

Ep #160: How to Achieve Any Goal in 2021



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Angela Kelly

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Hello, empowered principals. Welcome to episode 160.

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

Well hello there, my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday. And welcome to 2021. My, my, my has 2021 started in a way that I certainly did not anticipate, just like last year. So, we're not through it yet, folks.

I typically record my podcasts around a month in advance. But with the holidays in December, I had one podcast episode to record in January for January. And I'm so glad that I did because now I have the space to do this, to share this. And I have moved what was scheduled for this week to next week so that I could address you before moving on with the podcast theme of the month.

So, I am recording this podcast on January 7th 2021, which is the day after the Capitol building was attacked and invaded by national extremists. So, it's been about 24 hours, a little bit longer, that I have first witnessed what was happening in DC, and about 23 hours since I began coaching clients on their own feelings, processing those feelings about what transpired, and trying to help them wrap their heads around what to do and say with their staff members, with their students, and families.

So, today has been a day of deep reflection for me personally and for all educators across the country. There are many layers to this event, many thoughts, and many feelings. But what struck me the most deeply was the blatant apathy to protect the Capitol because the extremists were

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Caucasian. The whole world noticed. Students noticed. Teachers and school leaders noticed.

And we've all been left wondering what to say or not say in relation to this historic event. People are astonished and infuriated by the glaring reality of two systems of justice and how law and order is approached in this country based on the color of one's skin.

Now, we all knew this to be true. We've seen it play over and over again. And last night's, or yesterday's situation was just such another glaring example of how we can no longer look away.

School leaders, I know that many of you have been trained to remain neutral, to be professional, to be politically correct. And there have been times, even as a business owner in my podcast and in my work, I have wanted to remain neutral or professional or keep politics or social events out of conversation.

But I'm here to say, we can no longer hide behind our privilege. And I know, your district officials may not want you to address this topic because of their fear of disruption or backlash. I understand the fear completely, totally. I understand what it feels like to be a new school leader who doesn't believe in myself enough to know how to speak up or when to speak up or what to say, or to believe that I don't have the experience or the clout to stand up and say what I want to say, to speak my truth, to speak how I'm feeling, to share it, to stand up for those who need our support.

However, I also believe that we cannot let our fears hold us back from supporting our students and our families and our staff members who most need our support. Staff members, because of the color of their skin, are treated differently than white colleagues, or students and families whose

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voices are underrepresented and considered less valuable than those of their white peers in our own school communities.

Our title as school leader gives us the positional authority and the status to speak up on behalf of those who aren't granted the same access. Our skin color adds to that privilege. We have the platform that is required for change. The message cannot come from those who are discriminated against. They have been speaking their truth. They have been shouting from the rooftops for decades and decades.

It cannot come from them. It must come from us. It has to come from those who discriminate. We must be willing to acknowledge, "My privilege has allowed me the comfort to look away, to not speak up, to not have to acknowledge, to not have to fight for change."

I see this now and I want to change this about myself. We must be willing to say, "This is wrong. I do not believe in this. I do not agree with what is happening. I have been wrong in my thinking. I am willing to do better."

As Brené Brown says, "I'm not here to be right. I'm here to get it right." We must be courageous enough to be honest and truthful in what we have witnessed and how we feel, and what we will do to establish a non-tolerance for inequitable treatment and begin to instill a foundation of trust and respect.

If you are a white school leader, as I am, we will get it wrong. We have been getting it wrong. We will say the wrong thing or we'll misunderstand or we will acknowledge something or not acknowledge something, or we won't realize racist acts that seem subtle to us, but are egregious yet predictable to persons of color.

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People will call us out and we will feel terrible. We'll think we don't have racist thoughts, when we do. Because we've been taught to have them and we've been taught to have them without acknowledgment. They're so integrated into every aspect of our culture, including education and the culture of education that we don't even see it. They're in the background of our minds, so distant and so implicit that we don't even know they are there.

Thoughts white leaders might be having include, "I don't know what to do. I don't know what to say. How do I, as one person, solve this national lifetime of discrimination? What am I supposed to do?"

And I admit, I used to think these things as well. It felt like I had to do something so massive to make any difference. But over the course of time, I've realized that the difference doesn't have to be grandiose. The actions can be small and significant. There is no one way to denounce racism. It is a matter of consistent small actions that lead us to evolved mindsets.

The simple acknowledgment of what happened yesterday and the willingness to be open to a conversation and listening to people's stories and how they feel is a start.

One of my clients, after our conversation, decided to hold a staff meeting, an open-ended staff meeting for teachers to join in and process their own emotions and hold a discussion about how they wanted to handle conversations with kids today.

I have another client who's a new principal this year. And she shared with me that she hesitantly asked her boss if they should craft an email to the staff, that they were aware of what was going on and they wanted to be supportive. And initially, he told her not to because schools have to be very careful about these kinds of things, i.e., separation of church and state.

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As he thought about it, he decided to reach out to the staff, but first ran it by the superintendent, which is always a good idea. You want to include everyone who might be impacted by your actions, so I get that. So, they ran it by the superintendent and what was so great was the superintendent was really impressed and amazed and thought that this principal's team, two APs and a head principal, that they were very thoughtful and advanced-thinking and that they were good leaders for thinking about this ahead of time.

So, yes, we can choose to conveniently hide behind the policies and laws and use them as the reason that we don't need to or don't address uncomfortable topics. Or, we can see how those very policies and laws are actually meant to stop people from questioning the fairness of the law itself.

If we want our children, our students of color to have equal access and equal opportunities for successful lives and to have access to closing the gap, as we say, we as leaders have to be willing to speak up when we see how those laws and those policies that we believe are in place to protect us are actually only protecting some of us.

My message to you today is this. Be willing to take one action towards equity. It can be small, but it must be courageous. For me, bringing this topic up, as a white educator, as a white coach for instructional leaders feels vulnerable, but I'm willing to say it. I'm willing to hold conversations. I'm willing to be called out. I'm willing to be wrong. I'm willing to have my ideas and what I know to be true challenged because I care so deeply about getting it right, not being right.

I want to help all students, all teachers, all school leaders. We have to be willing to get it wrong in order to be able to get it right. And when we choose to remain silent, our children listen. Thank you so much for choosing to act from courage instead of fear.

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In the spirit of a new year and becoming new versions of ourselves, I've decided to share a replay of a webinar I held this week. Towards the end of last year, I started the Empowered Principal Leadership Series. It's a free webinar training series to help spread the power of coaching throughout the school leadership community. The more school leaders who believe in and invest in coaching for themselves, the greater impact it will have on students.

This month's webinar New Year, New Start, New You shares how to approach goal setting in a way that's fun, simple, and celebrates, and builds off of your strengths and successes. I'm going to be offering one free webinar per month, so be sure to get on the Empowered Principal email list to receive the registration links and the dates for the event.

And hey, by the way, invite your friends and colleagues. We want as many people getting as empowered as possible. So, on with the show. Enjoy the webinar. Enjoy the training. Have an empowered week. I love you all so very deeply and so very much. I thank you for being courageous leaders.

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Alright, you guys, welcome. I'm so happy you're here. I'm Angela Kelly Robeck. I'm a former teacher, instructional coach, principal, district administrator turned life coach. I'm a certified life coach through The Life Coach School. I'm super-excited to be here with you guys today. And I want to talk to you about getting yourself excited and ready for the new year.

Now, I will say, we have had an interesting few days, haven't we, in 2022. Yes, we have. But we're going to focus on the big picture today. We're going to talk about possibility and excitement and energy.

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So, what I love about the new year is that it's an opportunity for us to reboot and refresh. And we talked about this in the last Empowered Principal Leadership Series that I did in December. We talked about getting our brains wrapped around the end of 2020, releasing 2020, and getting our energy and our excitement up for 2021.

And what I love about this time of year is that for educators specifically, we are gifted with two New Years, right? We have the calendar New Years, this time of year, which is for us, in our work year is like mid-year, which is the perfect time to reboot and refresh and do a mid-year check. But we also have the gift of that New Year.

I always thought, as a principal and as a teacher, my brain was always really wrapped around the school year calendar. So, my brain went from August to August in terms of a new year. So, we have the gift of two, which is great.

So, this is kind of a mid-year reboot for you guys. But with every new year comes that promise of excitement and possibilities and potential and there's an energy around the new year. There's an energy at the end of a calendar year and into the new year.

And I've been talking with my clients this week. And one of my clients, Loraine, was saying, "I'm super-fired-up. I'm ready to go. I've got rested, refueled and reenergized over the break," and she's ready to roll. That energy is what we want to tap into and use that momentum to carry us into the new year and to fuel us into thinking about our future and our possibilities, what we want to experience, what we want to accomplish in our future this coming year.

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And when we're thinking that and we're believing that it's possible, we get really revved up. And that energy, those emotions are what inspire us into taking different actions. We're very motivated, right?

So, what we're going to do in today's webinar is we're going to learn how to tap into this fuel, this energy at any point in your school year, so when you feel like you fail – and you will because you're human – or when you feel like you got off track – and you will because you're human – you have the ability to get yourself back on track and tap into what you most want for your career and your lifestyle.

Those are really important to acknowledge, that you're not just a school leader, that you're a human with a whole life and a whole set of dreams and goals outside of school leadership. Yes, school leadership is important. And so are you and your lifestyle, okay.

So, the first step in all of this – and I think this is something we tend to overlook because it feels like it's in the past. And a lot of times, I tell clients not to look in the past. Only because I don't want them defining their future from what they've been able to do in their past. I want you to define your future by what you want to accomplish and how you want to get there and how you want to feel when you arrive or in the process, on that journey.

But in this case, this little exercise is what fuels us into the future. It kind of propels us. So, what you want to do, when you start thinking about your future and 2021, the end of this school year, going into the next year hopefully having a vaccination and being able to go with family and friends again, what we want to do is we want to acknowledge what we already have in our lives.

Practicing abundance is that first step in achieving new accomplishments. And let me tell you why. We need to acknowledge and exercise

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appreciation for what we've already created in our life. You, my friend, have created this amazing life that you're living right now.

You have created yourself as the position of a school leader. Or, if you're an aspiring leader, you have put yourself in a position to become a school leader. That is all on you. You need to give yourself 100% credit for every goal, everything that you have in your life. Whether it's the tangible things or the intangible things, from relationships to our homes, our cars, our food, water, shelter, all of those things that we've created, up to our credentials, our college experience, the person that we are involved with, the family that we've created, whether you have children or pets.

Like, everything in your life right now is a product, a result of what you've been thinking and feeling and acting on and creating this result. So, acknowledge it. And the reason we want to acknowledge and love what we already have is because energetically we're sending a message out to the greater powers that be – I call it the universe – to God, whatever it is that you label it.

But you're sending a message, "I'm so grateful for what I have and what I've created and what I've worked hard for. And I'm open to receiving more." You want to expand your appreciation and give yourself some space to welcome more in your career and more in your lifestyle, okay.

So, that is why it's really important. What I like to tell my clients is list 25 things that you really, really want and that you already have. So, for some of my leaders, "I wanted to be married. I am married. I have a great marriage. I have a wonderful spouse. I have a wonderful partner. I'm in a committed loving relationship. I want that and I already have it."

Maybe it's children for you or maybe it's a pet or maybe you own your first home and you really wanted to own your first place, or even just have your

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own first apartment. Whatever it is that you wanted that you actually already have, acknowledge that.

And I like to speak to this in terms of the physical things we have, the tangibles, like from our clothing to our cars to every single thing in your house, to your financial goals. Maybe you have worked really hard to pay off your college debt or maybe you've built up your savings or you've been able to donate to your favorite charity or cause. Or maybe you've saved up money for a down-payment on a vacation or a home or a car or whatever.

Or relationship goals, do you have the friends that you love, the colleagues that you adore and admire working with, your romantic relationships, your family, the children in your life, whether they're your children at school or your children here at home, the community connections you have, the spiritual connections you have with yourself and with the higher power that you associate with.

And finally, don't forget your career, like all the work you've done in your career; your college, your credentials, your teaching experience, the leadership experiences and tasks that you've done, the professional experiences and accomplishments. All of it is you; 100% you. You need to see the power within you, that you have created this life and that you do have things that you actually want.

Now, what does it mean to want something new for yourself? Wanting something new for yourself is all about a fresh start and a clean slate and it's an invitation to make some changes in your life. So, yes, you have things that you want, but it's also an opportunity to accomplish some wildly outstanding wins in your life that you haven't yet achieved and that you're looking forward to achieving. And it's a chance to feel more confident and empowered.

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So, a new year, a new dream, a new goal allows your brain to expand and to think about bigger things and bigger accomplishments and really stretch your imagination both in your career and your lifestyle, and give you that permission to believe that you're capable of having the career and the lifestyle you want.

I know it feels like it's an all or none, that you have to be a really good principal and be all in or you have to be all in with your family and friends or your personal lifestyle. You are one human. You can have them both. And we're going to talk about how to create that. And when you believe that this is possible and that you as the human are the person responsible for creating that and you're giving yourself the credit for the work that you're doing, you get to feel so inspired and so empowered to make those new decisions and to take different actions in your life.

Now, we're going to use all this momentum and all of this energy to begin working towards what you desire as a school leader and as a human who happens to also be a school leader, you guys. I keep reiterating this because we get so caught up in our job. It's very serious. It's very important. It's very big. We're going to break it down to the small things.

Okay, so if you're like me, most leaders tend to think similarly – not all. But if you are a leader, you tend to be visionary. You tend to be a big thinker. You tend to plan big. You tend to look towards the future, "What can I accomplish?" You're not looking back. You're not looking in the weeds. You're looking at the big picture.

If this is you, then you're like me. You have to see that big vision and write down those goals, and they might be very broad and expansive. So, things that my clients typically come to me with are clear and consistent priorities. They want consistency in their life. They want clarity in their life. They want

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clarity in their leadership and in their personal lives, right? That's a big, broad, expansive goal.

Or they want healthier relationships with either their colleagues or healthy relationships in their personal life, "I just want a better culture at school. I want to be more connected." They're big, broad goals. Aligned decision-making, less hours on the job. There's a lot of goals around time management and a lot of goals around self-care and having more time to yourself or with your friends and family. They're really expansive goals.

What we want to do is take those big goals and to keep breaking them down into a really small tiny goal that feels simple, doable, and that you're capable of taking the challenge on. What does it mean to have healthy, open relationships? What does that look like? We want to break it down to something tangible and something measurable.

So, for example, with clear and consistent priorities, perhaps you break it down to a 30-minute planning session per week where you're looking at your priorities and you're making sure that what you do for your workweek is aligned and consistent with your top priorities.

Now, I know what your brain is saying right now. But the priorities change, the district changes, the requirements change. I understand that. We can talk about that. But what I really want you to focus on is within you, the power within you. No matter what comes your way, you do have the capacity to create a set of consistent priorities.

And the way that you start doing that is by breaking it down into this very small task of what would it look like, who is a person who creates consistent priorities in her life or his life? Well, they definitely know what their priorities are, first of all. So, they define the priorities. And second of

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all, they review them and they keep them on the front burner, so to speak, like in their focus.

So, 30 minutes a week to review and make sure your schedule is aligned with that, that is a goal that you can achieve. It's tangible. It's measurable because you can say at the end of 30 days, "Yes I did this," or, "No, I didn't."

Healthy open relationships, that's a big goal, like creating a positive climate big goal. Perhaps you break it down to, "I'm going to agree to meet one on one with every single staff member, every single teacher," depending on how many people you have, "I'm going to do that within the next 30 days and really connect with them and just listen."

One of my clients was doing check-ins with all of her teachers, not for her sake but for their sake, to hear what they're struggling with, what they're doing well, what they're struggling with, what they need support on, just so she can get to know her people better. Because knowing your people is knowing your culture. And that's how you can start to change it.

Aligned decision-making, develop your top three values. Just that goal, that could be your 30-day goal, what are my values and what are the priorities? It's really hard to prioritize when values feel equal. So, taking 30 days to really dig into that.

Less hours on the job, guys. I know, it's hard to do. But what if a 30-day goal was, "I'm going to attempt to leave by 5pm?" Or, let's make it this way, even once a week I'm going to leave by 5pm, or 4pm, let's get crazy, right? But playing around with this idea that a person who has their less hours on the job and they still get things done, they leave once in a while. They don't always let work consume everything.

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More self-care, schedule one thing a week that's self-care. That's it. Bringing big ideas down to small ideas. This is how we do it. You guys teach this with the kids. It's the same concept, right?

So, you're going to break one goal, one big goal, and you're going to break it way down into a small 30-day goal. So, choose one area of your life. You've appreciated all that you have. There's this one little thing you want to fix. But you've got to make it super-tangible so it feels doable and simple to you and that it's possible.

Choose one area and then make sure it's measurable. So, for example, lose five pounds in the next 30 days. Very measurable. Go to bed by 10pm, very measurable. Stop working by five, measurable. Meet with every teacher one on one, see what I'm saying? Those are measurable.

So, the more simple, the more doable, and the more concise, the better for you. Now, once you've determined what you want and you've broken it down into this small piece, this one little tiny thing, your brain's going to say one of two things. Like, "Yeah, that's super-easy and doable." Or, it's going to come up with all the reasons. We're going to talk about that in a minute.

So, what I want you to do is to really ground yourself in this goal, is to ask yourself the question, why do you want to have this in your life? How will it feel to have it? Why is it important for you to go to bed at 10pm every night, during the workweek at least? Why is it important to have that goal? Why do you want to lose five pounds? Why do you want to leave work by five o'clock every day? Why do you want that?

You need to know why. That's what grounds you. It's called a compelling reason. It's what drives you. It's what keeps you motivated. It's when you dream about the goal, what you're dreaming about is the feeling and the thoughts that you're going to have when you get there. So, why do you

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want to have this in your life. What is the result? What is the effect on you and on your life when you have it?

So, I want you to notice that any goal we want to achieve, anything, whether it's tangible or intangible that we want to have, it is because of the way we believe it will make us feel when we accomplish it, when we have it. The dream home, how will we feel when we have or dream home? How will we feel when we raise those test scores? How will we feel when our campus is buzzing with a positive energy and a positive school culture? How will we feel to be the person who has created that in their professional life or their personal life?

So, name any goal. And then, when you dig down, why you want to accomplish it, ultimately, it's always because of the way it's going to make you feel.

Okay, here's the secret of the hour. If you're still on, good for you. We're 18 minutes in. Here's the secret. The real goal into achieving any goal you want in your life, it's not to have the thing, and it's not even to feel the feels – because life is 50-50. Once you get it and it feels good for a moment, it's kind of fleeting and then you go onto the next goal and then you feel bad that you don't have that, like our lives are designed to want, to have, to accomplish, and then to want again. That cycle is always in motion. But the real goal behind the goal is to train your brain to think different thoughts.

Empowered leaders understand how to manage their minds and how to feel their emotions. Because at the crux of all of this, the reason we don't have anything quite yet is that we haven't in some way been able to think differently or feel differently in order to act differently.

So, when we're eager, excited, and motivated, we're much more willing to take the scary steps or the steps that we don't want to do or we don't feel

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disciplined enough to do. Because your brain's going to tell you all these squawky thoughts, "No, you can't do this. You're never going to do that. You've never done it before. We don't know how. That's going to be hard. I can't keep this up." I'm thinking about weight loss. I don't want to get up. I'm tired. I'm exhausted. I've got other things to do. This is more important. I need to take care of this first. I overslept. I just want that cookie.

The reason we don't have any goals is because of what we're thinking now and what we need to think. The reason we set goals is to be able to harness our brain and harness our mindset and understand that our thoughts and emotions are what really are in the driver's seat and we want to learn how to train our brains to be in the driver's seat. We want to be the empowered one who's saying. "Hey, brain, I hear you. I hear you don't think this is going to work. I hear you want this new goal but you don't want to do the work to get it. I've got you. But guess what, I'm going to take over. I'm in charge."

We're going to train our brain to have the understanding that we're going to be okay, that nothing's gone wrong, that failure is not a problem, all of that. So, that's the real secret. So, when you think about better self-care, your thoughts start to shift, right?

When you spend 30 days eating a certain set of foods and exercising and getting enough sleep, your thoughts start to shift. My health matters to me. When I take care of myself, I'm better at what I do. How is that true?

When you feel good about yourself and you have rest and you've eaten well and you've exercised and gotten some movement in your day, how do you show up as a better leader? That is absolutely true. What you want to do is you want to start to actually believe that. Like, "Oh, it's so important for my self-care to get the rest I need and to stop working and to put in a little exercise somewhere in the week. Because when I do those things, I

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show up with more clarity in my brain, with focus. I get more done in less time. I make decisions better. I keep my priorities in focus and in check. I don't overwork."

There's so many reasons why you're a better leader. And when you see that effect in 30 days' time, you start to believe it. You're like, "I'm strong in my mind and my spirit. I'm honoring commitments to myself. I'm an example of what's possible. I take responsibility of what I eat or what I drink or how much I move my body." And you start to believe that you are that person.

Right now, you might not be the person who exercises or manages what they eat. In 30 days, you become the person who gets up and works out two or three times a week and eats less sugar or doesn't eat that donut in the staff room.

Okay, the same is true with relationships. But the reason that we do this 30-day goal is to show our brain it's possible to believe these things about myself that I don't yet think are true. I'm going to practice it. I'm going to get up. I'm going to try. I'm going to fail. I'm going to keep going for 30 days. I'm going to commit to it for 30 days, no matter what, no questions asked. I'm just going to go home at five o'clock and I'm going to see what happens.

And here's what's going to happen. Your brain is going to have obstacle thoughts. But I want you to focus on, how will you be different in 30 days if you commit to going home? How will your life be different? How will your family life and your relationship be different at home in 30 days when you make a commitment to going home at five o'clock? Or to going to bed by 10? Or to meet with every teacher once a month, what would that look like? What shifts will take place in your life as a result and what is the effect of practicing these 30-day goals?

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So, first of all, you're acknowledging what you already have. You're deciding on one thing that you want, from broad down to very small. Then you're acknowledging all of those thoughts that are coming up for you. And you know that the real goal isn't to actually have that thing, which is also just an amazing byproduct of that result. But the reason you want it is to know how to manage your thinking.

Now, the next step is, what do you think right now it's going to take to get you there? And this is where your brain's going to start to fuss, when you start thinking of the actions you have to take, that's when you go into lockdown. Your brain is like, oh, wait a minute, it feels really nice to think about it on the other end, but when you have to put it down onto paper and start taking action, that's when your brain is like, "Oh no, honey can't do this. Can't do that. Not enough time for this. I don't have the money for that. There's no way possible I could leave at this time because..."

So, I want you to ask yourself what you think it's going to take to get you there. Now, the secret is, what you think it's going to take to get you there isn't really it. Some of them might be, but a lot of times our brain makes us think it's really harder than it is or it's really bigger than it is, or that it's too far of a stretch than it is.

So, when you start to do that, notice the thoughts that are coming up. Those are called obstacle thoughts. And then ask yourself, why don't I already have that? If I want it so bad, why don't I have it? And just notice what comes up.

Because if you wanted it and you knew how to have it, you'd already have it. So, what you have to do is you have to expose the thoughts that you're currently thinking that prevents you from having what you have decided you wanted, what you're deciding to commit to. This is the work. This is the work between where you're at and where you want to be.

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You have to unveil those thoughts that are getting in your way, like I'm too tired or too exhausted or I don't have enough time or I need to get something else done. And this, my friends, is why having a coach can help you. Because even I have a coach. I can't see my own blind spots. I can't see my own thoughts that are preventing me sometimes.

Sometimes, I can see them. I'm pretty good at that. But all humans have that blind spot where they just can't see what's going on. They don't know why. A lot of people are like, "I don't know how to get what I want or I don't know why I don't have what I want." We all have these hidden thoughts that we just have written them off as truth, as absolutes. And a coach helps you see that.

So, that's what I'm here coaching you on today, to show you there are some thoughts and they're often the smallest, tiniest little thoughts. Things like, "One cookie won't hurt," or, "I'll just work late this one night. It's not that big of a deal," or, "I meant to meet with that teacher but I'll cancel that meeting and I'll reschedule with her, I really have to deal with this situation."

It's those little thoughts, they feel very true and very reasonable and very justified. But those are the thoughts we have to catch and say, "Wait a minute, I committed to meeting with this teacher. Yes, I have another issue. I'm going to meet with her and then I'm going to deal with that afterwards."

And the strength and the tenacity that it takes to first be aware of that thought and then two, follow through. And if you don't, not a problem because we all fail at that. If you choose to reschedule with the teacher, what you have to then do is have the discipline to go back and say, "Why did I schedule that? What thoughts were coming up for me? And just notice how it derailed you."

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And this awareness is how you can let yourself fail and just be like, “Oh I’m going to get myself back on track. I see what happened. I’m going to challenge that thought that I really did have to deal with that situation. What are some other things I could have done? What will I do differently next time so that I can keep my commitment to meeting with all my teachers?” Do you see how that works?

They’re very sneaky, those silly thoughts. So, one of the things I want to honor about school leadership is we hear – there’s a million offers. This is what I said in all of my promotional emails and all of my social media. And it’s very true. There’s a million people out there offering you to have a new year and have a better year and to achieve your goals.

I think – and this is specific to educators and maybe I’m wrong here. It could be everybody. But what I believe about school leadership is that we are trained as teachers and as school leaders to focus on the positive, to not talk about the negative, to not look at the negative, to not acknowledge it. And we’re really good at teaching people, fake it until you make it, turn that frown upside down, positive mantras, positive words, positive thinking.

I would like to invite us to, before we get to the positive side – and I’m saying we have to train our brain to go to the positive side because the reality of the human mind is that it defaults to the negativity. It defaults to what’s not working, what isn’t happy, what doesn’t feel good, what’s broken, where there’s a problem.

It doesn’t default to happy solutions and look at all the good things. We have to train it to do that. But sometimes – and I think education does this almost to a fault, where we pretend that everything is good, when inside – so the outside of us looks good and happy and we’re cheering our teachers on and positive, you know, doing all the positive little things to help people

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feel good. When on the inside, we feel like we're a hot mess. We feel like we're melting. We feel like we're collapsing, like we're not okay.

And you can hear it in people's words and I can hear it with my clients. I can hear it on social media. We're not okay. We're not doing well. This is hard. Let's just stop and acknowledge that it's a truth, that school leadership is hard. And when we take a look at all that we're doing and we take a look at all that is holding us back, we need to acknowledge that some of those obstacles are just truth. They're the situation we're dealing with. They are actually part of the problem and they're there.

They're something outside of us, like a pandemic. We cannot control that there's a pandemic. Yes, the pandemic is having a significant impact on our teaching and our leadership. That is our hard. People wanting us to go back and be in-person when we don't feel safe. Those are realities. This is a part of school leadership life. We want to acknowledge how hard it is to be a school leader, how hard it is to be an educator. We don't want to dismiss that because that is where our brain will be dismissive of the goal.

When we dismiss the hard part, when we dismiss the challenges, when we dismiss the discomfort and we tell ourselves, "It's all okay, we'll just put on a happy face," the brain will also dismiss that it's even possible to achieve the goal. Can you see that?

Okay, so I want you to know, whether you're a first-year principal, an aspiring principal, or a 20-year veteran, this year has the best of school leaders completely discouraged. The world is discouraged right now. There is a lot going on in the world that has us feeling heavy. It's okay to acknowledge that. And it's okay to feel it, to cry it out, to be frustrated, to be angry, to let that disruption and that anger and that sadness and that grief of this year, all the crazy that is going on right now, to acknowledge it.

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I feel like school leaders are supposed to always be a cheerleader. And I'm giving you permission to not be. School leadership is not easy. Look, school leadership during a normal year is really hard. I never led a school during a pandemic, and I thought it was hard. And I'm sure many of you thought it was hard before this. and now we're like, "Whoa, this is taking it to a whole other level."

Everything has changed. Social inequity is an issue. Political unrest is an issue. This is not easy. And thinking that it should be easier, thinking that your job should go back to normal or that it should be easier, that is like friction.

So, thinking accomplishing a goal is easy when it's not, that adds friction. It adds more resistance. You want to acknowledge that the challenge is there. It's very important to do that.

Now, I'm not saying that we give in to the challenge or that is the excuse we make to not even try. I'm saying we acknowledge it as it is hard. Because we don't get to choose the hard. The world is experiencing something right now. We're all worried. We're all scared. We're all afraid. We're all uncertain. Everyone is experiencing this. And this is just where we're at. And we're just going to decide right now, that's the reality of it. That is the reality. It's hard. We don't get to choose this hard.

So, people who live in financial stress, that might not be their choice. That might be a circumstance that they're dealt with, or the color of your skin. You don't get to choose that hard. If you are a person of color, that is not something that you chose.

So, when people say choose your hard, I say we don't get to choose our hard. We do not get to choose our hard. But what we do get to choose is what we think about that circumstance, what we make it mean, how much

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of an obstacle we let it be. Everyone has hard. We don't always get to choose them. But we can choose our mindset. We can choose our actions. We can choose to fuel our emotions, to put ourselves in a position where we might not make the goal but we're going to go down trying.

I want you to see that. You're a school leader right now and you're thinking, "I can't do this. This is impossible. This is too hard. I didn't choose this. This is not what I signed up for as a school leader, but here we are." So, there's the reality of where you're at. I want you to acknowledge it. Acknowledge the truth, that it's hard. It just is.

You don't get to change that part. So, let's just go there. And now what? This whole idea of just faking it until you make it and positive thinking and turn that frown upside down, I feel that it's actually more harmful and it doesn't work in the long haul. Why is that?

Its because you cannot feel an emotion that you don't genuinely believe. So, for example, if you're a new school leader and you're thinking to yourself, "I don't know what the heck I'm doing. I honestly do not know what I'm doing. This is crazy town. I did not see this coming. Nobody trained me for this. I don't have experience. I don't have a background." Sometimes, we don't even have credentials. We get put into positions.

When those thoughts are going on in the background but you're telling yourself, "I'm confident. I know what I'm doing. I'm a good school leader," and you're trying to convince yourself, it's basically like you're lying to yourself. And your brain knows. It's calling you out. It knows the truth.

So, instead of lying to yourself and then feeling that resistance to the truth of what is, that you are new and you don't know what you're doing, or even if you're a veteran, you can feel just as lost right now because the technologies are so different, because the way of connecting with people is

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so different. So, in that moment, you're trying to force your brain to believe something it doesn't believe. But the truth will always show because you cannot feel an emotion that you don't believe is true in your mind.

Your thoughts about what you think are true, that's what generates your emotions. When you're thinking, "I'm new, I don't know what I'm doing," you feel scared. You feel panicked. You feel uncertain. That truth, you need to align to. Be honest with yourself. And what it does is it just gives you permission to be new.

You're either going to feel the resistance of lying to yourself about a goal or about being positive. You're going to feel that resistance. Or you're going to feel the rawness. It's kind of like clean emotion versus, like, false emotion, like you're creating bad emotion.

Clean emotion, like, is just being new, the raw experience of being new in your job, to just feel what it feels like not to know what you're doing or to be panicked or to be afraid versus, "I'm confident. I'm this..." and your brain's like, "Liar. That's not true." And then you're frustrated and you feel discouraged because you feel like you should be positive all the time and you should be confident, but you're not. That's called cognitive dissonance in your brain.

Pretending to be positive when you're not also does this. It invites you to abdicate responsibility in the ownership of your goal. So, the truth behind school leadership is that it is overwhelming and it is pressure. You feel a lot of pressure to solve all the problems. Right now, you're being asked to solve the world's problems, put all the kids back in school because the economy is crashing and we need you to babysit our kids. That's what's happening right now. And teachers aren't feeling safe and we don't have the vaccine yet.

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So, you have a lot of pressures. Yes, it's hard. No one seems to appreciate you right now, especially school leaders. People might appreciate their teachers, but they're not seeing all the background work you're doing as a school leader.

So, I want you to know that faking it can sometimes – you kind of Pollyanna it a little bit and you can be like, “Oh, it's okay. I didn't work out this morning. No big deal. Just try again tomorrow.” What you're doing is you're abdicating responsibility for the ownership that you need to take, your part in that goal achievement.

So, when you fail and you just tell yourself, “It's okay. I don't have to feel disappointment.” I don't want to feel the disappointment of, “Angela, you didn't get up and workout today, what's going on here, lovie? Why'd you oversleep?” Having that conversation with myself, yeah, I feel bad for myself. I'm kind of calling myself out. That's disappointing. I failed. Not good. Not happy about that. And okay, lovie let's try it again.

Why did you oversleep? Well, you stayed up too late watching all the madness that was going on at the Capitol building last night. So, you overslept. I'm using this as an example. For those of you who are watching this in the future, last night, the Capitol was raided, so I was up late watching the news and feeling all the feels; upset and worried and just shocked basically. So, that resulted in my sleeping in an extra 30 minutes. All honesty here. All transparency, 100%.

So, instead of being like, “It's okay, I have a webinar today. I needed this sleep.” Yes, all of that's true. But the truth is, I failed in some way, shape, or form. I failed myself. And that's what you have to get real with, with yourself.

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So, don't pretend to be Pollyanna and just gloss over when you fail. As yourself why, what happened there? What was I thinking that led me to that decision?

Now, this gets me to an approach that I created for school leaders to help remind them and keep them on track. So, you're going to have your 30-day goal. That's going to create – and what's lovely about practicing how to train your brain is that it gets you into a space, like, if you can do this with one thing, you will create so much evidence for yourself that you can create it in other areas of your life. So, you do this one little thing. It impacts everything else. I promise you.

So, how do we do this? I took you through the steps. Step one, acknowledge what you already have. Step two, decide one thing you want. If it's really global, break it down to a really small little action you're going to take consistently over the next 30 days. And when you fail at it, notice what were the obstacle thoughts I had? Why didn't I do it? That's so fascinating.

That right there is the key. That's the training part. And it's not coming from a place of condemnation. It's coming from a place of curiosity and love. Like, I call myself lovie, what happened? Why did we forget to do this? Or how did we forget to make that call? Or we spent too much time on the podcast and now I didn't get to this phone call.

Like, for you as a school leader, something might have taken so much longer, you were doing an investigation on something and then you didn't get to calling that parent, noticing that, noticing that you lost track of your time, not to condemn yourself but to be curious as to why it happened, what you were thinking.

So, you might have been thinking, like, "I need to get to the bottom of this. This is the top priority. I will call that person tomorrow. That's not the

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priority. This is.” It is in there somewhere. You just have to ask yourself the questions.

So, this is how you do it. This is my HOW approach, H-O-W. H stands for honest. We’ve got to get honest with ourselves. We want to approach ourselves and other people with honesty. We want to be truthful in how we’re thinking and feeling.

O stands for open. You want to be open; open to new ideas, open to new thoughts, open to being wrong, open to failing, open to all of it. And then willing, willing to fail, willing to try again, willing to be wrong, the willingness to try and fail and to try and fail and to try and fail, the willingness to show up every day as a school leader and to become that person, to step into who is the person you want to become? Who do you become in the process of training your brain to go to yoga three days a week or to not eat donuts in the morning or to improve those test scores by being in classrooms every single day? Whatever it is you want, how you do it is by being honest with yourself and others, open with yourself and others, and willing, willing to try and fail.

So, when you get off track – and I have done this. I’ve done this with my eating this year. So, I was pretty disciplined. I decided to implement a no flour, no sugar diet back in the beginning of 2018, I would say. So, 2018, 2019, I went through the hard part. I went through the cravings. I went through the wanting it. I went through the brain drama. I went through all of it, the hardships, the hunger, letting myself feel hungry, letting myself want bread, letting myself want the sweets, and then training my brain and my body to adjust to that.

2020 came along and I can remember the first thought that I had actually when I ate something. I ate pasta. And I was thinking to myself, “Why am I eating this? I haven’t eaten this kind of stuff for two years.” And my thought

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was, “We have to eat what’s available in the house because there’s a pandemic I don’t know that I’m going to always have access to fresh fruits, vegetables, and proteins.”

So, I remember that shift. And it was just a little shift, and then a little shift, and a little shift. And then, over time, I was like, wait a minute, I totally lost track. So, when you get off track, whether it’s been a day or a week or a month or a year you can always get back on track. And this is what I want to end with.

You can always get back into this new energy and this new year excitement and the way you feel when you just go back to starting with what you know. So, let’s say you were doing great for a while and you slipped or got off track, you can go back to, “Wait, what do I already know? What did I know? What did I learn through the process?” What part of the journey did you do really well?

So, for me, when I was starting no flour, no sugar, I got really good at intermittent eating. I was not eating breakfast. So, my hours of eating were from 11am to 7pm. And I was really good at, even though I was so hungry when I work up, I was really good at waiting until 11 o’clock.

It was hard in the beginning, but I was committed and it got easier and easier. And I even felt nauseous. I felt sick to my stomach, but I was so committed. I got really good, to the point where I didn’t even feel hunger until 11 or 11:30, or noon. And I made my lunch be from 11 to noon.

So, I told my body, look, I know you’re hungry now. But in – right now it’s 15 minutes for me. And 15 minutes, at 11, you can eat an early lunch. There’s no breakfast, but you can have lunch. And my lunch is sou and salad, almost every single day. That’s just easy. I don’t have to make a decision about it.

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I make a big soup for the week. I have a side salad. That's my lunch, end of story. I did that really well until I didn't. But I can go back and say, "Oh, I remember how to do that."

So, go back and revisit what you did, what you know, what you know about the goal, what steps you know work, and then revisit your why. Go back to that compelling reason. Why did I want this in the first place? Oh yeah, for me, when I don't eat flour, my body feels so much better. When I eat flour, I feel bloated. I feel constipated. I just feel heavy. I just feel awful. It doesn't feel good to me.

Now, I will say this. It's actually easier to go 100% all in on a goal than to be like 90%, to be like, "I'm only going to eat bread once a month, versus no bread at all." I'm just using this as an example because it's something true to my life.

It was harder for me to be like, "When am I going to eat bread and when am I not?" And making this decision all the time and, oh there's pasta and oh there's not, back and forth. Versus, like, I just don't eat it. If that's the only thing available, I will wait or I will order something else off the menu or I will eat ahead of time. I will find a way to feed my body and fuel it in a way that feels really good to me.

So, revisit that why. And when you think about your why, I want you to include who you become as a leader in the process of all of this. Like, who is somebody who has developed the skill of managing their mind? That's who you want to become. You want to be a school principal who knows how to navigate your mind, who understands why you feel the way you feel, why you want what you want, why you don't have what you want, and then how to get there.

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That skillset is the real accomplishment. It's the real goal. I want you to try this for 30 days and I want you to see how amazing you're going to feel. Give it a try.

Now, let me warn you, this is not pleasant all of the time. It doesn't feel good to be disciplined or to be consistent or to do things when you don't want to do them, or to meet with people when you don't want to meet with them or don't like them.

You will feel negative emotion through this process. But know this; that emotion is the worst thing that can happen and you can handle that emotion. It feels like you can't. And when it gets to a space where you feel like you can't handle it, you have to give yourself lots of love and grace. And if you give into that emotion and you do something that eases it, that's okay. Just notice that.

What was my breaking point? What was the thought I had the moment I decided to eat or to cancel that appointment or to sleep in or to not go home at five o'clock? What was that defining moment? And just notice it. Because you just put that in your pocket, you're like, "Oh, I get it. My thought was, you know, I'm only going to finish this last email." And then it took an hour, so you didn't get home until six. "I'm just going to finish this email," can be an hour's worth of time, that one little decision.

So, noticing those little teeny, tiny thoughts are what really help you inch towards your goals, even when you get off track.

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