

Ep #154: Your Professional Relationship with Yourself



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Angela: Hello, empowered principals. Welcome to episode 154.

Female Announcer: 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.

Angela: Well, hello, my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday and welcome to the last month of 2020. Now, I know this isn't the first podcast in December, but as you know, last week I snuck in an interview with my good friend, Roseanne and we had an amazing discussion about how educators can help support students mentally and emotionally. So, I hope last week's podcast was amazing and helpful for you. Roseanne is outstanding and I do encourage you to look her up and refer her book to the therapists and the counselors and anybody working with kids who might need that specific resource for remote therapy and remote emotional and mental well-being.

Now, with that said, we're going to get started on the last theme of 2020, the last month of 2020, the last podcast theme of 2020, Hallelujah. I'm so happy it's the end of 2020. This year truly has been an exceptional year of growth for all of us. Now, I know your brain might be saying, "Hey, 2020 has been a terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad year." And I'm not saying that it hasn't been, but know this, your experience of this year is what you decide it has been.

The way you think about 2020 is the way you will experience it, the way you will remember it. You have the right to label it however you want. You can label it as a horrible experience, but I'm going to choose to label this year as a year of profound growth. Profound growth within myself, as a coach, and as a businesswoman. I've had growth in my relationships with my son, Alex, and my husband, Mitch. I've had growth in my friendships as

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we've connected more than ever, more often than ever over Zoom and over phone calls, but we've had these weekly Zoom calls that just makes me feel so much closer to them.

I've created new friendships and made intentional decisions to reach out and build new friendships and relationships with coaches and just to expand my collegial conversations, so I've been doing that. I've also grown in my ability to manage the emotions that before this year I didn't really give any space for. I didn't really actually even feel them because they weren't emotions that I had to feel. I didn't opt-in.

What I mean by that are feelings like boredom, loneliness, deprivation from doing things that I want to do that I can't do. So, I never really felt bored because I was always on the go, I was always engaged with friends. I was always in communion with somebody. I didn't have a lot of alone time and throughout 2020 working from home alone and granted in the beginning the boys were here with me and I was never alone and then I was alone a lot. I wasn't able to look forward to evenings out with friends or catching up and going to a movie or going to a show.

Just not having my time consumed by other things felt very boring to me and I had to learn how to feel bored and to be bored and to let that emotion just sit with me and to learn how not to be bored with myself and how to create fun in my life when I couldn't do things that I used to think were fun that were no longer available to me.

The same is true with loneliness. I felt a lot of loneliness in the beginning and I felt like just a part of me had died because I'm such a social person and I like to be around people. So, I had to learn to first, stage one was kind of feeling loneliness and letting it just sit there and be present with me, and then two, learning how not to feel lonely, how to be engaging with just myself. How to learn to love my time alone.

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What's interesting is that I really do love time with family and friends, but I also really love my time alone. I don't feel bored when I'm alone. I don't feel lonely when I'm alone. It's amazing how much I've been able to grow that part of me. Then finally, this deprivation like I felt a loss, almost a grieving of not being able to travel.

As you know, in the last couple of years I've gone to many educational conferences. I've spoke, I've done presentations, I've spoken on stages, I've been in keynote addresses, I've done all kinds of things to connect with people and to listen to people and to understand where it is school leaders are and where they're going and where they're coming from and I haven't been able to do that in-person.

I felt this grief and this deprivation of not being able to travel as much as I would want to, but what that allowed was it allowed for me to have so much more time to get deeper into my understanding of coaching and how it is the solution for school leaders. How it does evolve them as leaders, how it evolves them personally and professionally, and I've been able to create deeper, more rich content for you all and really coach my clients and transform in a way that's so much faster than what I used to think was possible.

So much is coming out of this and I've had to do deeper exercises on my commitments to my mental and emotional well-being, recommitting to working out even though I'm having to do it at home and not being able to go to the gym. I've had to be very mindful of not overeating or pouring a glass of wine out of boredom or loneliness and being very conscious about what I'm putting into my body and how I'm moving my body even though it's not what I used to be able to do.

There's been a lot of work that's gone into 2020 and I can imagine that you have done the same as well. Trying to figure out who you want to be and

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how you want to spend your time, what you want to think, what you want to feel and having to feel emotions you never had to deal with before COVID I'm sure this coming up for you as well. I know it's coming up for my clients.

My clients are so amazing. They're sharing these stories of their growth this year and their ability to manage their thinking around all of this constant change and the stress that others around them are having. Having to manage their thoughts about other people's stress, their teacher stress, student stress, family stress, the district stress, all that pressure they're getting from the district and managing that stress and being able to create this kind of boundary of calmness and certainty within themselves even when everything around them is chaotic.

They're seeing how they can have amazing resilience in their work and lead their school through a pandemic. My heart just bursts with so much love for these people and pride for all of them who have gone from not knowing how they were going to get through this year, at the beginning of the year they were questioning and doubting and they were even considering leaving some of them, into being able to manage the job with some ease and some calmness and peacefulness.

It comes from this place of alignment and integrity. It's the most magical thing to witness and what I've come to understand through coaching them is that it comes from this place, this depth of knowledge about ourselves, having a relationship with ourselves, both professionally and personally.

So, we need to understand who we are as both principals, which is what I'm going to talk about today, and then next week who we are personally, who we are as humans, as moms or dads, as sisters or brothers, as friends and family members, as spouses or partners. All the other parts of our lives that are impacted by our career and that our career is impacted by. This deeper knowing of ourselves has been how clients are achieving their

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desired goals even in the midst of COVID. They're blowing their own minds. They're blowing my mind because they're doing things that they didn't think was possible.

They're creating results in their career and in their school in the world because they are going inward and they're believing and they're having to anchor themselves from a place of deep knowing of who they are and grounding themselves in this alignment of who they are, who they want to become, how they bridge that gap even when things around them feel very chaotic and unpredictable.

It's happening because what they've done is they've learned how to be vulnerable with themselves. This month we are going to explore what it means to know yourself as a leader, to know yourself so deeply that you create certainty and confidence all from within. We're going to address why you feel the need for external validation and how, for once and for all, you can finally reduce this craving of that external validation need and turn it around to build your own self-validation.

Some of the things my clients have in common that they've been working on this year is this – number one, this irresistible need for others to approve of them and to validate their worthiness and competency as a leader. They're constantly wanting their boss's approval, their staff and teachers' approval, they're looking for parent approval. They're looking for all of this validation and external approval, but they're not willing to give it to themselves, so they struggle with that.

They see it, intellectually they see that that they don't give themselves the credit for their hard work that they're looking for somebody else to give them that credit in order for them to feel good about themselves. They see that they're doing it, but they're struggling with the how. So, we're going to talk about that this month.

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Then, two, the flip side of this which is so interesting is that they're all at some level are in resistance to feeling the emotion. So, they're not willing – they see this need, this external validation need, but they're unwilling to go to the place to ask themselves, “Why do I need this? Why can't I give this to myself? What is going on inside of me that isn't willing to go to the place where I can validation myself? Where I can approve of myself as a leader?”

It doesn't matter if you're year 1 or year 10, learning how to create a relationship with ourselves as a professional and to have our own backs and to believe in ourselves and to approve of ourselves, even when we make mistakes, even though we're human we just don't seem to want to go there. What is happening, what I'm seeing is that at the core of this clients who don't want to go there, they're just resistant to feeling the negative emotion. They want to avoid going to the place where they allow themselves to feel all the yucky stuff. They don't want to go to the place where they feel judgmental or condescending because that feels really bad to feel those feelings, right?

They don't want to feel phony or fake. They don't want to feel like they're wrong. They don't want to feel new or that they don't know. They don't want to feel confused and overwhelmed. They don't want to feel awkward or remorseful or embarrassed or vulnerable or rejected from other or angry. There's so many emotions that we label as being ugly or yucky and we don't think that we should feel them. The reason we don't think we should feel them is because we think it means that we are a bad person if we feel this way.

If we acknowledge to ourselves that we're judgmental and that we're wrong and that we're condescending sometimes or that we're rude or that we're super awkward, if we actually admit this to ourselves what does that mean about us? We think it means that we're not good enough, that we're not

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worthy as a human, that we don't deserve to be a school leader because we have this ugly side to us.

So, we don't want to admit to ourselves for fear that somebody else might find out and then goodness gracious what would happen then if the world found out that we're human? If the world found out we have negative emotion? That sometimes we don't feel good about ourselves or we don't think we're good enough. What happens if we go to that place? That is what I'm talking about right now.

There seems to be this all or none mentality that somewhere along the way from childhood to now that we've been taught that things are either good or bad, that they're right or wrong. That everything is all or none. Our brains want there to be this definitive yes or no. There needs to be this line in the sand. It doesn't want to go to the place where things are in the middle where everything and everyone on the planet, every situation, every circumstance, every single thing is both. It's both good and bad. It's both right and wrong. It's both imperfect and perfect, including us, we're both.

We're not all or none. We are both. We resist believing that thoughts are neutral, that circumstances are neutral. We don't want to think that debt is neutral or the president is neutral or our staff members are neutral. We want to think of them as good teachers or not good teachers. Or friendly and helpful and supportive teachers or they're kind of a pain in our backside teachers and they're doing all of these things and so they're a problem. It's an all or none thinking.

We create calm and certainty when we see the duality of ourselves and in others and in situations. This is the place where we create peace. This neutral space which is in the middle, the acceptance of both is where we create calm and peace and certainty. When we can see that there is balance in everything then it becomes easier to go to the spaces in our

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mind and clean up the thoughts that don't enhance us as leaders and don't evolve us and that no longer serve us.

Once we're willing to do this, we aren't afraid to feel intense emotions because we accept that we're all competent and we all have much to learn. There's no human on the planet that knows all or knows nothing, that is always right or always wrong, that is always good or always bad. We all have a lot to learn and we're all sufficiently competent. We're all capable. We're all worthy 100% right now.

So, we have a lot to learn and we're enough. It's both. It's all 50/50. Each of us are 50/50. Other people are 50/50, our school is 50/50, our staff, our district, the profession of education, the entire world, all of it is 50/50. There is no human that's better or worse than us. There is no opinion that matters more or less. There's nothing you can do to make you less worthy, nothing.

You, as a school leader, right now in this moment are 100% worthy whether it's your first year or your last year. All of us 100% worthy. We're all 50/50. Now, if you can grasp on to that concept and know this and believe this and see how it's true knowing this and believing in this is what will give you the permission to dive into the work I'm offering you this month.

In order to create the leadership legacy that you want in the long run, the marathon of school leadership, you must be willing to know yourself more and more professionally and personally. So, today let's focus on how to deepen your relationship with the professional part of you and next week we will go into how to deepen the relationship with the personal part of you.

Now, let me put a little asterisk here and say this, as educators I know this sounds like work that you just don't have time for. "This is fluff," your brain is telling you, but let me promise you this. As each of my clients will attest

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to, this is the work that they avoid because they don't think they have the time which really is just their brain's excuse to side-step feeling a negative emotion, but when they do finally lean into it, and they all do at some point, they all have had major, major breakthroughs.

They solved problems that they didn't think had solutions. They find the courage to hold conversations they were avoiding. They set boundaries for themselves that they didn't believe were possible. They stand in their empowerment. They stand in their courage and they create results that blow their mind. They didn't think it was going to happen, but once they leaned into just acknowledging the 50/50, realizing they are good enough and they have things to learn, that other people's opinions are not more important than their own. When everything is 50/50 that is when the magic happens.

So, how do you get to know yourself professionally? In order to lead a school you need to understand how you want to approach leadership. Most of us are hired and then we jump into the position and then we spend the rest of our time just trying to keep our heads above water. We're flailing. We're running. We're working, hard. We're running from one meeting to the next, and one situation to the next and one task to the next, one email to the next.

We're just on the go and because so much comes at us so quickly and because so many demands are coming at us and the expectation is that from day one you shall be the expert. You shall know how to handle all things, we never want or stop to slow down to actually reflect. We do not schedule time in for thinking. Not just thinking, but asking ourselves really powerful questions and then actually answering them. We don't take time to slow down and align our actions or the way we're approaching our job with our own leadership values. We cling on to other people's values which is why we feel like we're flailing in the wind because we're going from this

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person's value over to this person's value over to that person's value and we're running around trying to meet everybody's needs and believing in other people's values and we feel lost. We don't know who we are. We're not grounded as a leader.

This is where we start. Your leadership values are determined from your own belief systems. What you believe about money and time and social justice and equity and how people learn, what is the best teaching. All of your thoughts about education, all of your belief systems, what you believe to be true as a school leader all of those belief systems create what you value.

Different leaders have different values. Now, there is no better value or worse value. We all have different values, they're all valid. Valid values. So, notice that you do have belief systems that drive your everyday actions at work. If you believe that the most important thing you can do as a school leader is to be actively engaged in classrooms you're going to notice that's where you spend your time.

If you believe it's your job to keep up with emails and answer emails immediately and to keep up with other people's requests, like you really value a quick reply, getting an immediate answer out there that's what you spend your time doing. If you believe that your job is to have really high contact with your teachers, you're going to notice that you spend a lot of time meeting with teachers, talking with teachers, checking in with them.

Your values, your leadership values are based on what you believe about yourself as a leader. It's very important that you take time and schedule time into your day to think about what your values are, to acknowledge them, to list them down, put them onto paper. Now, these values that are driven by your belief systems, your values drive your professional vision and goals.

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You have belief systems that create this set of values that you have and then those values drive your professional vision and your goals. Because what you value is what you want to achieve. That is why they impact your goals. So, what happens is you have this set of values which is this vision of who you want to be as a leader.

There's where you are and where you want to be and your goals are really just an image of your future self, your future self looking back and having created the results that he or she wants based on our values. So, you have your back in your current decisions and they're aligned to your values so that you can achieve those goals which are driven by your belief systems.

That is something that you need to slow down and take a look at. Now, you prioritize your values at a subconscious level. What happens is you have a set of belief systems that create a set of values, those values determine the goals you want to achieve and your professional vision of who you are as a school leader. But sometimes, oftentimes we have values that can be in conflict with one another.

We can value self-care and we can value work ethic and there are times where we feel the urge to work even though we're so exhausted we know what we need to do is sleep. What happens is there is a moment of decision where we have to prioritize the value that's coming into play in that moment. Are we going to value and honor the value of self-care or are we going to honor the value of getting the work done, being that A+ employee?

So, you are consciously or subconsciously always looking at where to prioritize your professional values. Now, I have a quick story. This happened subconsciously. I was coaching a client the other day and she was saying that she does not want to work in her district anymore. She doesn't align to their values. It feels very out of integrity for her, but she also feels like – well, and one of the things her brain was saying was, "I'm

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not even getting paid enough to feel like this and to lead and to do all of this work when people don't appreciate me, people don't care, and I'm not even getting paid enough. None of this feels aligned to me."

I said to her, "What would happen, what decisions would you make, what values would you align to if the district came back and said, 'We're going to double your salary next year'?" She's like, "Oh, I'd totally stay." I pointed out to her, "You see how your values were prioritized in that moment." This need to feel alignment with herself as a leader and her value of having money, how the value of having money overrode the value of feeling aligned as a leader and then we explored that and we got down to what she really wants to prioritize.

The reason I share this story with you is that at a subconscious level if you're not being intentional with your thoughts and with your decisions your brain will choose the value and prioritize the value that creates the most comfort and safety for yourself even if in the long run it doesn't feel good to you and it's not the priority that you want to make. So, I just wanted to highlight that.

Let me just summarize this by saying you have belief systems that impact what you value as a leader. Your leadership values are what drives your professional vision and your goals, and you have to prioritize your goals and you want to do that at a conscious level versus a subconscious level. You want to notice what values get the priority and then consciously decide ahead of time what will be the top priority. Then, what happens is you will get triggered.

You are going to be triggered by your fear. You're going to be triggered by your commitments. You're going to be triggered by why you made the decisions that you do. You're going to see how you avoid not wanting negative feedback or you make decisions because you're worried about

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losing your job. Maybe you don't want to speak up professionally for your values because you're worried about upsetting other people or going against the norm or losing your job. You might not want to have a difficult conversation because of the emotions that you will have to experience when you have it.

So, what you'll see is that you'll have belief systems, you will have values, you will create vision and goals, and then even when you go through this conscious process of deciding your values you will get triggered. You will fail in terms of you will make decisions based out of fear and lack and scarcity versus commitment to the value, commitment to your priorities, commitment to your vision and your goals and that's okay. That's called being human.

There are some legitimate reasons why you might decide to align to your value or not. But what I want to show you is that you need to get to know yourself at this deep level in order to grow professionally and evolve yourself as a leader so that you can then evolve your school and your teachers.

You have to do this work. You have to know who you are and understand where your values are coming from and understand what your prioritizing and why you're prioritizing it. And understand when you don't do something that's in alignment with what you said you'd do why that triggered you. Why you did make that decision and sometimes you decide that's okay.

So, in summary, the bottom line really is this, in order to grow as a leader you have to know yourself professionally at a very deep level. Next week we're going to talk about how to do this work on a personal level and why the two are so equally important. You cannot grow professionally if you're not willing to grow personally. One impacts the other 100% of the time. So,

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do this work, commit to it, put it on your calendar and go have an empowered week. I will talk with you guys next week. Take care. Bye-bye.

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