

## Ep #166: The Value of Connection



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

## Ep #166: The Value of Connection

Hello, empowered principals. Welcome to episode 166.

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, and welcome to March. Happy Tuesday. Wow, here we are, March 2021, still looking at COVID, still looking at remote learning for many of you. Not all of you. But many of you. Well, I'm thinking about you. I'm sending so much love, so much support, so much energy your way. And I hope you are well.

As you guys all know, my word for this year is connection. I've been talking about connection for all of 2021 and I've decided that in order to expand the number of school leaders that I am able to help, I need to expand my connections. I need more people to know this service is available and how this service is different than any other coaching or mentorship professional and personal development package on the planet for school leaders.

So, I have decided to actively reach out to all kinds of people and I've spent lots of hours talking with them, getting to know them and understand who they are and how they're serving in the world as educators, coaches, consultants, instructors, leaders, fellow teachers, all of it. If anybody's crossing my path and they seem like a person I want in my circle, I'm in.

I've been spending lots of time building connections. I've been so fascinated by learning from other people. And I've also noticed that with these extended quarantines going on, I have felt a deep yearning to connect with people, as I'm sure many of you feel as well.

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So, instead of feeling sad for myself and having a pity party and feeling sorry that I couldn't be with family and friends in person, I just decided, I'm going to reach out and make this happen virtually. And the result of my effort has been explosive. I have met so many fun and interesting people. I can't wait for y'all to hear from them on the podcast this month.

I'm learning and expending my thoughts and ideas. I'm inviting these people to share their thoughts on the podcast. And the result of this is I'm just having fun. I'm having so much fun. My schedule has so much more going on each day but in a really good way. I'm waking up excited for the day. I'm looking forward to talking with people. I love discussing how coaching improves schools and education and school leaders.

I am more open to hearing opposing views than I ever have been before, and this has been an area of challenge for me. But I've been really exposed to new ways of thinking about things and in spaces where I'm wrong and how I can think differently and new ideas I've never thought of before, or just adding onto my ideas. I have some great ideas, and then somebody else comes along and expands that idea into a deeper understanding or a deeper level that helps me go back into the world and serve you in a much more meaningful way. So, I love what I'm learning and I love that I'm sharing it with you all.

So, this month, we're going to focus on connection as an actual tangible leadership strategy. I've a series of interviews lined up for this month and we're all talking about connection; connection with teachers, with parents, how to use empathy as a form of connection. I also have a courageous client who I'm trying to convince to have her share her coaching journey, her leadership journey. Because her value, her primary leadership value is about connection.

She believes that connection is the key and she uses connection as an actual strategy in her approach to school leadership. I'm sure she'll do it.

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I'm sure she's ready. She's working up the courage to say hello to you all and be on the podcast and I can't wait for you to hear from her.

So, to kick off this month's theme, I'm just going to do an old-fashioned podcast. I've been doing tons of interviews and I'm super-excited to be here on the mic just you and me having a conversation about connection.

So, when I think about connection and the foundation of what connection is, the word connection, when you look it up, it means to join, to link, to unite, to bind, to associate mentally or emotionally. Isn't that interesting? And it also means the art of establishing communication.

So, there's different levels of connection and you can physically connect, you can physically get together and join or unite. You can mentally connect with one another. You can have the same ideas or causes. You can emotionally unite and connect. You can feel the same way. You can feel the same passions. You can have the same desires and dreams. And you also can communicate all of those types of connections with one another.

So, what's in this for you? Why do you want to value connection? Why do you want to make it a priority? What's really in it for you? What do you get out of spending your time, which is a very important asset, why is it valuable enough to spend your time doing this work and connecting with yourself and with others? So, we're going to talk about that today.

I think of connection in two different realms. The first one is connecting with yourself. I'm going to talk mostly about that today. And then, I'm going to show you how that brings added value to the way that you connect with your school, with your teams, with your community, your families, and with your friends and family outside of work.

So, connection with yourself is the key. There are three ways to connect with yourself. Number one, connect with your mind. That is the thought

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work that you do. This kind of connection is about creating an awareness of the current belief systems that are driving your decisions and your actions.

So, if you're a person who's working more hours than you'd prefer, I want you to be curious about what beliefs are encouraging you to make those decisions to work and work and work and to not turn work off in your brain at night and to not turn work off in your brain on the weekends.

Just be curious. Why am I continually focusing on work? Why do I feel like I have to be working? Perhaps you believe that it's a leader's job to be available 24/7 or to fix all the problems. So, every time a parent or teacher presents a problem to you, your immediate reaction is to kick into gear and start fixing it. and that leads you down this path of you have to work more hours.

Because I'll tell you what. The more problems you solve for people, the more people are going to see, "Oh, that is the solution to my problem. I'm going to talk to him or her and she's going to solve my problem for me." I have to tell you, I have a who I love so dearly, and I'm trying to get her on the podcast as well. And you know who you are. She has been struggling with the idea that it's her responsibility to solve and fix all the problems, whatever is presented her way, and in an effort to make it super-comfortable for everybody.

So, for example, teachers coming and complaining about a schedule or about a situation or about a teacher, another teacher or parent or something, and this principal has this urge, this desire to fix the problem and jumps into gear and spends so much energy, mental energy grinding away at how to solve the problem for the other person.

And we've been coaching on when that's appropriate, when to lead, when to step in and be the person that solves that problem and helps that person solve their problem, and when to actually let the person own their problem

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and you just listen and say, “I hear you, I acknowledge you, what do you think the solution is?” And then let them own the problem and the solution.

So many of us leaders believe that we need to solve it all, solve everybody else’s problems. When you connect with yourself, you’re going to notice the beliefs that are driving your actions, driving your decisions. And then, when you understand how your mind is working, it really connects you with, “Oh, no wonder I’m working so many hours because of course I have to work this many hours when it’s my job to solve all the things and fix all the problems.”

But once you see that and you question it, you’re like, “Wait a minute, is that actually true that I should be solving all the problems for all the people? Or perhaps I solve the ones within my control and they solve the ones within their control and we separate that out.” And then, all of a sudden, you’re working half as much because you’re only doing the problems that relate specifically to what you can control and what you can solve and you’re empowering your teachers to do the same for the things that they can control. It’s so brilliant.

The second kind of connection is connecting with your heart. And this is about tuning into your feelings and processing your emotions. And I know a lot of you have been taught to not process emotions, to not feel the feels. We’ve been taught to be happy, not to show emotions, or at least not show the emotions that make other people feel uncomfortable.

And please leave your baggage at the door because school is a happy place and we don’t want children seeing real emotion. You need to be professional and polished. And years of practicing that belief can lead to a disconnection from your own feelings, disconnecting from your heart, what you’re actually thinking and feeling.

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And when you disconnect, you might find that over time – and this happened to me personally, this is how I know this – is that after so long of disconnecting and not letting my emotions be heard and felt and seen, eventually the emotions rise up and wash over you and it feels like it's beyond your control.

So, you find yourself saying – like, the emotions come up and you're like, "I don't know what's happening right now. What's happening to me?" Because you're so used to controlling them and stuffing them down and not showing them and not letting them be felt. And I will tell you what. Eventually, the emotions went out in some way.

They will find a way out. So, you can allow them space and give them time and attention and let them be processed in a way that feels most safe and comfortable for you, versus letting them decide when they're going to rise to the surface and kind of overtake your body. It feels like it's out of your control.

So, when I was a school leader, I would disconnect further and further from my emotions because I didn't want to experience the feelings like doubt, shame, and guilt, rejection, embarrassment, disappointment, failure, regret, all the yucky ones. And I got to a place where I avoided feeling much of anything at all. Because what happened was, I numbed the negative emotions and I tried to dull them and just tried to stay in neutral all the time.

But the problem with that is I was also disconnecting from the positive emotions. I do not recommend this. I recommend that you connect with your feelings. How am I feeling and why am I feeling this way? Ask yourself and let the answer come up. The worst thing that can happen is you will feel bad. You might cry. You might sob. You might fall asleep. You might be so exhausted. But when you let the emotions come to the surface, they will come through and then they will be done. And that is the worst thing that will happen. More on that for another podcast.

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But one, connect with your mind. Two, connect with your heart, and three, connect with your soul. And what I mean by that is connecting with your desires, your dreams, your goals. I want you to connect with the possibility of your life, your leadership life, your career and your lifestyle at home, your personal life.

I want you to connect with your highest self and evolve your self-concept of who you are and who you have to become in order to achieve and have all of the things you want in your life. This is the best and most fun part of self-connection. Connection with what you most desire to experience in your life is the energetic fuel that makes your dreams become reality.

Oftentimes, what happens is we don't allow ourselves to connect with our dreams because we're so afraid that we aren't capable of having them. We're not capable of achieving them. We are afraid we will fail. We are afraid that we won't even get close or that somebody will deny us, that we'll feel deprivation because we won't have the thing that we want.

So, what we do is we deprive ourselves ahead of time. We feel and we see a goal we want to have but we don't think we can really have it or achieve it. So, we tell ourselves not to think about that. We don't want to feel the failure of not having what we deeply want so we avoid thinking about it at all.

We ignore the dream. We push away the desire. We talk ourselves out of it and we tell ourselves to be reasonable. We try to justify that what we have is good enough and we scold ourselves for wanting more and tell ourselves, "Just be grateful for what you already have. Why do you need that? What do you want to go for that dream? That's a little bit audacious of you to want that."

So, we scold ourselves and we keep ourselves reasonable and at a level that people can tolerate us. But when you're willing to be vulnerable with



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yourself and be truthful with yourself, not even with other people, just with yourself about what you want and why you want it, and that you're capable of having it, when you share those grandest biggest desires with yourself, you tap into the emotions of hope, fun, possibility, eagerness, and an amazement that you can't quite put into words.

This is what I help clients do. I help them connect to their biggest life desires so that they can create a lifestyle plan where their career fits in and their personal life fits in. And what they're doing is they're tapping into their deepest desires because they're focusing on the experiences that they want to have, the connections they want to make, the feelings they want to feel, the things they want to have, the places they want to go. Just like Dr. Suss.

So, this idea of connection, I want to really sell you on it because it's so valuable to you as a leader. And the reason it's valuable is this shift into connecting with others. So, when you're willing to connect with yourself, it opens up the door to connect with others. It brings up your willingness to be open and connect with others.

You will want to listen and learn and expand your thoughts and experiences through the interaction you have with other people. The more vulnerable you are with yourself, the more open you can be with other people and the deeper connections you will have.

Knowing yourself really well and being connected, it also guides you when to say yes and when to say no to outside connection. Because the more you know about what you truly desire, the easier it will be to make decisions about how you spend your time connecting with other people.

There are times when we connect and it feels amazing. And there are times when we feel obligation to connect, which does not feel amazing.

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And you need to be able to really discern why you are choosing to connect or not connect with people.

The deeper connections you have, the more inspirational, impactful, and influential of a leader you will be and the more impact and fluence you will also have in creating the lifestyle you want to live.

So, what is the impact and value of connection? Pop quiz. It's knowing yourself and knowing how to work with others. It helps you stay grounded in your work because you have clarity of your leadership values which drive your goals. It gives you focus and helps you avoid overwhelm and confusion. It also helps you constrain, what to say yes to and what to say no to. You're not trying to solve it all and be the all-knowing and the all-winning principal. You're just going to focus on the top priorities that you have and spend your energy and time on those things only.

But the best part is that this builds self-confidence because when you know what you want and why you want it, you're going to feel confident about the decisions you're making and the actions you're taking and the connections you're building and the impact and influence you're creating.

Two, the other value is that it opens you up to connections with others. And why is that important? When you know yourself well, you're more open to getting to know others. And you more deeply understand how to process situations for yourself and it gives you insight into how other people process similar experiences.

You can see their perspectives with much more empathy, and at the same time, you can be connected to somebody and not take on their emotional toll, not let their emotional experience weigh you down. You can hold space for other people's emotions and their experiences and just notice and understand how their brain is interpreting a given situation. So, you can

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listen without getting really sucked into their situation or their story that they're having.

And finally, you practice vulnerability. You're not locked into one way of doing things. You're open to hearing new thoughts, new solutions, new perspectives. You're willing to be wrong. You're willing to fail and try again. And in that practice of true authenticity and true connection, you are going to receive. You're not just giving. You're receiving. You will receive love and support and a deeper connection from other people, which then again expands your influence, your impact, and your legacy.

So, the more connected you are, the greater impact you have on yourself, your life, and the world, hands down. That's it. One quick caveat I want to warn you with. You can get caught up in too much connection. And I want you to notice if you're using connection time to avoid other work and other situations.

Sometimes, we tell each other, "Let's connect with our colleagues. Let's connect with teachers." And what we're really doing is just spending time kind of fluffing around and not getting to the work that we said we were going to do. So, if you're a person who loves to connect, you want to make sure your reasons behind that connection are getting you towards the goals that you're trying to achieve and that they're not a form of buffering or avoiding other work that needs to get done. So, just keep that in mind, for those of you who love, love, love to connect.

So, in summary here, folks, what we implement ourselves as leaders in terms of connecting with ourselves has a profound ripple effect throughout your school culture and climate. And as a coach, my mission is to help all of you as school leaders to fully believe in the value of this internal connection and work on personal development and to see how focusing on your beliefs over actions is the missing link in our education programs today.

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Connection is the key. And one of the ways I'm evolving myself and my self-concept is to grow my network and build more connections with other educators so that you can benefit from the connections I'm making.

So, this month, you will continue to hear from my expanding network of colleagues and clients and fellow coaches so that you can broaden your connections simply by listening to the podcast. How fun is that?

I want you to be connected with yourself, be connected with others, and have an empowered week. Take care. Bye-bye.

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