

Ep #190: Leading Untrustworthy Colleagues



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 190.

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 and happy Tuesday empowered leaders. How's it going? I'm thinking about you. I'm wishing you a wonderful new school year. I'm so excited for you. I'm so excited for my new clients. I want you to know I have room for you. If you want a coach this year, I don't want a belief to be, "She's too busy. I'm sure she's full." I had somebody say, "You're a celebrity. I can't imagine working with you."

If you think any of those things, let me tell you what. I will always make room for clients. I will find a way to serve every single one of you. I don't want you believing that I'm too big of a celebrity or that you can't possibly imagine working with me or that I'm too full or I'm too busy. None of that is true. I make time for clients. I have an abundance of time. I will always find time for you. You just have to be a yes. You just have to commit to yourself.

Last week we talked about trust. Trusting yourself, trusting your desires and your goals. If you desire to have a coach and have somebody help you through this first year or even your second or third year or your 10th year. It doesn't matter. I want you to know it is possible. When you believe and trust in yourself, you believe and trust in me as your coach to help you get the results, and in the process of coaching. When you believe that coaching is the solution, there is nothing that can stop you. When you believe that you will figure it out no matter what, nothing can stop you. When you have me as your coach, nothing can stop you.

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So for those of you that have been holding back thinking that it's too late, the school year's already started. I'm here to tell you. My goal is to help as many leaders as possible. There is no reason to hold back from getting the tools and strategies that you need to be effective in your job. To feel good about who you are as a leader right now where you're at. Not thinking you need to be somebody better give years from now but right now. Having fun in your job right now. Having work-life balance right now this moment. I will never deny you that.

If you're a good fit for the program and I know that you're a 10 when it comes to believing in yourself and believing in coaching, hey you could be a five. I've got your back because I'm a 10 for you. I'll hold space for that. Just know that any obstacles that are coming up in your mind, I've got you. Jump on a consult call and let's talk about it. Let's see if we're a match to work together, and let's get empowered. Okay? None of that craziness. That I'm too busy or you think that I can't fit you into my schedule. We will make it work. All right? All right. Lets do this.

Okay. Onto a different topic. So last week I talked about building the school year on trust, right? Using trust as a leadership tool. Now, I'm going to talk about the reality of trust. The reality is we don't trust everybody. Our brain has a limit to who we trust. We don't trust everybody. For some of us, it's really easy to trust people. For others of us it's really a challenge.

Now I'm going to tell a story about a true situation. I'm working with a client, and there is an issue with trust. I'm going to be somewhat cryptic in terms of how I'm telling this story just to honor the privacy and protection of the people involved. I'm telling you this story because it really can work even when you don't feel trust with somebody. Let me share the story with you and how I coached her on it.

So the scenario is this is a second year principal. She has an AP, an assistant principal, who has been at the school much longer than her. The

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AP was behaving in ways that the principal did not trust. The situation grew in intensity. Throughout our coaching, and this was over a few months, we were coaching on how to build trust and how to create trust. Finding trust within ourselves, learning how to trust other people. Approaching the situation with some compassion and understanding and looking for the ways we could lean on trust.

This situation continued to progress, and it led to an experience that felt very traumatic for my client, for the principal. Things went down. It got pretty ugly. The AP took a leave. There was some district level involvement going on. The AP took a rest, a leave, and is returning this year. The return has triggered this client. The principal in this situation does not have the capacity or doesn't choose, her brain is choosing to not trust. Her brain cannot go from not trusting to trusting, which is absolutely understandable.

When you have had a traumatic or intense interaction with somebody, of course your mind or body are going to go into fight or flight. Your mind's job is to protect you. This is your brain's business. This is what it does, right? It's supposed to protect you and keep you out of harm's way. When you perceive another person as a threat either mentally, emotionally, or physically, your mind if of course going to default into protection mode.

So when I understood the capacity to which, and we tried all the other angles. It became apparent to me that the trauma inflicted, and the emotional intensity of this situation was so intense that instead of trying to work our way through it, we decided to just embrace it as the situation, as the circumstance, as truth.

So what we did instead of trying to fight nature basically, the way you're designed to respond which is fight or flight and keep yourself safe. We decided to lean into the truth. In this case, because the principal was not willing and didn't want to change her thought from 'I can't trust her' to 'I can trust her'.

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I want to say that this thought was serving her. The thought 'I can't trust her' was keeping her safe. It was helping her create boundaries and set up systems so that she would feel safe in her position. It felt much safer than "Oh yeah. I'll just try and trust her. We'll try again." She couldn't go there. I wasn't trying to get her to go there. We were exploring on the rungs of belief where she landed. She was adamant that, "I just can't trust this person."

So what we did was we decided to say okay. How would it feel to not trust somebody? How do we work with somebody we cannot trust? Think about this for a second. There are people in your work environment—they might be colleagues, they might be peers, they might be district admin, they might be teachers, they might be support staff. There's probably somebody in your sphere whom you don't trust. I want you to be honest with yourself. Notice the true feelings.

If you feel you can't trust someone or you don't fully believe in them, you can't fake that. It won't work. The thought, the fears, will prevail over you. They will show up in the way you interact with this person and the way that you approach situations with them.

So instead of trying to coach yourself into trusting them, being honest and just accepting what you're truly feeling about the person will be much easier in terms of, "How do I approach this person now that I don't trust?" If the circumstance is I distrust this person, now what? What are your thoughts about it? Right?

So let's go with the truth of that. Let's say you cannot allow yourself to trust someone. That becomes the circumstance. That's what you're dealing with. So now the question becomes what do you want to do with that? As a school leader, how do you want to handle working with somebody you don't trust?

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If you put that in a steer cycle, the feeling will be distrust. The emotion, the E line. So when you're feeling distrust and you're thinking I can't trust this person, how do you show up? Now if the distrust feels like fear, you're going to show up differently than if the distrust is backed up with confidence. Let me show you the two branches of this, okay?

So when you're feeling fear. If the steer cycle is the thought is "I can't trust this person" and the feeling is fear, worry, doubt, scared that they're going to do something crazy to you or say something or hurt you in some way, shape, or form. Then you're going to tiptoe around them. You're not going to want to work with them. You're going to go into fight or flight. You're going to battle with them and fight with them or you're going to avoid them or you're going to placate them. You're going to show up in a way that doesn't ultimately serve you.

If the thought is "I don't trust this person" and the feeling is confident, assured, certain, you're going to show up differently. You're going to set boundaries. You're going to build trust with your teachers outside of this person. You're going to build trust with other people, but you'll trust with yourself. You're going to have your own back even though this person doesn't fit on the team in some way, right? You're feeling like I can't trust them, but you're confident that you can handle it.

That feels very different from I don't know what to do or say or I have to walk on eggshells. They're going to destroy my relationship with my teachers. They're going to bring out the haters. They're going to destroy my reputation.

When you're in fear of the person you don't trust, that is different than feeling like, "You know what? I don't trust this person, but I have my own back. I am going to set boundaries. I'm going to set expectations. We're going to have a protocol for the way we interact." You'll probably minimize your interactions with this person, but you're not going to let them diminish

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you. You're not going to let them put you into an emotional state where you are fighting with them or avoiding them or placating them.

So you don't have to trust every single human on the campus in order to be an effective leader. You can decide out of respecting yourself and creating boundaries that you don't trust somebody and that's okay. What you want to do is you want to build your confidence in yourself. If you don't trust that person, you have to focus on what you can trust, the people you can trust, the relationships you can trust. The relationship with yourself and building relationships with people other than this person so that when you have an issue that you need to deal with that person, you have other people that you do trust to help you or that can support you.

So back to this case. If an AP is somebody that you can't trust and your thoughts are, "We're supposed to be on the same team. We're supposed to be working together. We should be peers on this. We should be working towards the same goals. What's happening here?" You're feeling all of this confusion and this dissonance inside your mind, you can say to yourself, "I'm not feeling trust and that's okay. I'm going to continue to do my job. I have the capacity to handle this. I know what I can do and who I can work with and who I can trust."

We want to make sure, one last thought, that when we feel distrust for somebody and we're in conflict with them in some way, shape, or form, you can do the work to feel confident, ensured, and build trust with other people. I also want you to consider looking at the thoughts about that person. What are the thoughts you're having about them? What do you believe they should be doing? They should be saying? How do you think they should be acting? Why do you think they should be on the same team and have the same goals?

This is called a mental manual. This is a tool from the Life Coach School where we have these little manuals, these little handbooks inside of our

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minds where we think we know how other people should behave. This is what they should do. This is what they should say. This is how oi should feel when I be with them. They should be on the same page as us. They should respond this way. They should do their job this way. They should have the same values that I have.

So our work in addition to coming to terms with no trusting somebody, especially if your core value is trust. I know for this client of mine, one of her core values is trust. She wants to trust everybody. It's really hard for her not to trust. This is her work to learn how to not trust somebody and still lead them, and still coach them, and still guide them, be their boss. This is her journey, her work.

So if you're a person who highly trusts somebody and you feel awkward because you are not trusting somebody, just notice that. Also do your work on the manual you have for them. The playbook that you think they should play by. When they're not playing and they're not doing what you're telling them to do or they're not acting in a way you think they should, where are you creating their own pain because you think they should be different than they are.

All right? So if you have questions about this or if you're struggling with somebody you don't trust, let's jump on the call. Let's do a consult about it and talk it through. I'm here to help you guys. All right. Have an amazing week. I will talk with you all next week. Take care. I love you. Bye.

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with-me to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

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