

Ep #200: The Reality of the Empowered Leadership Experience



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Ep #200: The Reality of the Empowered Leadership Experience

Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 200.

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.

Oh my gosh you guys. 200 episodes. I cannot believe this. I am here to celebrate with you. Hello my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday. Welcome to the podcast of the *Empowered Principal* podcast. This is so exciting. I just want to take a moment to thank you all so very much for the support. Look, there are a bazillion podcasts out in the world now. When I started this podcast four years ago, I had no idea what podcasts were, how they would take off in our American culture, probably global culture.

I didn't realize the significance and impact I could have just with my dream, my experience of coaching, my leadership experience at schools, and that I could jump on this podcast and share with you my knowledge, my wisdom, my mistakes, my fails, my successes, my clients work, their successes, their growth. Really dive into the mindset of what it takes to lead a school, to be a school leader, to make decisions, to be the advocate and voice for children all across the world. This podcast is just the beginning of that.

We are 200 episodes in. I could not be more honored to be your weekly podcast coach. For those of you who are my clients or want to become clients or one day you will be my clients, I believe all of you are going to become an empowered principal at some point in your life. If you're listening to this podcast and what I have to say and share with you resonates, you will all become a part of the *Empowered Principal* nation.

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We are going to change the way that school leaders experience school and the way you lead your schools and the experience for teachers, staff, students, community, parents, all of it. We're here to build up our capacity to grow, learn, and evolve. That's what education is. I'm so honored to be here. I'm celebrating you. Thank you so much for listening to the podcast. Please share it with your colleagues. Give it a five star review. Let the world know that you don't have to suffer, school leader. You can have a thriving school, a thriving life, a thriving profession, and you can have it all.

I want to just shout out to some of the people over the course of the last four years who have taken time to write reviews. Thank you so much. WSBHY says, "As a brand new elementary principal, this podcast has been so valuable to my growth and development. I'm using it as a resource weekly. I truly feel supported by Angela's podcast."

Gretchen says, "I'm bingeing on this podcast and loving the content so much. Angela puts a unique spin on her leadership advice for the field of education. So good." Genie3467 says, "I can't say enough about the help. Angela had me through a very difficult time in my life. I didn't play it safe, and I had some failures. But she lifted up my head and I continue."

"So helpful," says makenzie132, "I'm not an administrator but an instructional coach." Shoutout to all the instructional coaches out there. "Angela's work has been so incredibly helpful to me. Learning to understand your own and others' emotions," bingo, "and reactions is a huge part of the job of every school leader. Angela will help you stay grounded and centered and will give you practical and doable tips in becoming the calm and responsive leader we all hope to be. Subscribe. You will gain so much from it."

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Thank you, Makenzie. I could read on and on and on, but I want you to hear. School leaders, this is the level of support you need. Today to celebrate the 200th episode of the *Empowered Principal* podcast, we are honoring my first clients, some of the early adopters. The people who hired me without knowing me, without really understanding what life coaching really was, and now they are experts at this life coaching skill set that comes with being a school leader. So enjoy today's show.

I've got Dustin, Wendy, Dena, Erika, and Jena all in the empowered principal mastermind. We're having conversations about what empowered leadership looks like. How to help ourselves, our staff, and our students build up the mental and emotional resilience we so desperately need right now. We're talking about how to maintain work-life balance, how to ensure that we are living up to our best potential by taking the very best care of ourselves and our families so that we can be empowered leaders while we're at work. Enjoy the show.

Angela: I am just super excited to be celebrating it with all of you. This is a big deal for me. I know that—I think not 100% of my clients, but I'm going to say over 90% of them come from the podcast. It's because they listen to your stories. They listen to you telling your stories, but they also listen to me telling your stories through myself and through coaching.

So today I guess I just really want to talk about and share with the listeners your personal experience. What I'm really trying to home in for people is how this work is different than other kinds of leadership work that you do. Because there is the skill set of learning how to be a leader, but then there is this mental, emotional, psychological. Like mental skill set that you have to learn that I think is the missing component in our school leadership programs or trainings or practices or anything like that.

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I feel like this work of life coaching is such a new topic. It's such a new. It sounds kind of trendy, I think, but I really think it's here for the long haul. I would love to hear your take on it. I was thinking about you guys today. I was at the beach earlier this morning. I was driving back, and I was thinking about each of you and what you must have been thinking prior to coaching versus what you think on a regular basis now.

So I would love for you guys to share your stories in terms of what you think about coaching, how it's impacted the work that you're doing now, how it's going to impact your future. Really just tell your stories to the listeners so that they can hear, and they can connect and understand from your own perspective. It's not just coming from me. I want people to hear 100 different ways in which this work can benefit them. Because it's not just leadership skills.

I was coaching one of my new clients today. I could hear in her voice how, "Oh, this work comes back to me?" She's so focused on the teachers and the students and the community and what that all means, but that work is really just a product of the work we do internally. That's what I find so fascinating about coaching. So that's my two cents.

I would love to open it up and ask you guys your thoughts prior to coaching. Your thoughts about coaching now. Also later on I want to talk about the mastermind itself and how one-on-one coaching is amazing, and how the mastermind has broadened your perspective of this work. So I'm just going to open it up and let you guys start talking. Who wants to share their thoughts about coaching, their thoughts about leadership, what you've learned along the way, your future, all of it.

Dena: I'll start.

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Angela: Okay Dena. Let's do this.

Dena: So in just thinking about how I use coaching as a school leader, there's a few things. The biggest thing I've been able to do because of my coaching is to actually for the first time in my life establish work-life balance. That's something that I've never been able to do in the past 20 years in education. I have never been able to do that. Because I'm now able to do it, I'm seeing my teachers able to do it. That's amazing.

So what that means for me with the establishing work-life balance, it starts with weekend boundaries, email boundaries, break boundaries. I realized just coming off—I just came off a two week fall break. I worked maybe two to three days total. That's because we start with our audit every fall break.

Although I didn't really do anything exciting, I didn't go traveling or anything like that. So I didn't have a big vacation, but I didn't work. So what I realized yesterday going back to school for the first time was that I actually really truly felt revived and refreshed and ready for another quarter. Because for years, I would spend those breaks catching up or trying to catch up.

Sadly the reality is there's no such thing. I'm learning through coaching there's no such thing as catching up because there's always work to do. By trying to catch up on all of these breaks, the result for me is I still feel fatigued upon returning. So I don't really feel rested. But yesterday, I even dressed in bright pink. I just felt energized. Everybody was asking me what I had done for the break. Where did I go? I didn't go anywhere, but I felt revived and ready.

So that is probably one of the biggest results for me with coaching. Then because I'm able to establish that work-life balance, I'm able to be more

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fully present with my family when I'm home. That was something, like I said, for 20 years, I haven't. So that's number one big.

Angela: Oh that's so good Dena. If there's one thing that people call me about and feel like they cannot solve on their own, it's figuring out the work-life balance. Because the job has such high demands, and everything feels like a priority that the brain just has a hard time sorting that out.

It thinks that at some point in the future, like you said, you will finally have this feeling where I feel caught up or I don't feel behind or I have accomplished everything I've set out to do. My to-do list is complete. As all of you know, that really never happens. That's not how this works. It's not really how life works at all.

What I love about what you said was it's not about figuring out how to get it all done. It's about changing the way that you think about it in the first place. Because that's what brings you the feeling of balance. The thought has to come before the action, right. You can't have the result of the balanced life until the mindset around what that is and the value of it changes.

Oh that's so good. That's so good. Oh my gosh. Okay who else? What results have you been able to create in your life over the past year, two, or three that you've been working with me?

Implementing life coaching tools is something that feels—I was just thinking about my new client today. It feels like one more thing. It feels like you don't have time. The brain is saying, "I don't have the time." But this is how you create the time, right, by implementing these tools. Like Dena said, she now feels like she has time for herself and for her work. Dustin, what are your thoughts?

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Dustin: Yeah, I would just add onto what Dena said. Angela, you and I have been coaching since, I think, April of 2020. I was transitioning out of an assistant principalship into my first principal job. So obviously there was a lot of emotions and thoughts and feelings I had about that transition that you really supported me through. Also going from elementary to middle school and then the pandemic.

Just all throughout last year, my first year as principal, just having somebody to talk to on a consistent weekly basis who wasn't trying to fix my problems necessarily but would ask me the types of questions for me to kind of analyze my own thinking was just so valuable.

Today I actually kind of realized I was using some of those same skill with the teacher. I think it's happening more often that I realized. I think the old me, if there's a problem somebody's having or a concern, would want to jump in and fix it and give them the solution.

So today, for example, the teacher was really struggling with one particular classroom. Made a comment that the kids are out of control. They're monsters. Some pretty serious language. So I kind of just do what you do to me and took a step back and asked them some questions and didn't try and fix anything, but really helped the teacher feel why they're frustrated.

We really were able to have a productive conversation. They were kind of able to come up with really the root cause of what was bothering them. It wasn't the whole class. It was two or three students. Then they were able to come up with some solutions for supporting those kids. So I kind of just thought about it and said hey, that's kind of what you do with me Angela. It's kind of helping me support teachers, which is really exciting.

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Angela: I love this so much because we all get hired into the position, and we automatically think it's my job, my responsibility, my obligation to solve all of the problems that come my way. That come across my desk, that whoever says... You know if somebody comes to you and says there's a problem, you feel that urge to fix it. Especially when you're the person who—

When you had control over that classroom, and you figured out your systems and you had a flow, and you were in control of the environment and the culture. You really felt like you had a handle on things. Then you go into this setting where you have multiple, not just students. You've 25x'd your class size. You've also got a whole series of adults you're dealing with. Everybody has different priorities and different needs and different wants.

They all come to you and say, "This is my problem. You fix it." You being able to know, "Oh, it's not my job to fix everything. It's my job to help them walk through so they can figure out a solution that works for them." Oh I love that, Dustin. That is so good.

This work, the coaching tools you start. As you guys all know, you started with trying to understand them and figure them out yourself. Then as you integrated them into your own personal life, it becomes a part of who you are as a leader. Then you can start to coach people on how to coach for themselves. That's where the power of this work just magnifies itself. Because once you know it really well, then you can offer it to teachers. So good.

Dustin, can you tell us how you felt as you were working with the teacher? I'm just curious to know how did it feel to not feel the need to fix it, and to have the wherewithal to step backwards and look at this from the

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perspective of, “Oh, it’s my job to get curious. Help them figure it out.” Because what you really did was you helped the teacher unveil what was really going on for him or her. Which was it’s not everybody. It’s maybe two or three. Here’s the specific behaviors. You got very specific with them. So you helped them create clarity. How did that feel for you as the leader?

Dustin: Well, I started off by wanting to fix it. I’m just going to acknowledge that. That’s my instinct and what I want to do. I realized in that moment, I need more information. So just pausing almost. It’s a skill that you have to learn, I think. I’m still working on it.

I didn’t even realize it in the moment, but then walking away I felt good. I feel like he came up with solutions better than what I could have described. He kind of identified it was a relational issue with those students. Which I could always say myself, but to have the individual reflect and come up with that on there is more powerful. So it felt really good. I still have to consciously decide to do that though when listening. I think that’s just something we’ve worked on too.

Angela: Yeah. This is a great thing to point out because you still will have the urge. As a school leader, you’re still going to feel the urge to pounce in and solve the problem. Here’s what happens. When you own the problem, that is what creates overwhelm and burnout and overworking. Because now you’ve got that teacher’s one problem and this teacher over here’s one problem, and then all of a sudden, you’re now burdened with 25 problems.

You’re trying to problem solve in your brain. That is when you can’t turn it off. That’s when you go home at night and you’re thinking about Mr. Johnson and Ms. Gutierrez and Ms. Domiany. You’re thinking about all of their problems and how to solve them and that it’s your job to do that. That is where the burden comes in. In this scenario, you’re simply there

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facilitating and helping them own the problem, get clear and specific about the problem.

Then like you said, Dustin, they end up coming up with the solution because here's the thing. You could put out a smorgasbord of solutions and the teacher would be like, "Nope, nope, nope. Not that. That won't work." Because it's not coming from them. In their mind, the problem is they think they want you to fix it.

What's really happening is that they're not going to accept a solution to the problem until they see that they're the ones with the problem in terms of their mindset, right. The teacher coming in and saying, "Oh these kids are monsters, right." That's the brain doing all or none thinking. All the kids and they're all after me. It's that victim mentality.

When you just sit down with the person, you can break it down. You can say like well actually it's these two kids. Actually it's a relationship issue. Actually these are the steps I've tried, but these are the things I haven't and come up with a plan. That just takes the burden and pressure and stress off of you. I love that. I love that. I love that. So that makes the time while you're at work much more enjoyable, so you don't mind being at work when not everything lands on your shoulders and your plate. I love that. Wendy?

Wendy: Yeah. I just wanted to respond because I can make a connection with what Dustin is sharing. I'm not in my, I guess I've been an AP now, assistant principal, for about 18 months. I think one of the thoughts that I had when I first started is what if something happens and I don't know what to do?

I think now I'm realizing the answer to is what if something happens and I don't know what to do? I think it makes you just a human. Because you're

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not going to know what to do in every single situation, and now I kind of have the thought of just I trust myself to make the best choice in the moment that I can with the information that I have, with the skills that I have, with the knowledge that I have.

I think before the additional pressure not just of having to make a decision but also the stress and anxiety about making the right decision was almost like a double whammy layer of stress and anxiety. I think I was very concerned with the thoughts and opinions of others and what were they gonna think about my choice? Of course you want to consider all of the stakeholders and how it's going to impact other human beings, but at the end of the day one of the takeaways I have is.

I'll go to that quote that's like it's not the load that breaks you down. It's the way you carry it. So knowing that there's going to be tough decisions, knowing that I'm not going to know what to do in every single moment, knowing that I'm going to have to ask for help, knowing that sometimes the teachers actually will come up with the solutions themselves that are better than anything I can develop just alleviates a lot of that pressure and that stress.

Yes, the decision that you have to make is still going to be there, but you're not adding additional layers of anxiety and uncertainty and pressure and self-judgment and all of that. Where before I was very concerned with what if I don't do the right thing? What are people going to think? Having to ask for help or admit that I don't know what to do and wanting to make a good impression on my staff.

I think now I've kind of let go of a lot of those either perfectionist tendencies or maybe kind of wanting to have it all figured out right away from day one. Not giving myself that time to be new and be a learner and kind of listen

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and step back. Just relating so much to what Dustin's saying of I don't have to have all the answers. In fact, I don't know that anyone does. It's less pressure on myself that I don't have to come up with something because I know that I have great smart people around me that I can also tap into for the solutions.

Again, it's like that 10% of what happens and 90% of how do you respond? Like I'm not going to get rid of the to-do list. I'm not going to get rid of the stress and anxiety. The decisions are still going to be there, but I don't have to make it worse on myself by also creating a whole story in my mind about how am I going to handle it when that scenario does come up.

So just wanted to make a connection with what you were sharing. Because I feel so much less self-judgment, self-pressure, and uncertainty now because I'm just like I'll figure it out. If I don't know what to do, I'll ask for help because no one has all the answers. It makes me feel a lot less pressure and a lot of relief because of that.

Angela: I love this because new school leaders think that they're supposed to all of a sudden know the answers, right. You walk into your office. You're like, "Okay, now I've got the principal hat on. Now I should know how to do X, Y, Z." You cannot possibly know how to do something you've never done before.

I think there is a misconception as school leaders. I felt this too where I felt as if my superiors were expecting me to know all of the answers. Then when I didn't, they were like, "Well, why didn't you know that?" I'm like because I've never done this before. This is a new thing for me. HR stuff was all new. I had never done that. All the budgeting stuff was pretty new. I had never done that. Hiring. It was just so much new, right. So many new things. But when we just allow ourselves to be new.

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I think the really important thing Wendy said was that she had to build up her belief in herself. So we talk about this a lot in the one-on-one coaching program. Like your leadership self-construct is what we spend that year growing and developing. It's the belief that you have your own back. That you can figure out anything that comes your way. Of course it's going to feel new and it's going to feel clumsy. Yes, guess what. You are going to make mistakes.

Instead of living in your mind in the future worrying about mistakes, trying to avoid future mistakes, bringing it back to today saying, "You know what? No matter what comes up today, I'm going to be able to figure it out. I'm going to get the help I need. I'm going to ask the questions because I'm willing to feel new. I'm willing to feel uncomfortable. I'm willing to feel a little bit embarrassed if I have to ask a question that people think I should know."

Just eliminating all of that self judgement and building up your self-concept of this is who I am today right now. This is how I'm going to handle myself from this day forward. Because it takes that future worry down a notch or two or three. You don't have to be constantly in problem solving mode for future things that haven't yet happened. Because you know I don't know what's coming, but I'll tell you what. When it does come, I'm going to figure it out.

It's such a great thought. It's such a great self-concept to own for yourself in any capacity. Professional aspects of your life or personal aspects of your life. I will be able to figure out anything that comes my way. I can handle anything that comes my way. What we mean by that is I'm willing to feel any emotion. Because what we do as humans is we try to avoid feeling negative emotion, and we chase after positive emotion. So what you're saying is I'm willing to feel both ends of the spectrum, which expands your capacity to lead other people to do the same. So beautiful. So brilliant.

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Wendy: Can I just make one other connection? Because I have to. It goes back to what you were sharing with Dena about the action coming before the thought. So part of believing that I can handle anything that comes up is also knowing that I can recover from the errors and mistakes that I do make and recover well. Being able to be in the discomfort of yeah, I screwed up. Yes, I'm going to make it right. I know that even if I do do something that I need to recover from and make right, I can handle that too.

So just the connection of you have to screw up a couple of times and go through that process of having to do the cleanup afterwards to have that belief in myself of I really can handle everything. Even though it went wrong, I was still able to make it right. I still even handled it then. So, for me, I had to go through that kind of fail, recover, fail, recover to get a little bit more of that confidence to be like yes, I can handle it. Even if I didn't handle it right the first time, I at least made it right to smooth things over moving forward.

Angela: That's so, so good. That's so good. So listeners, I just really want you to hear this that it's not just about avoiding the mistakes and working through figuring out the how. It's more about when I do make the mistake, I can handle that too. That is brilliant. That is so good. I love this. I love this podcast so much already. Oh gosh. Okay. Let's keep going. Jena, do you want to share? Jena's been with me for a long time.

Jena: I have. So what I wanted to share, you had asked us what our thoughts were before we started coaching. It took me back to two and a half years ago where I was hired as an elementary principal right from being a teacher. So I had no administrative experience. I was using the summer to get prepared, bless my heart. And luckily stumbled across Angela's podcast and decided to take action and reach out to her about possibly coaching and obviously the rest is history.

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I will say that for people listening that are new to leadership or looking to get into leadership. From my experience, and maybe you guys will agree or disagree with me, the actual tasks that we as principals have to perform are really not that bad. I can go in and I can observe a teacher. I can create a schedule. I can run a meeting.

What makes the job hard is handling all of the emotions of all of the other people that you interact with all day long. Then of course then having to navigate your own thoughts and emotions. How do you do that without becoming unhealthy or not having the work-life balance, being miserable, overeating at night. Not that I did that. There are lots of things that we can do that aren't necessarily going to serve us. Yet there I was. It's just hard. That's even with me coaching with Angela.

So thankfully because then she was able to teach me the tools, I mean I'll forever be grateful. I could just like cry about it. I'm so happy and so thankful. My first year as principal, March 2020 hit. We all know what happened. We're at like exhaustion of talking about COVID. But I mean my goodness.

If I didn't have the tools that I have through Angela, what Angela has taught us, I don't know how I would have navigated it in a way that got myself through but also got my staff through because we didn't fall apart. We got through. We did it. We're still doing it. That's your job as a leader.

That's, I think, what makes it feel so scary is that you don't have all the answers. We full on know that we don't. We just have to take every day as it comes and make the best decisions we can. Then also carry along these however many staff members we have from small schools to really large schools. We have, also, in our careers probably seen leaders that have

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really excelled at that and really haven't. Obviously, I think we all want to be the best leaders that we can be.

So the tools that Angela is able to teach us not only, I feel like, have made me a better and stronger leader, but it's so transferrable into my personal life. There have been also things that has happened the past couple years in my personal life that have been really heavy and really tough. Through the work and taking the tools that she taught me, I was able to get through them in a way that I... I don't want to be miserable every day. I know in order for me to be happy, I need to be contributing and helping in some way, but not at the cost of my own happiness and my own health.

I feel like that is ultimately—I was thinking about what has coaching really given me. It's that. That, I feel like, is like the best thing ever. Besides my children, it's the best thing ever. So I'm thankful.

Angela: Your happiness is the most important thing ever because when you feel balanced and when you feel like the world isn't on your shoulders and when you feel like you can handle anything, that is what makes your life feel like it's worth living. When you feel like you're in that level of empowerment is when you most enjoy your children, when you most enjoy your spouse, when you most enjoy getting up and going to work and packing it up and coming home. That is what this is about.

I know for me, I was so miserable those seven years. To the point I didn't even realize it when I was in it. This is my biggest pain point personally as a coach is to know that there are millions of school leaders out there suffering in pain. They feel isolated. They feel alone. They feel like there aren't solutions. That this is just how it has to be. This is just what school leadership is. You kind of succumb to it.

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I know for me it was I just did the best I could to numb yourself and go through the motions because it was this weird, almost this toxic relationship with the job. Where it was like I love the title and the status and knowing I had made it into school leadership, but also like it being the worst part of my life in a strange way. It was just this strange push and pull. I knew there had to be an answer out there.

I searched high and low until I found a coach. Now I feel like I will not quit this work until every leader at least is aware that the support and the tools and the strategies are available to them. Not everybody is open to coaching. Not everybody is interested in it. That's okay. For them to not know it's available, to me that's the work.

Just like the work for you is helping teachers understand they don't have to suffer in their classrooms. Like you've got those teachers who are out there trying so hard. They just don't know how to solve a problem or how to get their classroom management under control or get their paperwork done on time. Whatever it is they're struggling with, right.

They don't understand the study is about themselves. Why do I struggle to get my paperwork in on time? What are the thoughts I'm having about that? That's the solution. They think it's they're not good at time management or that something's wrong with the kids or something wrong with these crazy parents out there. We externalize the problem. Every time we externalize a problem, we also externalize the solution. Meaning we're not in control of the solution.

The empowerment piece of coaching is that is the difference. It's the ability to fully own what we perceive are problems because that is what we have ownership over the solution as well.

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That's what Jena said. Like her happiness is now in her control for the rest—I'm going to cry—like for the rest of her life. It doesn't matter what school district she's in. It doesn't matter what level she's working at. It doesn't matter, any of that. What matters is she understands that her happiness is within her control. I mean the value of that, like to me it's priceless.

I would pay anything to know this work because it lets me know I'm in control of my happiness. I'm in control of the lifestyle that I love, the career style that I choose, the people in which I hang out with, like all of you. It's such an honor to be a coach, but it's also such an honor to have become all of your friends. So thank you for sharing your journeys in life with me. It's so amazing. We're here to celebrate. So congratulations Jena. I think if there's any result you could have created for yourself, the gift of happiness is the full package, right?

Jena: Yeah. Well, thank you. Congratulations on 200 episodes of your podcast. That's amazing. What you're putting out into the atmosphere is helping more than just us here on the screen.

Angela: I know. I know. It's so good. You guys have been a huge part of people realizing that, "Hey, these guys are just like me. They're in the same boat I'm in. They're doing this work and they're happy. They're learning how to not step in and solve all the problems and not overwork and not feel burned out." So that's amazing. Ms. Erika, I've got to talk with you because you've got stories to share.

Erika: I do. I mean we all have stories, right?

Angela: Yes. I love it. You guys all have such good stories. Share with us anything you want to share with us Erika.

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Erika: Well, I don't know. Just thinking about everything that you all have been saying, just kind of listening in. I feel like such a different person from a year ago when I started just even in that belief of just in myself. I don't need to know all the answers. Just have belief in myself. It's so amazing. It's not that, I don't think I'm any smarter than I was before. I'm more tired, for sure, than I was.

I think it's just knowing how to process what I'm feeling, what I'm going through. Having that person, Angela, that calls. Whatever it may be, that I can process. Like you said earlier whether it's work related or personal related. I know Angela and I have had some conversations where I've shared some very difficult things that have happened. She's helped me just process and just even put it out into the world, just what I'm feeling. That has been so powerful.

Just having that person that I can talk to, reflect, and question but that isn't judgmental. Does that make sense? Just that person that's not my supervisor, that's not a teacher. That's someone that's totally neutral and that's going to push and ask questions when I'm hiding behind my emotions or hiding behind what I really don't want to feel. So that has been powerful.

I think I'm definitely a happier person than I was. I actually love coming to work every day. I love the people that I work with. That has been great because there for a while, I wasn't feeling it. I was like what am I doing? I picked the right career. I really have enjoyed, and that empowerment is so great to feel that.

There's still a lot of work that I have to do and a lot of work for my kiddos and our students. Just knowing that I'm here and that I'm here for the right reason and knowing that, I think, that whatever comes my way I can take

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on full and know how to approach whatever situation may come. Understanding that it's just a moment in time, and that we're going to learn a lesson from it and then we're going to keep going.

So I think a lot of what I've learned is just that mindset. It's that mindset of just looking at things a different way and kind of questioning. The same way that Dustin, when I hopped on, you were talking about helping your teachers and questioning and kind of guiding them. That has been so powerful. I have been able to use it for me, but then also to help and support my teachers. So that's been really good.

Something else that Angela and I kind of worked at when we first started was calendaring. Just looking, because it does make you happy to have those interactions with your friends and your family and my husband. You know just allowing yourself, giving yourself permission to do all of these things. That has been the most powerful thing.

Just knowing that mid-week, I'm going to go hang out with some friends. I'm going to be able to go do this. That I can still be a principal and still have a life outside, but that I have to plan for it. Because if I don't plan for it, it doesn't happen.

I've been so much better with my time as far as knowing that first of all, I have to plan for fun because otherwise it doesn't happen. Which sounds totally silly, but if I don't plan for it, it doesn't happen. It also brings me joy. Things could be not going too good. There's sometimes you know in schools there's some difficult things that happen, but I still have my happy place. It just fills my bucket.

You know those little moments. It's the little things that I think make such a big difference as a school administrator. Whether it's spending time and

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making time to be in the classroom, making time to talk to teachers, to build relationships, and then spending time with your family.

To me, I think that's one of the most important things is that time spent with other people. It's something that I value, but I had gotten away from that. Just because naturally as a school leader, there is a million other things that you could be doing but just knowing that that was the most important thing. So I was going to plan for it. Just having someone to walk me through that. It sounds so easy, but it's so hard just to even allow yourself that. Give yourself the permission to do it.

Angela: Oh, this is so good. So yes. I remember this from the very beginning. Erika really wanted to have time out with friends, but she didn't feel like she had the time. So we talked about how you have to schedule your fun in, and it has to be of equal value to the work that we're doing and to the kids and to all of the demands of our lives. She started doing that. Now it's a regular part of your week, isn't it Erika?

Erika: Yes. It is a regular part of my week. Time with friends, with family, and with my husband. They happen every week.

Angela: Do you feel like that's kind of locked and loaded in your schedule? Like it's just a part of your week and you know it's coming, and you look forward to it. So even when you're having a rough day at work, you can know that it's not the only part of your life because your schedule is honoring all of the parts of your life. Yeah.

Erika: Yeah, absolutely. I think that it makes the work that we do Sundays even just a little bit sweeter. Knowing that okay, I'm going to get to do these things, but then I'm going to do a little bit of work. Even that time, just scheduling that 45 minutes or an hour or whatever it may be on Sunday.

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Knowing that it's a planned time and I have to get it done within that time. That has been the most valuable thing I've done.

Angela: So good. It's so good. Okay. I'm going to shift gears a little bit you guys because I want to ask you. I've been thinking about the mastermind. So all of you have coached one-on-one with me privately for at least one year. Now we're in mastermind. We created this mastermind. Really this is the initial cohort of the mastermind. You guys are the first. This is the first time that we've been together in a group coaching session like this.

So I would love to hear your perspective of the group experience, but I really would also love for you to answer this question. What do you believe you are capable of accomplishing as a school leader that you didn't believe before? Right?

Because part of the work that we're doing, I feel like the one-on-one coaching is about learning the tools and then practicing them on little everyday things until you can do that almost automatically. Then you can really start to plan your vision, right. The priority in terms of your vision, your planning, what you want to do with your life. I call this intentional results. What's the result I'm looking for?

Intentional result creation where you are intentionally planning out the result you want to create, and then you're predetermining that outcome ahead of time. So you know what you want to accomplish, and you're planning it ahead of time. Then you're working towards that accomplishment.

I just would love to hear what you guys think you're capable of that you didn't think you would accomplish maybe a year or two ago. Like your self-concept of what you think is possible for you. So let's just shout it out. What

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do you want to accomplish and what do you think you can accomplish that you didn't think before? I kind of want to call on Dustin because I have something in mind for him. Dustin, do you remember your goal?

Dustin: Yeah, yeah. I remember that. I don't want to talk about it.

Angela: We won't talk about it.

Dustin: Okay. Just listening to the other principals in the mastermind, something that I've always wanted to create for myself and didn't believe was possible was to Dena's point and Erika's point and Jena and Wendy, really all of it. That work-life balance and not being fully consumed by the job. Being joyful, enjoying going to work, enjoying the process.

I was stuck all last year on how hard the job was. Like this job is hard. It's so hard. Blah, blah, blah. I was always feeling like I was struggling. We've coached on accepting that it's hard and that's okay. Just like accepting that. That, in itself, kind of releases some of that tension and can make it enjoyable. Like hard things are important. They matter.

So I think that's been a big shift for me that I'm enjoying. I'm more joyful at work, creating better work-life balance. Then I think I slowly am seeing more success just in my job too and just gaining more confidence in myself. This year has a lot of unique challenges to it, but last year gave me the confidence kind of, to Wendy's point, that you don't have to have all the answers. Just try it. So that's taken a lot of pressure off of me.

So I just think overall I didn't believe I could enjoy the job at first because it was just so overwhelming. Now I'm starting to really enjoy it more and like being with the kids and the teachers, and that's huge.

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Angela: Yes. Here's the thing. We think that when we have work-life balance then we'll feel happy. When we have created an accomplishment or achieved a goal as a school leader, then we'll be competent. We think that the emotion follows the result. That the emotion comes after.

The truth is that as you're feeling happier about work and you're coming in, one, you are accomplishing the goal of work-life balance. But you are more accomplished in your daily tasks because of the energy in which you're completing those tasks. Because you can come in and you can be exhausted and miserable and be resistant and thinking that this job is so hard.

Dustin and I were like every day, "This job is so hard. This job is so hard." I was like you have got to stop saying that. Just that is what's making it feel hard. So we eliminated that part of it. What happened as a result of that is he actually doesn't feel like it's quite so hard anymore because he's not telling himself that.

Dustin: Can I just jump in? I think the reason that I was hesitant to share what we talked about is because that's no longer a goal for me.

Angela: I figured that was true.

Dustin: So Angela, you were coaching me on possibility one day. Like dream big. I set this goal like it would be so cool to be like principal of the year. This was like September of my first year.

Angela: He was like a month in.

Dustin: Yeah, but that's like this random goal. Now like that's not the goal. The goal for me is to have fun, to enjoy this, to just do the best I can. That's

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not what I'm shooting for anymore. I think that's a good transformation too for me.

Angela: Yeah. Because of what you made the principal of the year achievement mean. Because if I achieve principal of the year in three years' time then I must be good. Now what he's saying is I don't need that to just be good. I can just come in and be a good principal.

Somebody may nominate him for that or not. You may get the achievement award anyway, but you don't need it to prove to yourself or to others that you're good or qualified or accomplished. You're just deciding that for yourself right now. So in that goal when he said, I want—I'm so sorry. It's like fleet week this week. There's jets flying over my house at all times right now.

Anyway what I love about this is the reason he wanted the accomplishment was for the feeling he thought he would feel and what he would believe about himself. Now he just gets to believe and think that about himself right now. He doesn't need the award. Who's to say. You might still get the award, but that's no longer the goal because it's no longer the emotion you're chasing because he already has it. He's already achieved it, which is so good. It's so good.

So who wants to go next? I would love to hear your vision for what you personally think you can accomplish that's something you didn't think you could accomplish a year ago. So we have our personal goals and kind of the emotional goals we want to feel, and then we have our professional goals. So you can share any of those.

Jena: I mean I would say a year ago, I don't know that I was in the place or had the capacity to believe that I could be a superintendent or do anything

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higher up than the principalship. I would say now I don't really have a limit on where I will end up in my career. I just want to contribute and continue to grow. So.

Angela: Yes. I learned I didn't want that job. The problem wasn't that I didn't think I could do it. My thought was as I learned this work, my obsession with helping people at the site level not feel isolated became my obsessive focus in my life. It still is. I feel like I see superintendents with coaches, right. They have leadership coaches, executive coaches, whatever you want to call them.

I feel like what I would call the ultimate middle manager, which is all of the principalships, the site administration. You're expected to have that level of skill without having the support or the experience, right. It's an interesting thing. So to hear you say, "I now know I could take what I've learned here and apply it to any level of job." That's incredible. I love that.

Jena: Well, and I think it would be a different—Sorry. My children just got home from school. So it's gotten a little noisier in my home.

Angela: Not a problem. It'll be easier with some children here.

Jena: I think wouldn't it be interesting to see any leader who has this coaching background and knowledge in upper level leadership. What kind of impact could that have on principals and on the rest of that school community? I'd be curious to see.

Angela: That would be so fun to find out. That's the goal here is to keep this work flowing out of us into our teachers into students. If we could instill the belief in a student that I can figure out anything that comes my way, I can do hard things. I don't want to know ahead of time to figure this out. If they

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had the emotional mental capacity to know that as a young person, imagine the trajectory of their life because of those thoughts.

So it's really about helping people open up their minds to new thoughts about themselves and their capacity to contribute and to receive in both forms. So I love that so much. Wendy, what did you want to share with us?

Wendy: I have one, but it's sort of on an unrelated note. It's making me emotional to think about because I think one of my takeaways is just that I could feel proud of myself. I don't really know how to articulate it well. So I'm just going to verbally process with you all, but it's going back to the idea that you had about your self-concept as a leader.

Not that I felt like an extreme imposter syndrome, but I think it took me a little bit to realize that yes, I'm an assistant principal. Yes I have these capacities. Yes I deserve to be here. I can kind of be proud of having had that professional success. Also just how that trickled into my personal life, just kind of understanding that it's okay to have goals for yourself but also be proud of where you are and not rush things.

So aside from becoming an assistant principal in the last 18 months, I bought a car. I got engaged. I paid off a bunch of student loans. I had a savings goal that I wanted to hit for like a safety net for myself that I doubled what my initial goal was.

So just outside of school leader even and feeling like okay, like I have this goal of becoming an assistant principal. I accomplished that. I feel good about myself. Yes, I have a lot of things that I need to learn and a lot of things that I need to work on.

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Looking kind of in the rearview mirror and being like, “Wow, 10 years ago when I thought about this, I never knew that this was going to come up now and this is how I was going to feel.” Just that feeling of seeing my own growth and trickling that out into my personal life and all the things that I just mentioned.

Just feeling like a lot has changed for me as a result of this coaching work both in that I can see how my hard work paid off professionally and then also kind of just remembering that things fall into place in the right time. Personally, having gone through this coaching program seeing also that I'm empowered not just as a school leader but also as a woman and a sister and a fiancé and a partner and a family member and all those other things.

So thanks for letting me kind of talk that one out. Just this idea that yes, you can have goals and have ambitions for where you want to be, but it's okay to look back in the rearview mirror and feel proud of all the work that went into getting to where you are. All the steps along the journey and the mistakes that we talked about before.

Just seeing like okay I was able to become an assistant principal. Can I save this much amount of money this year? Can I move to a new house? All the other things that I aspire for myself. Like being a mom one day. I think this feeling now is the same feeling of looking back on wanting to have a family and in the future hopefully being able to make that a reality for myself too.

So just this idea of feeling proud of myself and knowing that whatever else I set out to do is going to be attainable. Not putting limits on my expectations for what I can do at a certain age or in a certain income bracket or anything like that. Just releasing some of those limitations on myself.

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Angela: That is so good because yes. I think about how often we spend time thinking about the past or about the future and how little time we actually spend thinking about today, this moment, where we're at right now. The beautiful thing about what you said is that yes, we want to have future goals.

We want to think about our future self and the advice she would give to us right now in this moment. Then as we're giving our past self some TLC and some gratitude for the hard work that we've done to get us where we're at right now. It's the being able to celebrate where you're at right now with today's accomplishments, and the patience to know more is coming. I think this comes from a place of sufficiency.

When you are building a life that is sufficient, where it's today is good. Today is good enough. I'm good enough with who I am right now and the accomplishments I've created from my past to this moment. I know I'm going to continue creating them but I'm not in a rush to get there. That is when you're living in sufficiency.

That is the place at which you feel—People will say, “I want to feel at peace. I want to feel just a sense of calm, relief.” That kind of feeling, that comes from the knowingness of I want what I have right now. I've created this and I'm celebrating it right now. I'm going to continue growing and creating more for my future, but I don't have to feel that urgency or rush to get there. That's so good. Love it. So good.

Wendy: I love how you said it.

Angela: I'm just summarizing what you said. It's being present and appreciating and being proud of who you are right now. That this is enough.

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Whether you are new or you are three years in, you are good enough right here right now.

Wendy: I never thought I would be here and look at all I've been able to create and accomplish. That I imagine that's going to continue to happen.

Angela: Dena. Share us your wisdom.

Dena: Well, I'm going to go off just a little bit. I'm going to say that the mastermind group, just to see. The coaching has been so incredibly wonderful, but to have a mastermind group this first ever and to feel that I truly am not alone. That we're all going through similar things. I want more and more of that.

Just sharing all those experiences. The little topics or whatever that we might have. Like how are you dealing with this? It's just been so wonderful to know that we're all going through such similar things just with mask mandates and no mandates and just the different things with COVID has been so helpful.

When I think back to a year ago and what am I capable of accomplishing now. Angela when I first started with you, I just didn't have that confidence as a leader and wow has that changed. I feel so much more confident. I trust myself. I think my first session with you was, you know, it was the imposter syndrome. It's do I have what it takes? Am I smart enough? Do I know enough?

Angela: Yeah. I think you were worried like I didn't have some credential or something.

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Dena: Exactly. Jena, it's been great to know. I went from teaching to an instructional coach, but I didn't have the background in administration. I've learned so much through coaching, and I do. I feel like a much more confident leader. That's when I really think about aligned leadership, I know that the decisions I make, I'm always looking out for the greater good of the school and that feels really...I feel solid and grounded in that.

Angela: Awesome. Awesome. Okay. Let's bring this home. If there is somebody listening to this podcast now who feels completely overwhelmed, completely isolated. They're breaking down emotionally. They're physically tired, mentally tired, and they need one thought to hang their hat on that gives them hope and possibility. I want you just to sit for a second and think of something that you would share with that person right now.

What is it that a listener who is feeling that isolation and that overwhelm and that fatigue? What is it that they could think that would help them in the moment that they're in right now? Because this was all of us whether it was three years ago, five years ago, 10 years ago. There was a moment where we were desperate to feel the way all of you were feeling.

I know what's going to happen. People are going to listen to this and they're going to be like, "I want what they have. I want this career and this lifestyle, but how can I do it? What do you have to offer for them? What's a thought?"

Erika: Can I share?

Angela: Yes, please Erika.

Erika: So I think the first thought that comes to mind is that you can do it. Believe in yourself and you can do it. Just look at yourself in the mirror and

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know that you can do it. Just take it one step at a time. I think the biggest thing that I've learned in this past year and a few months now is to get out of your head. Stop telling yourself stories. Stop telling yourself what if this happens or what if that happens or what if. You don't know what is going to happen. Stop telling yourself stories and stop talking to yourself negatively.

Instead fill those conversations in your brain, in your mind with positive things. With things that aren't going to stress you out. I think that's the biggest thing when I catch myself. Because I created my own stress sometimes. It didn't even happen, but I created my own stress.

So I think that's one of the things I've learned is that mindset and that how am I talking to myself? Am I making things better with what I'm telling myself? A lot of the time I was creating my own stress. For me, at least, that's where a lot of the stress came from. So just get out of your head. If you are going to be in your head, make sure that it's positive.

Angela: Yes. You want to give your brain 50/50. It's okay to be proactive and think ahead and strategize about potential problems or situations you might have to face. I also want you to spend 50% of the time thinking about how you do have what it takes. You can solve any problems. How you would solve it. Be strategic, but also give yourself that equal airtime to build up that self-concept. Spend time on that. That is time very well spent. So that's a really good recommendation, Erika. Good job. Anybody else want to share with the listeners a thought? A belief system?

Jena: I would say take action. You're never going to feel like it. No one's ever going to feel like getting all of your papers together to apply. No one's going to ever feel like interviewing. I think you really need to ask yourself in your mind who do you want your future self to be, and then what action steps do you need to be that person.

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Angela: Yes, so good. The actions that you take have to come now. You are not going to create the lifestyle that you want and the work-life balance and be the leader that you want by waiting. Being indecisive has never served anybody. So that's a great one Jena.

All right my friends. Well, I just want to say it has been my complete honor to be your coach. I am so happy you guys agreed to celebrate the 200th episode of the *Empowered Principal* podcast in this way. It has been such a joy, such a pleasure. This mastermind is nothing but fun. I look forward to this. I can't wait for Tuesday at noon, Pacific time anyway, to jump on with you guys and see your beautiful faces and hear all of the stories and the growth and the celebrations.

So congratulations to each and every one of you. Because you are the reason I do this work. I'm so happy that we're on this journey together. So thank you all so very much for being on the podcast and being in the mastermind. I look forward to seeing and celebrating your future accomplishments right along with the ones that we've already created thus far. So congratulations to each of you.

Jena: Thank you. Congratulations to you.

Dustin: Thanks everyone.

Erika: Yeah congratulations.

Wendy: 200 episodes. Amazing.

Angela: Woo-hoo. Yes, awesome. All right. Thank you so much and we'll see you guys next week. Take care. Bye.

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