

Ep #208: Take a Real Break



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 208.

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

Hello my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday. If you're new to the podcast, welcome. Hey guys if you're new and you're loving the podcast, can you please write a review? The more people that write reviews, the more people can find the podcast. We don't want school leaders out there hanging. We know how hard the job is. So please write a review, share it with your colleagues and buddies, share it with your Facebook groups. Just share the love. That's all we're here to do.

All right. This is a great episode. I'm super excited about it because I just created it this week. So right now as I'm recording this, it is the 16th of November. I was thinking about the Thanksgiving holiday and how to pump up my clients and my students in the mastermind to actually enjoy their holiday break.

One of the questions I love to ask myself is what would feel like a miracle for my school leaders this month? If they could achieve something or accomplish something or just feel a certain way, what would it be? What would be a miracle that blew their mind? They would be so happy that they could experience this thing, right?

When I asked myself that question this morning, the solution was we've got to figure out how to get people to actually not work over the break. It would be a Christmas miracle if you could go on your Christmas break or holiday break, whatever you call it, and actually take a break. So I designed this podcast just for you. It's called take a real break and how to do that.

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So I'm just going to walk you through my notes, how I personally developed a way for me to work before break in a way that allows me to fully enjoy and be fully present and really get the most out of my breaks when I am not working. You can use this for summer break, long breaks like summer break or holiday breaks, or you can use it for weekends and even evenings. This is going to apply to any time where you are not working but your brain tells you you should be working. Okay?

It goes like this. So there's some prework to be done before the break. It's really just a series of questions to get intentional about what you want to do on your break and what you need to do before your break in order to actually enjoy the break. So usually we're so busy cramming in last minute things at school we don't even think about the break until we have worked ourselves to the bone, super exhausted. Here's what happens.

We cram a bunch of work in. We're trying to get so much done before the break, as is everybody else which makes it feel like your plate's even more full than normal. You're working yourself to the bone. You're not thinking about break. You're just thinking about getting to the finish line at the start of that break.

What happens is you are so exhausted by the time you hit break you actually physically don't enjoy your break because you've worked yourself until you're sick. Or you're just so exhausted you lay around zoned out, vegged out, or you're sleeping your break away. What do you do, right, to avoid this? You have to intentionally plan.

So I want you to think about like what do you actually want to do on your break? What do you want to experience that break to be? What do you want to have happen during that break? How do you want to feel during the break? I love this question. What would the experience of your break be if it were completely guilt free? If you could wrap up everything and not feel the

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urge or the guilt to work? What would have to happen in order for that to take place?

So I want you to first visualize the break as you want it to be without being panicked, without being stressed, without being worried, without feeling guilty. What would that even feel like? Can you take yourself to the place where you are not wanting to work during your break?

Maybe for some of you, you're just like, "I don't work. I don't care. I'll deal with it later." Then that panic kind of sets in at the end because you didn't plan and prepare intentionally. So there's a little bit of a difference there. I want you to just imagine and visualize what the break might be like.

You want to enjoy the break. So it has to be about what you want to do. I also like to think about what does a principal who doesn't work on the break, what are they thinking and doing? How are they feeling? How are they setting themselves up in order to be able to have the luxury of not worrying and not working or feeling guilty over the break?

So you've got to think ahead of time about what that break even looks like for you. What would it feel like to take the break of a lifetime? What would be winning the lottery or getting the Christmas magic delivered to you in terms of not working? What does that look like for you? You have to be intentional about that. So you do that work ahead of time.

The other thing I like to ask you is what would it take in order for you to be guilt free? What would have to be done ahead of time? What would have to be done ahead of time? What would have to be accomplished, planned, whatever you need in order to be able to feel like, "I've done the work. I've done enough. I'm planned enough. I'm prepared enough for when I come back that I don't have to work."

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So once you've done the prework, then you're like okay. Now I've got to plan the breakout. So this is kind of a before, during, and after situation where you're planning out what you want to accomplish before the break, then you're planning out what you want to accomplish during the break. Then you want to think about what you want to have planned and in place on your calendar for after the break. So there's the before break, during break, and after break. You've got to plan all of that out.

Now let me get into the obstacles because this is where the coaching comes into play. You are going to know what you want for the most part. If you don't, spend some time exploring that. You're going to know like these are the things I want to get done. There's going to be a million of them.

Of course you're not going to get them all done. So you're going to have to pick and choose and sit with the discomfort of having a list of 20 things, but maybe only getting three done. Then you have to understand for yourself who do I have to be in order to be the person who has breaks for real? Okay. There's that.

Then come up all the obstacles. All the obstacle thoughts, all of the excuses, all of the reasons why in our mind this can't be accomplished. So I've talked with my mastermind about this. We really had fun coming up with what we want, why we want it, how we have to prepare for it, and then all the obstacles that are going to come up. So here are the obstacles. I'm just going to share with you some of my thoughts on the solutions.

So obstacle number one, you're going to want to get more done before break than is possible. You're going to have 20 things on the list, and you know you're only going to get to four or five. So let's get honest with ourselves beforehand and focus on one thing at a time.

If of your list of 20 only one of them got done this week before the break, what would it be and why? Work on one thing at a time. You're going to tell

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yourself and you're going to tell me. I'm sure you're telling me right now as you're listening that's not possible. If you had to commit to one thing, what would it be and why? Work on one thing at a time. Hey if you get that one thing done, then you cannot take your to-do list home because it's done.

Now if you're at work ahead of time and you've got three more days and your checklist is done, your priority is done, yeah go ahead and get some more things done. You can work on them beforehand, but you cannot take things home.

Another thing I like to suggest is have a closing ceremony before you walk out the door. So if on Friday before your break your desk is a mess, it feels super discombobulated, spend 15 minutes. Organize your paperwork, file the papers, recycle, clear your desk. Just give yourself the treat of walking into a welcoming clean, fresh office before you go home for your break.

Don't just run out because you're so tired or done and you didn't plan out for yourself. Don't run out and leave yourself a big mess. Spend five minutes. Spend 10 minutes. Get in there. Just tidy it up. Even if you put the piles aside so it looks great when you walk in. The piles will still be there whether it looks ugly or it looks clean. So do that ceremony.

Obstacle number two. Giving into the urge during your break to check email, to get ahead, to take this opportunity. Oh I've got some extra time. I'm going to get ahead and catch up. That kind of thing.

Here's the solution. Schedule your fun ahead of time. Create a schedule for your break. Don't just leave big, huge amounts of time floating about. You want to have a fun schedule planned for you. You want to know what you're doing on the break. You want to make sure that the things you said you wanted to do. Even if it's sleeping, put sleep on the calendar. Stay in my jammies and watch movies. Put it on the calendar so that you feel like you have permission to do that.

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Now if you can't get yourself to the place where you just can't resist checking your email, then I invite you to be honest with yourself ahead of time. Put it on the calendar. 30 minutes every morning I'm going to check. Or 15, I'm going to make you try and do it less. Give yourself a few minutes to check it, calm down the nervous system, and then go about your day. Plan out your tasks.

Then you're just going to have to sit with the discomfort of the urge. You know how you have the urge to have a cookie, but you don't eat the cookie. You just feel like I want the cookie, but I'm not going to eat it. You have to do that with the email. I feel the urge to check email, but I'm going to choose not to because I know that giving into that urge is not ultimately what I want and allowing that urge is possible. I can totally do that, okay.

Number three, not scheduling in the fun. So what's going to happen is I'm going to tell you schedule your fun, plan your break, put down what you want to do. Want to bake cookies with the kids, want to go out for drinks with a friend, put it on the calendar ahead of time. Plan it ahead of time. Go to Christmas in the park. That's what we're going to do. That's one of our things. Plan out your schedule.

I'm not saying that you have to be like rigid and have every minute planned, but I'm saying fill in the blanks with the things that you really want to experience and do. Put those in first. Put in the downtime and rest that you want, and then you'll have some flex time and that's fine. It has to come first.

If you don't do it, which you're not going to want to because your brain's going to tell you that this is silly. It's going to tell you, "Why would I take the time to do that? I just want the break. I don't want to have to be scheduled." Well, that's fine if you don't want to be scheduled. What happens is we need to tell time what we want it to do.

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Time is like money. With our money, we create budgets because we're telling our money, "Here's how I want to spend you. I want you to be spent here. I want you to be saved here. I want you to donate here. I want you to create and have money in my account. This much in my account, this much in my savings. I donate this much. I save this much."

You do the same thing with time. Here's how much time I'm going to have fun. Here's how much time I'm going to rest and sleep. Here's how much time I'm going to spend at work. Here's how much time I'm going to spend with my kids. You are the creator of your time. You tell time what you want it to do. Time is your asset. Time is just sitting there waiting for you to tell it what to do. If you don't tell it what to do, the universe is going to tell it for you.

All of a sudden it will feel like break is happening to you and other people's agendas are happening to you. Your friend's calling you up wanting to do this and that, and then you're going to feel bad saying no because you don't really have other plans. So you might as well go do the thing even though it's not what you really want to do. You see where I'm going with this? Okay. Schedule in the things you want.

Now keep in mind if you're resisting this, you just want to ask yourself why. What's the obstacle underneath that obstacle? Then don't overschedule yourself. For the love of goodness, give yourself downtime. Give yourself that break. Let yourself have the rest and the peacefulness and the vegging out all that you want. Just plan on it.

Don't tell yourself you're going to be super productive and then be upset that you didn't have any rest, or you're so exhausted that you just veg out and then you're mad at yourself for not being more productive. Do you see that? You want to be in alignment with what it is you want and what it is you need, and then you offer yourself those things. You just say no to the rest.

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That's number four. What's going to happen is you're not going to want to say no. You're not going to want to say no to yourself. So when your brain's like, "Let's check email," you're not going to want to say no. You have to be willing to say no to yourself. No to the urges. Just sit with the discomfort of telling yourself no. Totally okay. Totally fine.

You're definitely not going to want to say no to friends and family who want you to do all the things. If you don't want to go out and do all of the things, you have to plan ahead so that you can say, "I would enjoy that another time, but I have something else planned." Or I really need the downtime today. Thanks so much for the offer. I'll take you up on another time, right. Let people know ahead that you have a plan. Here's my schedule.

Catch your brain when it's lying to you, and then just sit in the discomfort of saying no to other people. You know how to say no. You've done it with your kids. You've done it with students. You can do it with yourself and with adults. Okay?

Number five, the Sunday night blues. When you get to the end of the break and you start to ramp up and you feel the panic. The thoughts of work come rushing back into your head. You're dreading going back. You're telling yourself break went too fast. You're worrying that something's gone terribly wrong because you didn't work, okay. You're going to have all these scary thoughts that come. One of my clients calls it the Sunday scaries.

So what you want to do is you want to plan on this happening ahead of time. You want to just know like, "Oh, this is the part of my break where my brain freaks out. Totally fine."

So I offer this to the brains that freak out. If your brain's one of those that freaks out on Saturday or Sunday, schedule in time, a finite amount. At the maximum one hour. Give yourself time to go in, check the emails, look at your schedule, get your planning in place so that you can calm down and

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enjoy the rest of the weekend, the rest of that break. But if you don't set a set time of one hour or less, you're going to get sucked in and then end up working the last two days of your break. Then you're going to be upset because you cut your break short.

Now the other thing you can do if you don't want to indulge in work is just write down what's bothering you. So what am I thinking about working? What am I worrying about? Write it all down. Then here's what I used to do. I used to write down the list. Here's all the things I'm thinking about. Then I would say, "If I had to solve that right now, what would I do? Quick, quick, quick." I come up with quick solutions.

Or if it's a complicated problem, something I have to spin on a little bit, think about. I just go to my calendar, put it on, and say okay Tuesday at 1:00 I'm going to think about this and problem solve. But I have a spot on my calendar for it. It feels so much better than waiting to put it on the calendar or waiting to think like I don't have a solution. Just write it down quick, put it on the calendar, and be done with it.

Number six, this is an interesting one. You use work as a buffer from your personal interactions, your family interactions, the discomfort, or dysfunction that was going on at home. We lean into I think I have work to do. So you sit down at the dinner table, politics come up or there's a disagreement. There's family tension. Then all of a sudden it feels very enticing to go into your office or into your bedroom and have very important work to do, right?

Notice this. Notice when you want to use work as that buffer between you and the discomfort of family conflict or relationship conflict or whatever it is. Coach yourself on that. Think about who is challenging me? What are they challenging me on? I like to think about these people ahead of time.

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You know who triggers you. If somebody who triggers you is coming over for the holidays, you want to plan ahead of time. What triggers me? Why do I feel this way? How do I want to show up? What kind of person do I want to be in handling this? What does the person who handles somebody like this do? What are they thinking, feeling, doing? Think about that, okay? Plan those situations out ahead of time.

Finally number seven, believing the break is going to go fast. So one of my clients, she's so sweet. She said, "Oh no, I'm thinking about the break and I'm already worried it's going to go too fast. I'm already dreading that it's going to be over." I said Dina, you're ending the break. You're pushing a break away before it's even started, right. She's expediting that break by telling herself it's going to go too fast.

So instead of believing you won't ever have enough time and you're dreading the end of the break before it's even started, I want you to slow your brain down and ask yourself how is this break abundant? How do I have plenty of time? What's going to make this feel like it was slow and luxurious? That you had a luxurious amount of time.

You had enough time. What makes this break feel plentiful? How will you know that you've had enough time? What if it's also true that the break could go really slow. It could just feel like you have so much break ahead of you. What would that feel like to believe that? Isn't that amazing?

So play with that a little bit. Have some fun with it. Don't wish you break away by telling yourself it's going to go too fast. If you plan your breakout, you put in the things you want, you say no to the things you don't want, you get the work done ahead of time and you plan the week after, you are going to love your break.

I'm going to be talking about this in the Empowered Principal Facebook group. Come on now. We're going to be doing a mid-year reboot. If you

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want to sign up for coaching and you want to get started, there's no time like right now. We're doing a January reboot, midway through the year. We're going to pick ourselves back up, get on those goal trains, and we're going to move forward.

So sign up for the Empowered Principal today. Give it to yourself as a gift for the holidays, the gift of the new year. We're going to work on achieving balance, achieving breaks, and achieving high success while you're at school in less time. Are you ready? Let's do this. Love you guys. Happy holidays. I'll see you next week. Take care. Bye.

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