

## Ep #178: The Reality of Positivity



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

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## Ep #178: The Reality of Positivity

Hello empowered principles. Welcome to episode 178.

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

Hello my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday. If you're new to the podcast, welcome. I'm so happy you're here. We keep getting more and more downloads. We keep getting more and more principals joining the Empowered Principal Facebook group. We're having so much fun over there.

As you guys know who are in the Facebook group, I am doing 31 empowered leadership thoughts in 31 days throughout the month of May. And in June, we're going to be having the summer of fun. I'm going to be challenging you to do lots of selfcare, tap back into who you are and what you love, and how you want to live life, and all of the joy that comes with being human and being alive on this planet.

So we're not just here to be school leaders. I know it's very serious and very important and very busy, but there's also a part of you that needs to live and be joyous and be lighthearted and free. We're going to do that in the Empowered Principal group this June. Can't wait.

Okay. To close out this month, I'm going to offer a variety of thoughts on positivity based on the real life experiences of my current clients. Clients who are just like you listening to this podcast. They are in the throes of the end of the year. Whether you are a teacher or an instructional coach or an assistant principal or a principal or a district leader. The end of the year is

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very busy, very challenging. Not to mention you are at the end of a pandemic school year. We haven't had a pandemic in over 100 years. This is kind of a big deal.

So just know. It's okay that you're exhausted. Of course you're exhausted. Your patience has worn completely thin. You want it to be over. You're not alone. Every client of mine is expressing the same feelings. They're exhausted. They're over it. Their patience is gone. They're frustrated. They're angry. They're just done. They don't even want to feel positive. They're not even able to tap into it anymore because they're feeling so heavy. They're feeling burdened. They're feeling like they're having to take on everybody else's energy as well as their own.

So I'm going to talk about that today. I'm going to talk about the reality of this time of the school year and when you don't feel positive. And I'm going to offer you some thoughts that will help you feel relieved. At least some relief when positivity doesn't feel available to you. And how being honest with yourself about how you really are feeling right now is actually the path back to positivity.

So thought number one. You don't have to be the cheerleader all of the time. I want to start this off by acknowledging the pain, the struggle of school leadership these last two years. It's tough during a "normal" year. Last year and this year have been anything but normal. Layers upon layers of actions you've had to take that you never thought you would have to take as a school leader.

From closing down last year and transitioning to remote learning to all of that technology involved. To getting teachers up and running, to getting students online and available, and access to technology. To figuring out food services and transportation services and cleaning services on your

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campus. Then having to bring the kids back and all the social distancing and the quarantining and then contact tracing. Like it's unbelievable the work that you have put in.

So I commend you. I acknowledge you. I want you to know you are seen. You are heard. You are felt. You are honored. You are appreciated. I feel so much love for all of you right now. I'm just sending out so much love and giving you all a great big hug right now. I feel so emotional just thinking about you. I want you to know this. I know that you are using grit and stamina to get you through to the end. You're holding your breath until you can reach summer.

But I want you to know that it's okay not to be everybody's cheerleader right now. Yes, you're the leader of your school, but you're also human. You only have so much capacity mental, emotional, physical capacity to offer to other people. Yes, I know your teachers are also equally exhausted. You want the end of the year to be done as much as they do and the students. Everyone wants it over. Everyone wants the break. You have earned it, and you deserve to have the break from the business, the challenges, the tasks at hand.

But with all of that said, just because you are the school leader doesn't mean that you personally need to endure not only your own exhaustion but to take on the responsibility of taking care of other people's exhaustion. No wonder school leadership feels like layers and layers and layers are being put upon you.

It's like this heavy feeling. You almost feel like you're being crushed by the end of the year because we have these thoughts that we're the leader. The buck stops with us. We are the final answer and the solution, and we've got

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to keep everybody's spirits up high when they are in the grind. But sometimes you're in the grind.

So you can celebrate students and teachers at the end of the year without killing yourself in the process. Without making the celebration so big and so grand that you don't even have the energy to enjoy the celebration yourself.

You don't have to overextend yourself with thoughts like, "Morale is low. I need to do more to keep everybody feeling good and motivated. It's my job as the leader to always be positive and to keep teachers going." Pushing yourself when you're at the end of your rope from the thought that you have to overextend yourself for them to enjoy the year. That's not serving from alignment.

When you're too exhausted and taxed for time because there are additional things going on at the end of the year. And a teacher says to you like, "Hey, the staff lounge is out of chocolate." It doesn't mean you have to run out at eight p.m. at night and buy the chocolate. To my client who knows that I'm speaking to her right now, don't buy the chocolate. If they want chocolate, they can go buy it. Or at the very most, you can ask somebody else to do it. Delegate that responsibility.

But don't take it upon yourself to feel like you've got to fulfill their every little need, their every little whine, their every little complaint. Yes, they're tired. And when people are tired, they complain a little more and they're a little less positive themselves. So don't think that your only job is to keep them to the point that you can't keep yourself running. Don't buy the chocolate. I want you to take that sentence, put it on a post-it, and put it in your office.

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I love you teachers. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying you don't deserve chocolate. You're tired too. But go buy it yourself. Your school leader is burning the candle at both ends.

Okay. All right. Next thought. All humans, all of us, experience all the emotions. Just because you're a school leader, it doesn't exempt you from going through challenging situations that trigger intense and challenging emotions. You have a life outside of work that can significantly impact your ability to lead your school from this place of feeling perky and positive all the time.

Look. I've got clients who just had babies, and they are beyond exhausted. They're up all night helping with the feeding, and they're truly sleep deprived. I've got other clients who are dealing with highly contentious family matters. I've got clients dealing with health issues, clients trying to have babies while being a school leader and going to school full time in their doctorate programs.

I've got clients dealing with relationship issues. Clients who are morally opposed to their district's leadership decisions this year and are truly undone by some of the actions and decisions their district has made. Clients who are dealing with very parenting situations. Parenting situations at school, parenting situations in their life. I've got clients who are taking care of elderly parents outside of their work. Clients who have struggled with depression.

Look. Every school leader on the planet isn't just leading their school. They and you, the listeners out there, are living a human life with all of the challenges that come with being human. You have a personal life. It does impact your professional life. You are one human. I've said this many times before. Your personal and your professional life are one.

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Which is why this program, this coaching program that I offer integrates both of your personal and professional lives into one package. You are one human. You're not going to feel aligned and energetic and positive all the time. That's not the human experience. So there are going to be days and weeks and even months where you are going through a period of misery. No one's exempt from that.

While some clients are experiencing a lot of breakthroughs and successes, and you'll get to hear from some of them next month. I'm going to highlight a few of my clients who are eager and excited to share their stories and their breakthroughs and their triumphs with you. Other clients while some are on a high, others are in deep struggle and in deep pain. Life ebbs and flows like this. It's designed to be 50/50. If it weren't, we couldn't distinguish one experience from another. It would be flatlined. That's the beauty of being human.

When you're in the period of time where you cannot authentically tap into positivity, trying to force yourself to be positive and cheery is only going to make you even more unhappy because you're not acknowledging the truth of how you're feeling. Trying to feel happy when you're not, it just feels gross.

What's really happening is that you're ignoring the thoughts that are going on in your head, and you're resisting the emotions to those thoughts. You're trying to pretend that whatever personal situation you're facing, or even if it's thoughts about work that are creating a lot of distress. Whether it's work related or personally related, if you're not feeling positive and you can't really tap into being positive trying to be positive and trying to pretend you're happy when you're not, that whole fake it until you make it, actually feels worse. It's awful.

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Look. If you're going through a significant personal situation and you come to work and pretend to be happy and to be positive and that nothing's going wrong. You're the perfect happy little leader, and you're bouncing around campus. One, you're going to be twice as exhausted at the end of the day. Which is going to perpetuate how unhappy you actually truly are. And people will know it's not genuine.

Look, as humans we can sense when something feels off with somebody else, and we know when someone's faking it most of the time. Now, there are those people who are going through traumatic situations at home, and they come to work and they're actually genuinely happy while they're there. These are the people that when you hear their story at some point, you're like, "Whoa. I had no idea what they were going through. How did they do it? How are they so happy?"

Sometimes people just get really, really skilled at compartmentalizing their personal life and their professional life. Other people get really skilled at just lying their way through life and pretending to be happy is their norm. And it's hard to tell the difference.

Or being at work actually does feel happy. It is the best part of the day. It is that relief because they're dealing with something at home, and they can come to work and just feel like this is a safe space. It's a space to think about something else. And it's a relief from the pain that they're in personally. It's kind of a refuge from the storm that's happening at home or in their private life.

So what I want to offer is that whether you're able to tap into some level of positivity or if you're not able to tap into any positivity. Or if work itself is the situation that's feeling really painful for you right now and being happy is not how you truly feel. I invite you to give yourself time on your calendar,



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actually schedule it in, and let yourself feel the pain of whatever it is that you're going through. It's not going to subside until you acknowledge it.

I repeat this month after month on the podcast. That emotions drive our actions. It's what determines how we make decisions, the actions we take, the decisions we make. It all stems from emotion. Everything revolves around how we feel. And our thoughts about life and work and all of the things are what are generating those emotions. So acknowledge those emotions.

And then the thoughts behind those emotions is how we create new routines in our life. How we make better decisions for ourselves. How we evolve our self-concept. How we build our skill at leaders. How we improve the way we practice leadership, education, teaching, learning, all of it. It's how we evolve education at large. It's how we have this bigger impact in influence and legacy as school leaders. It all stems from emotion. I promise you.

So if you're feeling less than positive, take time. Take a weekend away. Go rent a hotel room or get a little cottage on the beach or go to your lake home. Whatever access you have to getting out of your house and just letting yourself sit with you and be with you and think the thoughts and feel the feels. Go do that.

Or if you can't afford a whole weekend away either financially or time wise, just take a night. Turn off the phone. Turn off the computer. Turn off the TV for a night and let yourself feel grief or anger or sadness or exhaustion. Crawl into bed at seven p.m. Let yourself feel. Cry if you have to. Scream if you have to. It won't last forever. Just acknowledge the feeling. Feel it. Let it vibrate through your body.

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I promise you. Yes, to the mind it feels terrible, and you're telling yourself, "Just get me out of this pain." But the emotions as terrible as they feel are just emotions. They can't hurt you physically by allowing them to vibrate in your body. It can feel like they will hurt you physically, emotionally, mentally, but we are designed as humans to be able to allow emotion. Any emotion.

If we weren't capable of handling emotion and we weren't wired and designed by nature to allow emotions, we wouldn't have them. Because we were built on the premise of sustainability and life. Preservation, right? We want to procreate and keep our species living and alive. We don't want to become extinct. So if emotion were to kill us off, if we weren't capable of handling it, we wouldn't have them.

So I promise you. Allowing yourself to just be in that emotion of whatever you feel whether you're crying it out, whether you're punching your pillow, whether you're screaming in anger. Whatever it is you need to do to get that out, nothing's wrong with you. Every human feels that intense of emotion at some point.

Let yourself be honest with yourself about what you're thinking and feeling. Just that acknowledgement. Just the truth of saying, "I see you over there. I see you in pain. I know you're suffering. I know you're tired." Acknowledging that feels like relief to the body and to the brain. They want to hear the truth. Your body, your mind, your soul, it wants to hear you acknowledge what feels real for you in the moment. It doesn't feel good to try and rush through or ignore altogether those hard emotions. Allow, allow, allow. It's okay. The emotion won't last forever. Nothing has gone wrong with you. You're not a bad human for feeling hard emotions, okay?

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Now, let's get back to positive. So once you've been truthful with yourself about how you're feeling and why you're feeling it, and you've processed that exhaustion, the frustration, the annoyance, the fear, the pain, the anger. Whatever it is. Then you can take some steps towards moving back to feeling more positive.

So in the episode with Kim a couple of weeks ago, Kim Stroble, she shared a straightforward tangible top that you can take. Very simple. Choose three things you're grateful for everyday and write them down pen to paper. I added dropping yourself into feeling that gratitude. Dropping into your body and actually feeling the vibration of gratitude in your body and letting it resonate through you. Do that for 21 days. Three things you're grateful for. Feel the gratitude for those three things. Notice if your mind starts to focus on and look for positive aspects in your job and in your life.

I have been doing this very intentionally, very proactively. What I do is the very first thing that I do when I wake up before I even get out of bed, I have my little gold beautiful journal sitting there. Husband still asleep because I wake up around six, really early. Or even earlier sometimes. I wake up.

Here's what my brain defaults to. My brain is very all or none thinking. It's like it's going to be a great day. It's super excited. Jump out of bed. Whoo! Or I'm like terrible day ahead. All the things to do. Hate having to do my bookkeeping and taxes and blah, blah, blah. Boring things. I don't know. That's just my brain. Maybe it's your brain too. It's all or none thinking. It's all good or all bad. The world's going to hell in a handbag or it's the best place ever in the entire universe, right? So very all or none thinking. If you can relate, we are connected.

But what I've been doing is as my brain wakes up, the very first thing I do is I grab that journal. I drop into like what am I truly grateful for? Some days

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are harder than others. I am not gonna lie. During the pandemic, I would wake up feeling very heavy. Not that we're over it yet, but we're feeling vaccinated. We're hopefully on a trend that's moving in a positive, forward direction.

But during the thick of it I was feeling very heavy and unmotivated. But every time that I took the time to write down little things that I'm truly grateful for in my life, and I had to reach on some days. Sometimes I would look around and it was just whatever was in eyeshot. My bed, my blankets, my nail polish, plants. The sun shining through the window in the morning. Like little things that I could just grab onto.

When I did that, and I wrote that, and I felt like the sun coming in, and I took a deep breath in and felt the plants were alive today. I was cozy in my bed. I just love our new bed. Just those kinds of things changed my energy. I could feel myself day after day shifting into thinking about so many things in my life that I'm grateful for. Technology. Of course all the people in my clients. I love my clients like so much. It pains me how much I love them. How much I love my friends, my family, all of that.

Even little things in my life. Technology. Who would we be without our technology? Electricity, running water, clean water, fresh food, warmth of a home. All of it. My car. Just everything around me, everything I surround myself with I feel immense gratitude for.

What happened is that I began to wake up and feel excited just to do my journal. I woke up and I was like, "I get to write down all the things I'm grateful for and put myself into this energy of tons of gratitude for so many things." I keep thinking of more and more every single day. Not only that, I now can even when I'm spinning in negativity. Like just last night we sold a property. I anticipated that we were going to make much more than we did.

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It kind of became a wash. I was really frustrated at myself for not seeing that ahead of time.

Anyway. Even when I woke up spinning, my thoughts were right away on that whole transaction and how it went down and how I could have handled it differently and what I'm going to do next time. I looked at my journal. I grabbed it, and immediately started writing down the gratitude I had for that property. The beauty of selling it to somebody who really truly loves it and wants it and is going to build a beautiful home on it.

I started really leaning into why this experience was happening and gratitude for the learning I was having. Instantly I released any struggle, any kind of self-judgement that I had about what I didn't know, where I was inexperienced in this whole transaction. I have been having the most positive day.

So doing something as simple as three gratitude's a day can turn into deep appreciation for all of it. The good times, the bad times, the good experiences, the successes, the failures, the learnings, all of it. You can find the gratitude in all of it.

When you do that, you can also find the gratitude ahead of time where you are feeling appreciation for the things you don't yet have but are striving for. The parts of your life you haven't yet accomplished but you're striving for them. You can get into this energy of having already done it before it's actually kind of in your physical life.

So the more positive I am, the better I coach, the better I teach, the better I write. It's a completely different energy than when I let my brain default to its complaining because that's what my brain does. I don't know about y'all.

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Okay. One last thought on positivity. I do recommend choosing to prioritize authentic positivity. As I mentioned in the last podcast, I talk about authentic positivity in the last podcast, which was podcast 177. So if you haven't heard that, tune back into that. It will give you all the details on what that means. Building up your beliefs and being intentional with those thoughts that you want to think to generate true positivity in your life and in your leadership work will really benefit you. So check that out for the details on how to do that.

I also will say this. Positivity is not required to be a good leader. It does not equate to good leadership. So it's not a requirement of a good leader, but it also doesn't equate to good leadership. Just because you hop onto campus with a bunch of energy and enthusiasm and positivity and cheerlead your teachers on, that doesn't mean that you are a great principal.

Positivity does not equate to good leadership. Positivity in and of itself doesn't create results. I mean you can feel positive and create results or you can feel negative and create results because that's not what creates results. Your feelings impact how you show up, how you act, how you talk, how you speak to others, how you treat them, how you think. Just all of it. It impacts your actions, and it impacts the results that you create. But what really creates expedited results is value.

So you can be having a hard time and still give value to your community, value to the families, value to students, value to teachers, value to your district. The value that you provide to students and staff and families and the district who's paying you for your value that you're providing, right. That's what creates results. More on that topic next month.

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But for now, know that you don't have to be positive every single day or ensure that your staff always feels positive in order for you and your team to create the results that you want for your school and your students. Proactively prioritizing positivity will help you generate those results faster. Because when you're directing your brain to thinking about what is working, what is going well, and the resources you do that. That is how you generate solutions more quickly, but it doesn't mean it will always feel good in the process. Do you see the difference?

So positivity can fast track you, but only when it's authentic. Only when you're focused on what is working, what you do love, what you do have, and what you want to accomplish in a way that's not coming from the scarcity or lack of not having it. But coming from a way that knows and believes it's possible to achieve and to feel that certainty within yourself before you've actually accomplished it.

Okay. I hope that all resonates with you and feels good to hear the truth. That you don't need to be positive all of the time. And that the only positivity that actually works is authentic positivity.

All right. Next month. I'm telling you ahead of time. Next month is going to be the best month ever for this podcast because I'm going to be sharing insights that I've never shared before about the Empowered Principal coaching program. I'm also going to be interviewing a few of my clients so that they can share their experiences and their success that they've created over the course of this past year.

You will definitely want to tune in because these folks are in it in real time. They're right there with you. So they can speak to the experience of the leadership and the coaching and how coaching's impacted leadership and how coaching's impacted their ability to impact their teachers and to create

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bigger results for themselves. It's phenomenal what these clients have accomplished and how they've grown. I am so proud, and I am so honored to be their coach. Truly, truly I am.

So if you are curious what is life coaching for school leaders? What does that look like? What does that feel like? What does it entail? "I'm curious to have a coach, but I'm a little afraid. I'm intimidated. I'm not quite sure." Be sure to tune in to all the episodes in the June podcast series because we'll cover information about the program. I'll answer questions and answers. I will give you clients who will share with you directly their stories, their experiences, their challenges, their fails, and all of their wins. It's going to be amazing. I love you guys so much. Have an amazing, empowered week. I will talk with you next week. Take care. Bye, 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](https://angelakellycoaching.com/work-with-me) to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

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