday celebration, and I said, "Oh my gosh, that's so great. I'm so excited for you. Whose birthday?" And her response to me was our birthday. Ours. I was like, what?

So she and her husband share a birthday. How sweet is that? They're both August 5th birthdays. I just think that's so cool. So here they've made reservations for themselves to go have dinner at this beautiful lakeside restaurant in Lake Tahoe and I have been so out of touch with what day it is and what month it is and what season it is and just all of that, and here I'm talking to this friend every day and it just didn't even dawn on me that it's August and that we have massive birthdays in my family and in my group of friends in August.

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My dad's, my sister's, my auntie's, my mom's birthday will be coming up. And so I just wanted to share that with you to say like, if you feel out of touch with just the concept of time and the days going by, the weeks going by, the months going by, it all just is blending together and I just want you to know that I think that's happening to everybody.

And even as a life coach, I find myself like what is happening? I need coaching, I need help, I feel like I'm spinning as well. So feels like some days go by really quickly and other days feel like they drag, and they go really slow and then it feels like some days don't even exist really at all.

So I think it's a mind bender when we see how time really is a construct that humans created in our brains and now that our time references, the things that we kind of measure time by aren't in place for the most part, our brain is really struggling to wrap itself around what time means for us. I just find it so fascinating and I was really taken aback but she said, "Yeah, my birthday's coming up." And I was like, what, August? No it can't be true. And here we are.

And I'm recording this in August. So her birthday is actually in two days, so I'm recording this on Monday, August 3rd. Her birthday's on Wednesday. You guys are probably listening to this at the first of September. Anyway, I just wanted to share that story with you because it really made me aware of how unaware I've been around like, just time passing.

So speaking of time, you principals out there, I want to say there is no time like the present. It is not too late to sign up for coaching with me this year. Many of my former clients around this time into the school year, so they probably started their contract in July, they were excited in July, people started coming back in August, and then September hit and the reality of students coming back and families with needs and staff with needs, and

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this year it's tenfold with all of the different needs going on with remote learning or hybrid learning or in-person learning.

So many of my clients actually came in abundance in the month of September because this is when the rubber hits the road. This is when your brain's like, going from what you expect it to be like when you're not in the reality of it versus oh my gosh, this is the reality of the life I'm living. Especially if you're brand new this year, your brain thought it was going to know what to do, it thought it was going to have some answers.

And even if you thought to yourself, "Well, I don't know what to expect but I'll just go with the flow, I'll be okay," September, October, November are the hardest months of the year and this is where you will really get into stress, overwhelm, worry, fatigue, burnout, questioning, self-doubt, self-pity, all of it, resentment. You're going to feel a lot of bad feelings.

And just know that's normal, but also know that having a coach to help you every single week of the rest of the year is going to get you through with so much more peace and alignment. We're going to talk about alignment today. But I want to offer that to you. It's never too late to call out if I have spots available and we're a match to work together, you are in.

Don't think that it's too late or that I can't take you on. If I can't take you on or you're not a good match, I will let you know. But for the most part, I attract clients that are ideal clients for me. They love to work with me. They can't wait to say yes. They're a yes before we even get on the consult. They just want to know how do we do this, what's in it, how do I get started.

So if you're one of those people and you've just been holding back because you're worried, don't worry. I've got you. I've got your back so come on down, let's do this.

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Alright, last week I outlined the anatomy of a decision. I think this is such a cool concept. I'm so glad that I dug in and created this idea of the pieces and components of what a decision really is because so much of your time as a school leader is spent on making decisions.

I remember my friend Cathy and I, we were both principals at the time and she'd call me up and say do you want to go for lunch? And I'd say yeah, sure. She goes, the only thing I'm requiring is that you decide where we go because I can't stand the thought of making another decision. And I was like, sure I'll decide, no problem.

But we used to joke about "I cannot even think about making one more decision." So I know that part of your fatigue, your mental and emotional fatigue in the job is when you make decisions. It's the amount of decisions you make and it's the worry and the weight of those decisions on your heart, your mind, your soul, all of those things.

So we talked about the time before a decision is made, that's the before. And then you've got the during, which is the moment of decision, which is actually very fast, and then you have what happens after you make a decision.

One important aspect of decision making is understanding why we make the decisions that we do and how we make those decisions. There's always a reason behind your decision. Now, you might not really understand what that reason is, maybe you're not able to articulate the decision, sometimes it feels like you don't know why you chose what you chose.

Have you ever noticed all of a sudden, you're doing something, you're engaged in some activity and you're like, why am I doing this? A lot of times I'll notice that I'm distracted with something before I even realize that

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I got distracted. Have you ever done that? Like wait a minute, why am I painting my nails? I just said I was going to record the podcast. What am I doing? What's going on here?

So noticing and being aware of why did I make that decision, what was going on in my brain, sometimes you can tap into that why, other times it's hard for you to bring it to the surface. That's okay. We're going to talk about that a little bit more today and we're going to dive into the reason behind our decisions.

And we want to get into giving those reasons meaning and deciding whether we are in agreement with those reasons. That is very important. So when I talk about agreeing with your reason, what I'm talking about is being aligned to your decision and agreeing with why you made the decision.

And when you do this, it will be much easier to stay in tune with that decision, to fully own that decision, and to stick with it when people question it. Does that make sense? So it's like when you're tethered and a storm comes, you might wave back and forth, you might wave around a little bit and get a little bit beat up by the wind, but you're tethered down, you're grounded because you are attached to that reason and you agree with the reason for your decision.

Liking your reason for your decisions is what's going to help you stay aligned to them even when other people disagree with you. Not to say you don't re-decide if new information comes in and you can see a different decision being better than another decision that you've made. I'm not saying you hunker down in the sand and you don't look up and you don't look for more information or you don't re-decide new things.

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But I am saying that when you make a decision, you stay with that decision as long as you like your reason for it. So let's quickly review how we make decisions. A decision is made in a second. The actual moment we decide takes zero time. What takes our time is all of the thoughts about what that decision means.

And we think about what that decision means in terms of us. What do we think about ourselves? What does this decision mean for us? What will people think about us when they hear this decision? What will they think basically? We spin on that.

We also spend time thinking about how the decision will impact us. So basically, we think about what does it mean about me, what will others think it means about me, and then how will that decision impact ourselves and others. So it's kind of like what will people think and what will be the response, what will be the actual real impact that it has.

So in the before stage, we spend a lot of time gathering information, asking others for input, and then we weigh all the pros and cons and we speculate about the potential outcomes and the potential impact that the decision is going to have. And we spend a lot of time in the before process.

And this year in particular, most site leaders, you're not solely responsible for the decision about how school is going to roll out this year, but you are going to be responsible for many of the procedures of that decision. So you're going to have to respond and make your own set of decisions based on the decision about your school year.

So you're going to be tasked with reopening and having to decide how to execute social distancing and ensuring proper PPE if you're in person, or if you're starting with remote learning, you're going to have to decide the

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process and help teachers with online learning and communicating and getting expectations out to families and students and staff members.

You're going to have so many decisions to make, but just notice that the decision to use Google Meet or Zoom happens in a second. But the before process is going to be perhaps a week or two researching and getting information you need and talking to your teachers to see what the best decision is before you make the decision.

Now, once you decided, which happens like boom, we're going with Google Meet, once you've made that decision, then you communicate that out and you go into this state of analyzing that impact and outcome. So it's not to say the decision is final and it's carved in stone. It's just to say that you're going to stick with it and you're going to honor it because you agree with the decision, you're aligned to it, you've done the research.

To this point and date, this seems like the best decision. You're going to move forward with it and you're going to immediately start analyzing and reflecting and noticing what impacting is this having, do I need to tweak or change. So you go into that after mode about what does this mean about me, what does it mean about other people, what are they thinking, what are they feeling, what are they doing, and what can I do to help.

So that after aspect of a decision can also take up a significant amount of your time, depending on how often you are going back and reflecting on that decision and tuning into the impact of it. So before and after the decision is where clients spend most of their time getting coached. Getting your brain to that point of making a decision and then at the back side, fully owning where you are, what the decision is, and that's typically where we often get most stuck is before or after.

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And this is where agreeing with your reason comes into play. Agreeing with your reason is everything. Let me tell you why. When you make a decision, you make that decision because of a thought you're having, and it's a thought that you believe is true.

So for example, if you personally think it's not safe to go back to in-person school, but your district is choosing to have in-person instruction, there's a misalignment there in terms of agreement. That belief, your personal belief that it's not safe to go back is going to have an impact on the decisions you make as you lead your team through the year.

You have to notice that and notice that you're in misalignment between the district and you. I'm not saying that you should or shouldn't be feeling that way. There's no wrong or right way to feel about this. Just notice the misalignment. But the misalignment in this case that I'm talking about is coming from their decision and then your opinion or thought about it.

So you have a thought about that, your situation, that they're basically telling you here's what we're doing, and now your thoughts about that situation are what will impact your decision. Just notice that.

So if you, let's say in this case, I'm just making this up, your district decides we're going in person or we're going hybrid, and your belief is it would be safer to be at home. When you lead your school, that's going to be playing in the background. So you might spend a lot of time deciding on safety protocols and ensuring that everybody has the equipment that they need to be safe and that you're going to think about all the ways you can enforce social distancing, six feet apart, washing of the hands, temperature taking, all of the things.

You might spend a great deal of time on that because in the back of your mind, your belief is that it's not safe to be close together. And the flip could

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be true. We could also be talking about you believe they should be back in session and your district says no, we're going to be remote learning. You're going to spend a lot of time thinking about how to be super connected with kids.

If you believe that the reason for bringing them back together is so that their social and emotional wellbeing is intact, you're going to spend a great deal of time with your staff ensuring social and emotional wellbeing is of priority. Do you see that?

Whatever decisions you are faced with this school year, the goal is to make them from a place of alignment. This means agreeing with the reason behind your decision. It does not mean always feeling good or happy or content with your decision. It doesn't mean that there is a decision that feels amazing and a decision that feels wrong.

So often we get caught up in how we think we're going to feel when we make the decision. It means feeling aligned to your decision because you agree with why you made the decision. We often make decisions based on the way we think it will make us or others feel.

And sometimes that decision feels aligned and other times it doesn't. For example, when I was a principal, I was so busy with projects from my own school that every time my son's school would reach out and ask me to do something, I would cringe. I would just cringe if ever I was asked to step into a leadership role for a project at his school.

And while I love my son dearly and I also really wanted him and his school mates to have this best experience possible at school, and the last thing I really wanted to do was disappoint, but at the same time, the really last thing I wanted to do with any free time that I had left over was work on yet another school project.

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So I would feel conflicted because I wanted to show support for my son and his school, especially being an educator. You're like, come on, you're an educator, you should go and do the thing. But at the same time, every time I got asked, especially to be the lead on something, if I had to do a little thing here or there, no problem.

But the big jobs, the ones that take tons of time, the one the PTA moms are doing and they're at your school full time, that kind of thing, I was like, I don't know how I'm going to swing this. So I would feel in conflict there because I wanted to be that mom who supported, I wanted to be seen as an educator who walked the walk and talked the talk.

Yet, my true reaction was oh my gosh, absolutely not. I don't have time, I'm exhausted, I'm tired, the last thing I want to do is work on another elementary school project. I do this all day long; I don't want to come home to this. Those were my real thoughts.

I was feeling resentment, I was feeling pressure. I felt like I was put into this position and now what am I going to do. So if I clean up all of that, what I had to do was self-coach. I had to determine what decision I wanted to make, why I wanted to make that decision, and then agree with my reason why.

In this case, if I clean it all up, I was simply presented with a decision. It was either take the lead on a project or decline it. Here's what typically happens in our brains when we're not aware of what we're doing and how we're making decisions, and if we're choosing a decision that really does align with our reasons.

So let's say we're asked to take the lead and we feel that pang of disappointment that we have to make a decision. For me, my brain was

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thinking I don't want to have to make this decision. And the reason I didn't want to have to make that decision is because of how I was feeling.

So instead of asking ourselves why don't we want to make this decision, we kind of move into the part where we're thinking about how we're feeling. We feel the pressure to say yes because we want to be seen as the mom who's engaged and supportive and she's superwoman, but we also feel pressure to say no because we know we're going to feel resentful the entire time if we say yes.

And it makes us feel like we're in this Catch-22 because we won't feel good either way. And that stalls us in indecision. We procrastinate making the decision. And the reason we do that is because we think that one of the decisions should feel good.

So we're kind of hoping that if we decide later that maybe it'll feel better making the decision later than now. That's never true. That is exactly where we get off track. It actually feels worse to hover in that indecision.

We think that if we decide to do it and say yes, what my brain said was it's the right thing to do for your kid, this is the kind of mom you want to be, if we decide that our alignment is we should feel good and when we end up feeling resentful, then we get mad at ourselves for saying yes. And then on top of that we show up in a negative energy.

So we end up creating multiple layers of negativity to the entire experience. So we're mad that we said yes when we wanted to say no, we're feeling guilty because we feel like we should do it, so we say yes and we give into the guilt, and then when we're doing it, we're feeling kind of resentful and angry and grouchy.

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And then we show up and then the experience itself becomes a negative one. Our memory of it, the memory we're creating in the moment, we feel bad in the moment and then we remember it and we're like, never doing that again.

So the entire experience becomes miserable and negative. And the next time we get asked, guess what, we're going to feel the pressure to say yes even when we want to say no, and even though we're had the experience of saying yes and having it be miserable, we still buy into the pressure of saying yes because we haven't reconciled within ourselves why we're making the decision we're making and do we agree with our decision.

So this is an example of not being aligned with your reason. Instead of believing that you should feel good about a decision, you have to agree with your reason for making the decision that you did. So in this case, you have to explore what you think about each decision option and whether or not you like your reason for it.

So deciding to say yes, if you're in this situation, you're looking at it and you're asking yourself what feels aligned, what feels true for me, what would I agree with, what would saying yes feel like, and if you're an aligned yes and you agree with your reason, the thoughts you might be having are something like this.

Even though I feel burned out with school projects, I value supporting my child's school over my project burnout, it's important to me in the long run to do this work, I'm going to appreciate having done it, I feel good knowing that I'm contributing in this manner, I'm going to agree with saying yes to the project because I value it. I value being an active parent in my child's school, even when I'm going to feel like I'm pressured for time or I'm tired or I'm a little less available in the evenings or whatever it is.

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You're agreeing to say yes but you're aligned to the why. It feels good to choose the yes even though you're going to experience some exhaustion or tired or whatever. Deciding to say no is equally as true when you're aligned. So when you decide to say no from a place of agreeing with your reason, it sounds like this.

Why don't I want to say yes? Why do I want to say no? When I think about saying yes, I feel extreme resistance. I'm exhausted and I value setting boundaries around my time. I support my child's school in other ways and whether or not I do this project means nothing about how much I love and support my son or his friends or his classmates or his school. I appreciate all of that.

And saying no for me means that somebody else who wants to do the job will have the opportunity. I have faith that saying no allows me to be more present at home and that if I don't do this job, if I say no, I have faith that someone else will step up to the occasion who was meant to do the job, and even in the case that nobody steps up and it doesn't get done, I'm going to believe that it wasn't meant to be, that it wasn't a priority.

Because guess what guys, when there's something that is a priority at school, principals, teachers, parents, they find a way to get it done. If for some reason it should fall through, it's not your fault that you said no. It wasn't meant to be. We take that on ourselves. We believe that we're the only ones who are going to be the ones who are going to get the project to the finish line.

But if you open up to the possibility that other people are just as capable as you, and that saying no when it feels aligned and you agree with that and you create evidence to prove why no is a good thing for your child, then you can stand in that no. It's not to say you're not going to feel discomfort, and that's what I want to point out.

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So if you do say yes from a place of agreeing with your decision, it might still feel like tired, burned out, and resistance at times. But when you think back to the why you said yes and you feel aligned to offering yourself in that way to your child's school, you align to that value, you agree with your reason, and it feels good in the big picture.

If you say no from a place of alignment and agreement, you still might experience some guilt or disappointment or awkwardness or embarrassment or like you're insufficient as a parent when you have to tell somebody no, but also in saying no, you're going to feel aligned to that reason and agreeing with it, it feels good to say no because you're in agreement with it. Not because you won't experience awkwardness in having to say no.

You see the difference? You're going to feel discomfort in either decision in some way shape or form, but when you make the decision that feels aligned and you like your reason why, you want to know what I decided? I decided no many of the times because I knew that as a single mom, doing one more thing and putting one more thing on my plate just so I could look good or feel good from an external place did not feel as good as coming home and putting things away for the day and being present with Alex.

So I liked my reason. I was willing to feel awkward to say no and have people judge me for being a school principal who didn't spend all day at her son's school or all night at her son's school. I was willing to feel that. I was willing to risk that because I was more aligned to being in person with him at home.

So that was my decision. Sometimes I did projects, and as he got into high school and as Mitch came into the picture and I had a little more ability to take on some roles, yeah, I did some things. But I always tried to align with

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what was my reason, why was I doing it. Was I doing it for other people's approval or was I doing it because it felt right to me?

So the key is to know that one, you have the power to decide whatever you want. Number two, you will feel grounded when you decide from a place of agreement with your reason. Number three, you need to know that it doesn't always feel good, but it does feel aligned, which then feels good. But you will experience emotions that you may be trying to avoid by taking the out where other people's approval matters more.

Number four, owning the decision is easier when you spend time creating evidence that your reason works for you. The more evidence you can create that you agree with your reason and these are all the reasons why I agree with my reason, the more you can do that, the more aligned you feel, the more connected and attached you feel to the decision and it just feels better. It's easier to stay in alignment with that choice.

Some of my new clients are new to school leadership and they're having a really hard time with school this year. They're questioning whether they should have signed up for the principal role this year and if they're capable of handling it in their first year.

So here's what I ask you to consider if you are a brand-new school leader. Number one, the decision to stay in the position is entirely yours. You don't have to stay. If you are feeling chronic stress and none of this feels aligned to you, you can resign. You actually can. But be sure you like your reason. Make sure it's aligned.

If you decide to go, that this isn't for you, it's not meant to be, you're going to have to really understand why you're making that decision, you're going to have to hold tight and stay aligned to that because you'll probably get some judgment or you'll get some feedback or you're going to get some

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input from other people and you're going to have to be really grounded in that decision.

But that isn't a right or wrong decision. It has to be aligned with your reason. So let's say you decide to stay. Maybe your brain is like, no, I need a job, I need the money, I need a paycheck, I committed, I'm loyal to the job, I'm willing to do this even when I don't know, if that's where you're at and you align to that decision, then fully own it.

What you don't want to do is tell yourself that you don't have responsibility of that decision because you do. You can leave if you are unhappy, but like your reason for leaving. If you decide to stay, then you have to fully own that decision, which means not going back and forth all the time, whether or not you should stay or go or be in the position or not.

It means I'm here, I'm all in this year right now, my focus is here, and I'm going to be open and willing to process any emotion that comes my way this year, including incompetency, ignorance, overwhelm, exhaustion, fatigue, decision fatigue, all of the things you go through, all of the rough feelings, go all in on them.

You decided to be in the position, go in 100% and as the self-doubt and the worry creeps in, create the list of why you decided to be in alignment with staying in the role, staying in your position. Why do you agree with that decision? Write down all the reasons why you agree. Look at the list when you need a little self-check.

And one last bit of advice or one little tidbit for you guys. New leaders out there, I want you to know that nobody knows what to do. Nobody knows what's going on this year. You are certainly not alone. Even the most veteran of principals does not have all the answers. They don't know exactly what they're doing.

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Your superintendents don't, gosh, the governors don't. Everybody is in confusion. So just give yourself some grace. You actually have some more wiggle room because your brain was going to tell you that you didn't know what you were doing either way.

So because of COVID or not, you still were going to go into self-doubt and worry and stress and overwhelm and I don't know what I'm doing mode. You would have done that anyway. Lots of confusion. So you're either confused this year or last year or next year. Doesn't matter.

Building your ability to trust in your decisions by agreeing with your reason is going to build your courage and your confidence in yourself as a leader. And if you can learn that this year, think of what's coming your way. There is no stopping you from the years forward. Go and get it. Have an empowered week and agree with your reasons. I'll talk to you next week. Take care. Bye-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

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learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.