

Ep #207: Creating Balance



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 207.

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

Well hello my empowered leaders and happy Tuesday. I hope this finds you well, and you're getting close to break. So we're going to talk about balance today. I'm really excited about this topic. This is the topic that we have been covering in the Empowered Principal Facebook group. So if you aren't a member of the Empowered Principal Facebook group, please join us. We are working on balance.

Next month I am going to be teaching, actually this month because you're hearing this in December. In the month of December, I am teaching you how to prepare for the holidays so that you actually take a break. You take a real break and you enjoy that break with intention. We're going to talk all about that in the Facebook group.

So join us ASAP so you can get the trainings and get the information you need in order to enjoy yourself and have a wonderful holiday long break that you don't feel guilty and you are present and truly enjoying time and taking time for yourself. Not just saying yes to everybody else's agenda or everybody else's offer to come and do all these holiday things. Maybe you want to stay at home and enjoy yourself. So you have to decide what it is you want and go for it.

We're going to talk about that in the next podcast, but this podcast today is all about balance. We're going to talk about what it is and how to create it for yourself. Okay? Let's dive in.

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Balance. What is balance? Okay? This is a question that I have been asking my clients and my students in the mastermind because so many times we say to ourselves and to our colleagues, “I just wish I had more work-life balance. I wish I had more balance in my life?”

I started thinking about this. What is balance? Where do we find it? What is the balance? How do we know when we have it? How do we know we don't have it? So I started questioning all of this. When you say that you want work-life balance, typically what people think of in terms of balance is the way that they're spending their time.

So when we crave work-life balance, what we're saying is that we'd like to spend less time working and more time engaging in our lives outside of work. Because what it feels like is it feels like we get up and we're spending our entire day working and very little time doing the things outside of work that we want to do, that make us feel excited and happy and rejuvenated.

Most of the time people think of it in terms of work and not work, I would say. When I ask my clients when do you know you have balance? How will you know you have achieved balance? What they said is, “Well, I'll feel it. When I have balance, I'll feel balanced.” So that was interesting to me. So we believe we have achieved balance when we feel in our bodies that we're contributing at work and contributing to our personal lives in equal or close to equal amounts.

So our brain wants to make it a mathematical equation, like a balanced scale, right. Equal amount of work, equal amount of personal time. That creates balance. When I ask my students how do they know when they've achieved balance, they said it was a feeling. I was like that's it. This means balance is a feeling that we feel.

When we say we want balance, what we are referring to is a feeling of balance. Feeling balanced in our lives. This is how we know it's a feeling.

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You could mathematically divide your hours, the 24 hours you're given in a day, and spend eight hours resting, eight hours working, eight hours playing or personalizing. Whatever it is you.

But that doesn't mean you will feel balanced. Because a lot of people sleep eight hours, work eight hours, and have eight hours of personal time. But it doesn't feel like balance because those eight hours, even though it's equal to the amount of time you're working. The way you're spending that eight hours doesn't feel like the way you want to be spending it, right?

It's like well but I have to shower and I have to cook and I have to commute and I have to pick up the kids and I have to grocery shop and I have to do all these other things. Then I'm working during those eight hours. I'm sneaking in some emails or I'm writing a post of whatever it is.

So mathematically speaking, you could be spending your time equally and still not feel balanced. Some people they work 12/14/16 hour days, and they're completely balanced and happy. Other people work four or six hours a day and feel out of balance and unhappy. So if the goal is to feel balance, we achieve a feeling, an emotion in our bodies from a belief. We have to achieve a goal of balance with a belief that our life is balanced or that we're in the process of aiming towards balance.

So balance has a different meaning for everyone. So if you're feeling unbalanced in any way, shape, or form, you want to look at what you're thinking and what you believe is true about your life. Your professional life, your personal life, all the facets of your life. What will it take for you personally to create that balance for yourself?

I've done a lot of work on this myself over the last couple of months. I've come to believe that there are many facets of our lives where we can feel and create balance. So I think of balance in terms of mental balance. Giving my brain time to think about problems and solutions. Current

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thoughts balance with past and future thoughts. Negative thinking and negative self-talk balanced with thoughts that inspire me and motivate me and feel good and creating and consuming content.

All the ways in which I use my brain, there is a balance to that. When I am consuming and I'm learning and growing and thinking about the things I'm consuming, the things I'm reading, the things I'm watching on videos, the podcasts I'm listening to versus creating content and pushing my mental balance in terms of that external communication, okay? So there's mental balance.

There's emotional balance. Allowing myself to feel all the emotions that come with being human. Not just trying to pick and choose the happy ones. You know you get a platter of, you know what I'm thinking of are those chocolate boxes you get, right? You're trying to pick the best one, and you don't know what you're going to get but you're trying to avoid the yucky ones. This is what we do with our emotions. We look around and we try to ensure that we're going to pick only the happy chocolates and we're not going to get the yucky chocolates.

So what we want to do with balance is we want to be willing to taste all the chocolates. We want to be willing to feel all the emotions. What happens is when we're afraid to feel a feeling, we get into avoiding it and resisting it and ignoring it, pushing it away. But what happens when we do that is we shrink the spectrum of allowable emotions.

So I think of emotions as an emotional spectrum. Negative 10 to positive 10 and all the feels in between. Happy, neutral, negative. When we aren't allowing ourselves to go to a space where we feel really intense negative emotion, that also means we cut off the other end of the positive emotion. It's like a rubber band.

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So if you stretch it in one direction, it goes in the other. When you don't allow yourself to feel the balance of both emotions, what happens is you kind of have this small little spectrum of what you're willing to feel, which is why a lot of people tend to feel numb or neutral or they say, "I don't know how I'm feeling." Because they're not playing with that emotional spectrum, they're not creating emotional balance.

So there's mental balance, emotional balance, then there's physical balance. I think about physical balance in terms of how I use my body. How I physically move within the world. How I spend my time in terms of movement and exercise and motion versus sitting and typing and working and being sedentary and sleeping and lying down, all those things. So physical balance is about how you are engaging with your body at a physical level.

There's another kind of balance, psychological balance. I think of psychological balance as the balance of growing and evolving and pushing myself and expanding my capability to experience life. Versus feeling like I'm plateauing or that I'm stuck or I'm in the grind. In the river of misery, as my coach calls it. So there's psychologically times when we're advancing, and then there's psychological times where we're either resting on purpose or we're feeling like we're spinning out and stuck in overwhelm and plateauing and all of that.

There's also social balance, right. The social balance, for me, is about being with people versus being alone. That feels different for everybody. Extroverts are going to be out there more in order to feel that balance. So they might need to be with people 80% of the time and home alone 20% of the time in order to feel a 50/50 balance. Introverts might be the reverse of that. So what your social balance is depends on what you crave, who you are, what feels right to you.

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Then for those extroverts, learning how to allow yourself to be with yourself. Be just as entertained by yourself as you are when you're out with people. And for introverts to learn how to enjoy being with people and not making it so draining. I don't know that because I'm super extroverted, but I'm imagining there's a balance there for those introverts out there as well.

Then there's professional balance. I think of professional balance as contributing professionally and learning. So when you're new, there is a lot of learning going on. There's a lot of not knowing what to do and a lot of needing to know and needing to learn. You're consuming in a lot of knowledge and experience.

When you become more experienced, more veteran in your position, you start to contribute more. You don't have to learn as much as you did on that learning curve in the beginning. You might be deepening and understanding and expanding your skillset, but it doesn't feel as unbalanced because you are contributing and learning at the same time.

There's financial balance where you're making money or receiving money, and there's when you're spending money, donating money. You're choosing to spend money and contribute it to somebody else in exchange for value. Money is simply an exchange of value.

So when you receive money, that is in exchange of the value you provide to your district and to your community in your line of service. When you spend money, you are paying for the exchange of value that you are receiving. Whether you are purchasing something and you're exchanging money for the items or whether you are donating and contributing to the greater good. You're exchanging the value of contribution, the feeling that you feel when you can give to others in need.

Finally there's global, I think. Well, there's many more, but I think of global balance in terms of being out in the world globally. Travelling, exploring,

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being in nature, going and seeing new things versus retreating in the comfort of your home. So there's times and places where we engage in the exterior world and there's times where we retreat to the comfort of our interior safe space.

So those are some of the areas in which I believe people create levels of balance in their life. There's also spiritual balance that just popped in my head as I was speaking of these, but these are some of the things that came up for me. I'm sure you could do things. Relationship balances, friendship balances. Family time versus friend time. There's lots of ways in your life that you can create balance. These are just some of the ways that came up for me.

What prompted my thought on this goes way back to, I don't know. I'm going to say like 2015 maybe. When I first attended a Tony Robbins event here in San Jose, California. He defined the six universal human needs, and that they all require us to have balance. They are certainty, uncertainty, significance, love and belonging, and then growth and contribution. The way that I see his work is that there is a universal balance to them.

So all humans have these universal needs in their life. There is a universal human need to have safety and certainty and assuredness. We want to know what's coming. We want to feel safe. We want to feel certain, and have a level of certainty in our lives. That drives a lot of our behaviors, this need for certainty.

On the flipside, the balance of that is we also crave uncertainty. We like variety. We like spontaneity. We like surprises. We like the unknown. That's why we love movies and games and going on adventures. So there's this balance of wanting certainty and safety and comfort and knowing this and there's also this human desire for uncertainty and desire and spontaneity and surprises and all of that.

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Then I think of the next two as significance. When people value being significant, and you can apply these six universal truths to your students or to your teachers are you're thinking about their behaviors and what drives their behavior. There is a need for significance. We want to feel important, unique. We want to be seen. We want to be heard. We want to feel that we have significance in the world, and that other people value that significance. On the flipside...

So we want to feel like we're special and important and unique and that there's nobody else out there like us, which is all true. We also have this deep, deep rooted desire for inclusion and belonging and being wanted and accepted, being a part of the tribe, a part of the group. We want to feel loved.

There is a real desire that drives a lot of our behavior when it comes to this balance of being important and being significant and people seeing us as separate than other individuals, but we also want to fit in. We also want to blend in and belong, which is why we kind of drive what we drive and wear what we wear in terms of our clothing. Like we fit in a certain way. We want to fit into our circles. So there's that balance of being unique and fitting in.

Then finally there's this, he calls it growth and contribution. I see this as a balance of growing at an individual level. Evolving ourselves, becoming accomplished, creating achievements, having self-care. So we're growing at an individual level. Then there's this contribution to the other.

So there's this internal growth and then there's this external growth where we're giving and supporting, being compassionate, caring for others. We feel balanced when we are giving and receiving in similar proportions. I also believe that we feel most balanced when we lead our lives from our heart and our head in balanced proportions.

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Dr. Martha Beck identifies two parts of ourself. There's the social self, which is the part of us that has been molded by societal values. Society, our family, our institutions that we're a part of. It's the part of us that was taught how to think and feel and behave. It's how we learned what goals we should strive for, what we should value as an individual and as a family and as a society. It's what we should strive for. It's all of that that creates in our mind how we should be in the world. It's the social aspect.

I call this leading with our mind because in our mind, we're always thinking about, "Am I doing the right thing? Am I checking the box? Am I doing it the right way so that I don't get ostracized or excluded from the group?" We're trained to do this from a very young age. I believe it serves us as humans because we have the unique gift as a human being to have that prefrontal cortex working in our favor. It's responsible for the way we think, problem solving, reasoning, impulse control, memory, executive functioning, all of that. We want that prefrontal cortex working for us.

As educators, we love that part of the brain, don't we? It is responsible for all of our cognitive functions. However, I think that we over rely on it because we want to feel in control. We think that the mental part of us is how we do it right. I believe that the reason we often feel unbalanced is that we're leading from our head much more of the time than we're leading with our intuition and our heart.

When we're leading with our heart, Martha Beck calls this the essential self. It's the deep knowingness of who we are, who we were meant to be, our deepest desires. So I feel that we feel unbalanced when we lead from only our head or only our heart and we want to lead with both. We want to hear what our heart and desires and our deepest fears, all of that has to say. There's a deep knowingness within us that we want to hear and listen to, and then we want to use our mind to problem solve those solutions, right?

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We know that we want to feel balanced, but we don't feel balanced for ourselves. We don't create it for ourselves. We resist it. So why do we do this? When we know what we want but we don't create it. That's kind of a common theme, right? Our brain is like, "I want this." But then it's like, "But I don't want to do the work for that. I don't want to take the time for that." It has all these reasons, right? So I was thinking. What are the top two reasons that school leaders crave balance but don't have it?

Number one, time. 100% of people I asked said I don't have time for both. I don't think it's possible to have balance. Work-life balance isn't a thing. It's not possible to have balance. I disagree. I challenge you on that. You do have time because there are lots of people who experience a ton of balance in their life, and they have exactly the same number of minutes that each of us does.

So we have to challenge the thought and the belief system, the story that we've been sold that we don't have time for both. Or that work-life balance isn't real or it's not a thing or it's not possible. We have to confront that belief system. We have to look for ways in which it isn't true. Look for ways in which it is true that we do have time for both and that it is possible to create the feeling of balance.

Number two, we are more comfortable in one area than the other basically. So it's easier to work than be at home when there's family dysfunction. It's easier to stay at home than to have to get up and get dressed and go out to an event. It's easier to spend than to save, that's for sure, right? It's easier to stay in bed versus getting up and going to work out.

So you can see why we don't have what we have because it feels easier to the mind to do the zone of comfort, what we know how to do and what requires the least amount of effort. Because as you know, the brain wants the least amount of effort. It wants it to be easy, simple, doable. It wants to know what's coming up. It just doesn't want to have to go to work. It's a

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lazy brain, but it's because it's trying to conserve our energy and keep us safe. So once we know that, we're like oh, it's not a problem to have to not want to work out, but to decide we're going to go work out.

This is where our heart and our head work together. Our heart knows that our body needs movement and exercise and strength training. Our brain is telling us, "Oh but I'm tired and I'm so busy and I don't have time." What we can do is we can reroute those thoughts and say, "I understand. In this moment, it doesn't feel like getting up, but what's the benefit of this? What's the long-term result I'm trying to create? How can I sell myself on why getting up is the better idea than sleeping in?"

We have to understand the results that it provides us and the long term benefits. I like to also think about the cost of not creating that balance. So you want to think about what is the result I'm trying to create and why? What is the long term impact it has on myself and those I love? What's the cost of not taking this time to create the balance? How does it impact me negatively in the long run? Why do I want to invest in a balanced life?

You want to ask yourself those questions because it will help shift the brain from saying, "I don't want to do that. That's boring. That's lazy. It takes too much time." And all the excuses into like, "No, I want to go do these and this is why. Let's make it fun." So the value of emotional balance, I'm just going with emotional balance because if you have emotional balance and you can regulate your emotions, you can regulate all the other levels of balance. All the other facets of your life.

I think of the value as fully having your empowerment. You become capable of allowing any emotion. You're tuned into what you need in all the areas of your life, and you learn how your body processes emotions.

Second, confidence. When you feel more certain about yourself and your work, you have more confidence. When you're able to experience all of the

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emotions and you're able to tell yourself the truth of what it is you need in that moment whether it's physical, mental, psychological, spiritual, all of the things. You create a sense of confidence knowing, "I know what I need. I know how to give it to myself. I'm going to create that balance within my own hands. I have that agency to create it for myself."

When you have the confidence to create balance in your life, you feel more influence. You feel more influential because you're balancing your energy. You're giving time to work and home. You're creating and receiving. You are feeling good and willing to feel bad. You are evolving and you're resting. You're doing all of it. This helps you stay centered because you can step out of your life for a second and see all the ways in which you love every part of your life.

When you're centered, you can ground yourself in times of chaos and challenges and uncertainty. Also creating impact in your life, at your school, and for your family. You solve problems faster. You can intentionally make decisions. Decisions and actions aren't just in reaction to emotion. You are in charge of them because you're creating the balance of when you get to work solving problems and when you take a break and give your brain a rest.

So creating balance in your life, pick an area. You don't have to do all of them at once. Just pick one of them and give it a try. All right? Have a great week. Talk to you guys next week. Take care. Bye.

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

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