

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program



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Angela Kelly

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Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

Hello, empowered principals. Welcome to episode 161.

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

Well hello my empowered leaders. How are you this fine Tuesday morning? I am on cloud nine right now. It is back in December and I have to tell you this story. I'm just telling you off the cuff.

So I got a phone call today from a colleague and friend of mine. Her name is Dr. Roseann. Y'all know her because she was on the podcast in December. Roseann calls me and says, "Oh my gosh Angela, I have the perfect opportunity for this. This woman named Jasmine is a reporter for CBS LA and wants an educational consultant to speak to about getting a plan together for our nation's school."

They call it a Marshall Plan, which is like, an emergency plan. It's a coming down from the government kind of a plan where there's one consistent unified plan for all the schools to be able to follow and emergency funding that would go with that, all of the things.

So here I was in the middle of my morning, getting ready for all my coaching calls, and I had just conducted a workshop the night before. So I had all of my stuff set up from the night before for the workshop on the Reboot and Refresh for School Leaders workshop. I did that last night.

So today I was just trying to wrap up for the December season, get all my client calls in, I get this call from Roseann and she says, "Are you Zoom

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

ready?” Well, I am Zoom ready fortunately. I was showered and dressed but I wasn’t maybe in the outfit I would choose to be on TV for.

So she said, “I’m giving this woman your number, she needs to do an interview right now. Go upstairs, grab a shirt that works, get your Zoom ready, get your game on. You can do this. I know, I have full confidence that you’re the perfect person for this.”

I didn’t even have time to think. I just had to jump into action. So I came upstairs, I grabbed a blouse that I thought was TV appropriate. Because to be honest, I’m in a really nice warm cozy sweater and a pair of yoga pants because I wasn’t planning on being on TV today.

But you never know. This is my message to you. You never know when the opportunity is going to knock. So long story short, this woman Jasmine calls me, she’s absolutely fabulous and amazing and so fun to talk with. We jumped on a Zoom, we did the interview, I felt so natural and so at ease, and it was so much fun working with her.

I just couldn’t believe all of that just happened today. It was so crazy. It’s going to air tomorrow, which will be Thursday, December 17th. Pretty fun. So I’ll make sure that I share that link with you all. And it’ll be in the podcast notes because it’ll have already aired.

So anyway, I’m just sharing my excitement with you today because I had so much fun with that interview. I hope that people find value in the interview and in the conversation that Jasmine and I had. And I just really enjoy my job and I just wanted to tell you how much I love all of you and how much I love the work that I do.

So that is my story of the day and I am wound up and excited because today, I’m going to share with you the process that I have created over the

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

last three years of working with clients and working as a former principal and district leader and thinking about teachers and really diving into how to bring personal development tools into our professional setting, how do we implement these tools, first at a personal level so that we understand them and we can speak to them because we know how to do them and we created results for ourselves.

And then when we get into the future podcast months, I'm going to share with you how then to transition in using these tools for yourself and then implementing them at a school-wide level with your staff, with your parents, with your students, and using them to drive your plan, your vision for your school, for your school culture, for the type of mindset you want students to have in their learning experience and for teachers and their teaching experience, and for you in your leadership experience.

So this process has evolved over the course of a few years. I want to just give you an overview today of what it is and what it entails. I'm not going to go into super detail. That would take too long. But I want to share with you that I have created a step-by-step process for principals that's simple and easy and doable.

And really, at the core of all this, the reason we need some kind of plan or some kind of systematic way of approaching this job is that school leadership is not what we expect it to be. It's never what we expect it to be. We have a vision when we're teachers or we're instructional coaches or teacher leaders of what we thought the position would be and how amazing we thought it would be and how fulfilling and how impactful we would be as a leader.

We have all these wonderful ideas swirling in our heads and we want to get it up into the position of authority and power and be able to change some of the things we see that aren't working for kids and aren't working for

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

teachers. And yet when you get into the position, the realities and the politics and the management piece of school leadership kind of hits you in the face. And it doesn't feel the way you thought it would for most people.

So what happens is what we don't see that's happening and what is really happening kind of behind the scenes is that when we make a decision to jump into a leadership role from our teacher leadership role, the gap - and I've talked about this before, but the gap of where we currently are in our professionalism, in our career, and the position we've jumped into, we have a vision of who we want to become.

That gap, any time you do something big, there's a large gap from where you're at to where you want to be. And school leadership is no different. There's a large gap in experience from running your classroom to running a school. And navigating all of the pressures.

I call it the ultimate middle management position because you're hearing from teachers, you're hearing from students and engaging with students, you're hearing from parents. You're getting pressure from the community, you're hearing from your school board, your superintendent, other district officials.

Perhaps you're working with the county or the state or other schools within your district or within your county or in your region, whatever it is that you call it. All of the people outside of your school. There's a lot of influence, a lot of flow that comes your way that you're expected to manage.

And that's when things feel very overwhelming. We get caught in this overwhelm cycle where it's not what we expected it to be, there's a little bit of dissonance and discord in our brain. Things start to feel very chaotic, and then we start to feel very uncertain about ourselves and we doubt ourselves, we feel a lot of confusion, a lot of overwhelm.

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

And we doubt our ability to lead the school through all of this chaos. What happens is in response to that disillusionment and overwhelm and chaos, our reaction or our approach is generally to work ourselves to exhaustion. We overwork. We overwork to the point that we just can't do it anymore. We can't keep it up either mentally, emotionally, or physically, and we crash.

And then the cycle goes into underworking. We subconsciously underwork. We maybe avoid things, or we take off early, or we procrastinate something. We're just trying to give ourselves a breath and in doing so, we tend to underwork.

And then when we underwork, we start to feel a little bit of guilt and then we feel inadequate and insufficient as a leader, and in response to those emotions, we go back to, what? Overworking. And we get caught in this loop. I call it the overwhelm cycle where you're overworking, exhausting yourself, underworking, then feeling this pressure and the stress again, and in response to that you start to overwork. And we're in a spin cycle.

Our thoughts about school leadership, it's like they're all over the place. They go on a pendulum. They swing from one way, and then they swing back to the other. We want to be really good at our jobs as school leaders without it consuming us fully, without it consuming our personal time and our personal lives.

And we want to feel this sense of competency and assuredness and in control and accomplished. But the truth is that when you're new at something, especially when you've made a big leap and you're created a big gap in your self-concept of who you are and who you want to be, it's not easy. It's hard. It feels hard.

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

And we don't acknowledge that being new isn't supposed to feel easy. It's not supposed to magically happen with no struggle or no stress or no doubt. It's not supposed to feel good all of the time. It is actually hard, and that's because it requires a lot of effort and energy and focus and time.

And my friends, it involves a lot of failure. A lot of failures. It's very awkward and cumbersome. It's not comfortable and I think one of the worst emotions we feel is vulnerable. We feel attacked or we feel exposed. All of our inadequacies feel like they're on the table for display.

So why do we do this to ourselves? Why do we go into a school leadership role? And what I find so interesting is that as stressful as it is, as painful as it is sometimes, when you ask a school leader if they could do it all over again, would they still choose school leadership or would they go back into the classroom?

Most people, most of my clients anyway say absolutely, I would never go back, I love what I'm doing. So as hard as it is, as much as it stretches you and your capacity to lead and to learn and to grow and evolve, people love doing it.

We don't have to stay in the position. So there may be some of you out there listening who if you just admit it to yourself, you really don't enjoy the position, it's not what you thought. And it's so much so that you don't really want the position. Just know that you always do have a choice. There is no shame in making a decision to go back and do something you know and that you love.

There are many leaders who decide to go back into the classroom because that's what gives them joy, that's what fills their heart, that's their wheelhouse. That's what they're an expert in, and they would prefer that over school leadership.

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

So I give you permission to allow yourself to go back if that's what you want to do. If you are a person however who when you think that question, why do I do this, do I want to do this, and your answer still is yes, and then you're feeling like it's really hard, that's where you just have to learn how to do the mental and emotional work that comes with evolving yourself as a leader.

So education is the process of human evolution. That is what we're in the business of. Evolving young human minds. And in that, helping our teachers evolve their minds, and we evolve our mind. Learning is how humans evolve themselves.

And we choose to learn new things in order to become the best version of ourselves as possible. We want, as humans, to experience the best of ourselves, the best life possible, the best career possible. The best accomplishments possible.

And every time you choose to evolve yourself, it will never feel easy. But it will create new results and results that you deeply want in your life. The emotions we experience as a result of evolving ourselves can be pretty intense. So how do you continue to choose to evolve yourself and opt into that evolution process and at the same time, manage those emotions that come with it?

And my solution to that is the Empowered Principal process. So there are five steps to the process that help school leaders navigate the emotional aspect of this job. Growing into the leader you want to become.

So step one is aligning to your leadership values and vision. You need to know what your leadership values are in order to create your vision. You have to have a sense of who you want to become as a leader. You don't

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

have to be that person in this moment, but you need to be thinking ahead and looking into your future about what type of leader you want to be.

What do you value as a leader? What results do you want to create? In order to have that vision become really concrete for yourself, you have to align yourself to what those values are.

Now, different leaders have different values. There's nothing wrong. There's no judgment on a value. It's your value. You get to determine your value. That's not what coaching does. Coaching doesn't tell you what values to follow and then do them.

Coaching helps you decide and discover what your values are and help you align to those values so that you can create your leadership vision. And you need to know your vision in order to determine how you will approach leading your school. So that's step one is getting into alignment with your leadership values and vision.

Step two involves prioritizing your schedule. Empowered principals use their values and their vision to guide their day-to-day actions. So you prioritize your weekly schedule based on your leadership values and visions and what's so fun about this is that once you decide your values and you know the vision that you want to create, you only put things on your calendar that align to those values and visions.

You don't have to do all the rest. I know, sounds radical, but the truth is it gets very clear about where you're spending your time, how you're spending your time, what you're spending your time on, and we coach through the courage to say no thank you to the activities and tasks and meetings and kind of fluff that doesn't help us reach the goals we want to reach for ourselves and our school.

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

That, number two, prioritizing the schedule, that's a huge step in getting closer to becoming the leader you want to be. Now, it sounds easy but it's hard. It's not hard to write down on your calendar. What feels hard are the emotions that come up with having to say no and having to practice constraint and having to prioritize when you have two values that feel equally important. Those decisions will come your way and you'll have to coach yourself through how to make that decision and then stick with it.

Step three, make empowered decisions. Empowered decisions happen when you're aligned to your values and your vision. And you can decide and be more decisive with more certainty when your decisions are grounded by your leadership values.

Being a decisive leader is so empowering. Not just for you, but for those who are following your lead. Teachers want decisive leaders. They want somebody who will stand up, weigh in the input, and get the research and information they need, but make a decision.

They don't want somebody who procrastinates the decision. They don't want somebody who prolongs the decision or continually changes the decision. Especially if the decision isn't well communicated the first time and there's confusion. So this aspect of empowered decision-making is critical for you to evolve your leadership capacity.

Step four, implementing constraint and honoring your calendar. This is the hardest part, as I mentioned. So there's one thing about prioritizing your schedule and aligning it to your values, but there's this second step of actually constraining and honoring the calendar. Basically, doing what you said you would do, having your own back, honoring the values that you said were your priority.

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

Because what happens, our brains are crazy. What happens is when we're planning something head of time, it sounds great, that'll be easy to do, I want that on my calendar, I'm going to give it two hours of my day and I'm going to be ready to go.

And then when that time comes on your calendar and it's two o'clock on Tuesday and you said you were going to write the site plan, your brain's going to be like, "But I have to deal with this behavior issue and I have to send this email and I've got to get my newsletter turned in. I'll just take care of those things really quick and I'll get to the site plan tomorrow."

Your brain is very clever and it's going to find really valid excuses and really valid actions that you can be taking that aren't what your calendar says you're going to do, or that you said you wanted to do on your calendar. So this is the hardest part, which is implementing your calendar with fidelity and having your own back.

Because the urge to say yes to everything and to everyone and to people please is really intense. And the myth of being available leaders and having an open-door policy and being reachable 24/7, the myth that that is good leadership really is an opposition to this idea of constraint and honoring our calendar.

So know that that will come up. If that's a belief system for you that good leaders are always available, they're approachable, they have an open-door policy, all of those things, those ideas, those belief systems, if you have that and it's very deeply rooted within you, constraint and honoring your calendar does become a struggle.

And finally, and this is something we don't talk about in school leadership. And I can say this with certainty, I know that people really struggle with permission to process emotions. Permission to be human. Permission to be

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

a leader who doesn't have all the answers, sometimes makes mistakes, sometimes loses his or her cool, sometimes gets frustrated, sometimes doesn't feel like working, sometimes doesn't get to all the things and lets some things slip off the plate.

We have to learn how to process that emotion. What I see happening in school leadership is there's a belief system right now that we have to be so professional polished and so pulled together that we can never let them see us sweat, we can never make a mistake, we can never lose our cool, that we can't feel negative emotion basically, that we can't admit that we're frustrated or we're unhappy with somebody, or that we don't like what's happening today, or we don't like our job right now.

We can't do that. We feel like we have to hide and go in a little corner and go home and complain about it to our spouse or our partner or our girlfriends or guy friends outside of work where it's very secret that we have human emotion.

So step five in the Empowered Principal process is to simply learn how to allow and process your emotions. This is the missing link in any leadership program. As humans, we are driven by emotion. Emotions are what drive our actions. As leaders, especially as school leaders, we're told to be completely G-rated, to be completely happy and Disney-like and Pollyanna and professionally polished all of the time.

We're not taught and we're not given permission to acknowledge how we're actually feeling. And it feels like there's no space energetically to go and do that, to be human, as a school leader. And so this program gives lots of space for that. We talk about that on the regular.

We let you say what you're actually thinking and feeling because the only way to lead from a place of empowerment is to acknowledge the truth

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

within yourself, to acknowledge that you're not perfect and that you're not always happy and that you don't always know and that you don't always care. That you're human. That 50% of the time, you've got it, you've nailed it, you know what you're doing, you're feeling great, and 50% of the time, you don't.

This really is the key to empowered leadership and this program, this process that I'm describing with you today is what's different than any other professional development program for school leaders out there. I have personal development tools that are different than anything else in the industry.

I am the only certified life coach that I know of who's offering this type of coaching service for you, for the listeners, for any school leader out there who is compelled to evolve and to gain control and to feel more human and to have more work-life balance and to not let the stress of the job consume them.

So if this appeals to you, if this program sounds like something you are interested in and you want more, I am launching the next round of the Empowered Principal program offer for school leaders. This will be a calendar year. So if you choose to invest in yourself in this program, what you'll get is a full year of coaching that covers all components of the leadership program.

So keep it in mind. If you're interested, January is the time to get started. Doesn't matter what the school year says, we're not going off the school year. We're going off 12 months, calendar year. So when you start, you get 12 months no matter what.

For more information, go to my website. You know where to find me, guys. Angelakellycoaching.com or reach out on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or

Ep #161: The Empowered Principal Program

LinkedIn. Y'all know where to find me. I am here to help, I am here to evolve you, I am here to coach you, mentor you, guide you, and be the support that school leaders need.

Have an amazing empowered 2021 my friends, can't wait to see you on the inside of the Empowered Principal program. Have a great week. Take care. Bye.

If this podcast resonates with you, you have to sign up for the Empowered Principal coaching program. It's my exclusive one-to-one coaching and mentorship program for school leaders who believe in possibility. This program is designed for principals who are hungry for the fastest transformation in the industry.

If you want to create the best connections, impact, and legacy for yourself and your school, the Empowered Principal program was designed for you. Join me at angelakellycoaching.com/work-with-me to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit AngelaKellyCoaching.com where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.