

## Ep #197: How to Stay Motivated



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 197.

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. Happy October. Welcome to fall. It's so exciting. So I'm recording this on the last day of August, August 31<sup>st</sup>, and it's my sister's birthday. So a shoutout to my sister, Heather Kelly out there in the world who has her own video podcast. She is a musician, and she coaches musicians. It's fabulous. So shout out to her. Happy birthday baby sister. Love you. And on with the show.

So if you're new to the podcast, welcome. The podcast is growing. I love it. I love all of you. This is so much fun. Today we're going to talk about how to stay motivated by tracking progress by focusing on all of the growth that we are achieving as school leaders in the moment. This is something I've been working on for myself in my business. Because our brains want to default to what isn't working and why we're not good enough and what isn't happening and why we're not fast enough.

No matter where you are along the journey, there are things that you will be working to accomplish that you won't have accomplished yet. So, for example, before you became a school leader, and maybe there are many of you out there who are aspiring school leaders. So you're not even in the position yet. But I want to talk to those who are already in it just for a second.

When you wanted to be a school leader, you were working towards being a school leader. And you were thinking about landing that job, getting in the ideal position, getting in the ideal school, becoming a school leader, and

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what that meant to you. You were thinking about the accomplishment of getting a job offer as a school leader, but you didn't yet have it. You were so focused on landing that accomplishment that your brain was thinking about it all of the time.

Now there are people out there who don't get an offer on the first interview. They might have to interview three times or five times. Or maybe you go through the process where you have first, second, third round interviews and you don't land the job. You feel discouraged and you're frustrated. You're spinning out thinking to yourself, "What am I doing wrong? I'm doing something wrong in the interview. I'm not conveying my talents, my skill set." So you're thinking about all of that and you're spinning out. Or you're thinking, "There's nothing wrong with me. I've got this. What don't they see in me?"

So your brain does to blaming yourself thinking you're not doing something right or you're not good enough, or it goes to blaming the other people. What don't they see? What's wrong with them? Basically. Or you think something's wrong with the interview process. It's rigged, or they've already decided on somebody before me. The process. There's something wrong with the process. So our brain wants to look outside and say what's wrong with the process? What's wrong with the other people? What's wrong with us? We think that something's gone wrong.

Now that you're in the job, you're not thinking about those problems anymore because you've evolved. You've grown. You've made progress. We don't track that progress. We go onto the next problem. So the brain is always focusing on the problem that's next. It never stops to look back and track all of its successes. It doesn't think it has time for that because it's so busy focusing on the problem. So what I want to offer is the process of tracking all kinds of different data and information.

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So I know that school leaders, and I'm talking about district leaders, superintendents, state superintendents, right, feds. The people at the top, as we say. Those people have one focus, and that is student data. Student academic data very specifically. Yes, we're looking at attendance rates and graduation rates. But on the daily, we are school leaders, you all hear about the scores. The academic testing scores. That's really like the bottom line for many of you.

So your brain is always looking at that number. The reason so many of you feel like crap a lot of the time, you feel bad about yourself. You feel bad that you're not serving students well enough. You're getting after your teachers. You're pushing them harder. You're thinking that pushing is the goal, and that academic growth, that number growing is the goal. We focus on only that, and we feel like we fail every single time because it's never good enough, right.

So think about that for a second. When you're focusing on that data point—that data point that never feels good enough—what would it have to take to be successful? What's that data point? What are those test scores? What do they have to be for you to feel good? For you to feel like your students are doing well, your staff is doing well? What is the number, right? It's 100%, right.

Even if you had 90% of students proficient on the test. Yay you have accolades and a celebration for one hot minute, and then you're back to looking at the 10%. What aren't they doing? Why aren't they making it? Who's teaching them wrong? Is it the teacher's fault? Is it the student's fault? Is it the parent's fault? Is it the circumstances? Is it the school community? What's going on here? Is it special education? Is it we don't have the resources? What's happening, right? Our brain wants to focus on the 10%.

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Now, let's just go to the fairyland place where 100% proficiency has been achieved. Your brain wants to think, "I want 100% of students scoring proficient and above on the test. Then my superintendent will be happy. Then the community will be happy. Then the state and the feds will be happy." But I want to dig into the data that we're tracking, the one thing we're focusing on. What does it mean if it were actually true that 100% of students scored proficient on the test? On whatever test your state gives. What does that really mean?

We make it mean so much. We put so much value, so much weight onto the score. We hang our hats on it. We put all of our eggs in the basket. All the things, right? We make that score mean everything. We feel bad about ourselves as leaders if we don't successfully achieve the goal. We think differently about our teachers when they don't hit the goal, or their classroom doesn't hit the goal or individual students don't hit the goal. We make it mean something about ourselves as a staff or a community. We think about our greater community and who we're serving, but we place all this emphasis on 100% proficiency.

If we had it, what does that even mean? Does that mean oh, 100% of kids are going to have a successful life because they scored proficient on a state test? Does it mean that every teacher is amazing and wonderful, and everyone is living a happy life skipping around blowing bubbles, right? Does it mean we're happy all of the time? Does it mean everyone will have financial wealth and physical health?

I want you to really think about this. This one data point we are hanging everything on. What does it even mean? Does it guarantee success in life? Does it guarantee financial wealth and happy relationships and a physically healthy body and whatever all it is we're going for? The home, the picket fence, the dog, the 2.5 kids. Does that test score mean that?

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I think the same thing is true about attendance. We get really caught up on numbers and we make them mean something more. We just create a result in our mind that is the value, basically. I'm thinking like okay. The result we want is 100% attendance, but what is the value of that? What is the purpose of that result? What does it create? Does 100% attendance rates, no attrition, no truancy. If everyone were coming to school 100% of the time unless they were sick and had to be home, you know what I mean.

If we had the attendance reports that we wanted to have, the numbers on the paper, what does that mean? Do we just assume that it means student success? That it means high proficiency on tests. That it means students are learning and growing and can apply the knowledge we're teaching them?

Of course there are many, many positives for kids being in school. I get this. This is why we're here. We're here to offer them, to serve them. To serve our community, to serve the greater good, to serve our future academically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and psychically. We keep kids physically safe, socially safe, emotionally safe, mentally safe, academically safe. I mean our environment is a very safe place for kids most of the time. Even that is not perfect.

I want you to notice that. We think that school is the only right place for children under the age of 18 to be. Maybe even up until 22 when they graduate college. So yes, we are offering safe space. There are many reasons why kids are best served in a school setting. It keeps them from harm on the streets. It keeps them from not learning, from avoiding learning. It keeps them physically safe in some cases.

So I'm not saying students shouldn't be in school. What I'm asking is you to consider that what does 100% attendance mean? We're making it mean that all will be well, all is right, all will be successful, and that school's the one and only place that these kiddos should be. We're thinking that by

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being in school and achieving on the test means a guarantee on success and in life.

Now, I'm going to push and I'm going to say there are many other amazing experiences outside of our school walls that also provide kids with tons of powerful learning experiences. I have a client right now. Her name is Jamie. She just signed up. She wants to expand her school beyond her walls. It's such an admirable, such a big vision. Such an amazing vision. I am so excited to be working with her. She sees the value beyond the test scores, beyond the attendance. The value of looking for data points beyond what we traditionally track.

So here's my point. This is going to be a short and sweet little podcast episode here because I want you to listen to it over and over. This is my point. The reason school leadership feels so difficult and the reason we don't feel motivated. We get discouraged. We feel resentful. We feel frustrated. We feel like we're not being successful is because we have an extremely myopic focus on just a few data points, and we make those data points mean something so significant.

It's kind of an all or nothing attitude. Either the test scores are perfect, attendance is perfect, graduation rates are perfect or we're doing something wrong. It's all or none. We're assuming that the 100% proficiency rate is the goal, but what's the value of that? What does that actually mean?

I want to suggest that we start tracking all of our progress, the little things, the big things. For yourself, how you're growing as a leader from last year to this year, from before you were a leader to becoming a leader this year if that's your case.

If you're an aspiring leader, how you've grown as a teacher and to look at who you are becoming into wanting to step into school leadership. Thinking

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of all the ways you've grown mentally, emotionally, physically, socially, with your relationships, your knowledge base, your experience base. What you've learned from your past and how you're applying it to your future. What you're learning today that you're going to apply to your future now, right now in this moment.

You are learning. We tend to focus on the growth that didn't happen versus all of the growth that did. How did your students grow emotionally this year? How did they grow socially this year? How did your staff work together? How did they evolve? How did your new teachers grow this year? They weren't able to do behavior management and now they are. They weren't able to be on time and now they are. They weren't able to work together and now they do. They didn't know how to handle parent communication and now they do.

Looking at all of the little, tiny things, those are the growths that mean so much more that you can hang your hat on that you can feel good about. You want to teach this to yourself how to do this for yourself and for others. That way your teachers will always be looking at what is working, and students will be looking at how I am growing versus beating themselves up.

Thinking about last year versus this year. What were your worries and fears last year that you don't even think about now? What did you think was impossible that now feels like a complete possibility, almost routine? What do you now know that you didn't know before? What do you do so much faster than what you did before?

I think about I've been coaching clients on how to write teacher observations in a much more expedited way. Writing the newsletter, getting certain projects and tasks and reports done in a faster more efficient way. Think about how long it took you in the beginning and how it feels more like routine. You get it done much faster this year.



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So I say all of this to help you stay motivated, stay on track, and to consider that these coaching tools are the solution to tracking your progress, to expediting your growth. Next week I'm going to talk about why it's safe to go big and how playing it safe versus going big can help you and can hinder you. We're going to talk about that next week. So stay motivated, look for all of the growth, have an amazing week, and I'll talk to you next 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-dash-with-me](https://angelakellycoaching.com/work-dash-with-me) to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

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