

Ep #210: Do Not Fear Numbers



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

[The Empowered Principal Podcast](#) with Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 210.

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, and happy New Year. Welcome to 2022. It's crazy, right. I can't believe it. I have to say though I love this time of year. I love the new year vibe. It's a time to rejuvenate ourselves. I love to reflect on the prior year, celebrate my growth, my successes, review my goals from last year and look into this year. All of my ambitions. Give myself time to realign to what it is that I want, who I want to become, what I want my future to be like, and really reimagine that future by continually expanding what I think is possible to experience in my life.

Throughout the month of January, we are going to cover four concepts to help you reboot your brain and connect you to the goals that you want to experience and that you want to achieve as a school leader and as a human. We are all one package here. So this podcast is definitely about your leadership skills, but it's also about your life. That's why I'm a life coach for school leaders. We're doing it all here.

Let me just say these four concepts that I'm sharing with you over the course of January, they're not new or they're not earth shattering. But we are going to look at them in a different light, in a way that makes them intriguing and allows you to implement them in a way that inspires commitment to the goals. That inspires you to carry on even when it's hard, even when you don't see the path, even when you're not sure how. Even when you're lacking in belief, we're going to get you to the other side.

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First can I just share with you because it just happened like an hour ago. Can I just share with you how much life coaching is changing my life and the world in both profound and really small ways? I just got off my monthly certified coaching call where I was coached on my thoughts around negative thinking. So we submit a form when we want to be coached.

I was just noticing like I was defaulting to like really negative energy. Like meh. Something would happen? Meh. Little things, big things, traffic, meh. Like Amazon messed up my order? Meh. Husband didn't pick up the dinner he was supposed to pick up? Meh. Like meh, meh, meh. I'm like what's going on here? Why am I so negative? So I submitted my request, got coached, and I've been watching myself since I submitted the request. I was like yeah, I need this coaching because even little things.

Like this morning I was in the shower and I have this brand new bottle of shampoo that I'm trying. I'm trying out all these cool new products. The shampoo pump wouldn't work this morning. I couldn't get the shampoo out. I'm like I want to just get in and out of the shower. I don't want to be in there forever. My brain is like meh, meh, meh I'm never buying this again. This is brand new. I was just completing. I was just whining, right?

Like last week I couldn't find my PO keys to my PO box for my business. I wanted to go check the mail. Where were the? Blah, blah, blah. Getting hard on myself and being critical and telling myself that I'm forgetful and that I'm not organized. You know the drill, right? I notice how often I react with frustration and annoyance and I grumble to myself. This should work. This should be easier. There shouldn't be traffic. I shouldn't have to do this. Technology should work. That's a big one for me. Technology and I are working on our relationship.

Oh my gosh, my brain is so whiny. I thought I was having the thought that I was wired this way. That I must have grown up in a negative space and I

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was taught to be negative. Or I was just born wired negatively, and that I should fix it. Something's wrong with me. I'm unfixable. I don't know how to change this.

It turns out after coaching that I'm just like everyone else. I'm not special. I'm not different. I'm not broken or I'm not worse than any other person because I have negative reactions. I just have them. I'm human. So are all of you. My coach guided me through the process of negative thoughts. They're not a problem and they don't all need to be fixed.

I'm not going to spend my whole day every time I have a negative thought stopping myself, coaching on it, trying to get to a better thought. No. I'm just going to say, "Okay, my brain is offering me a negative thought. That's part of being human. Moving on." But there are times when my brain is offering me a negative thought and that net result of that thought is creating an outcome that I do not want.

So when it comes to my business or my clients or relationships or with my husband or child or friends/family. Whenever it impacts the things that I want to have in my life in a negative way, then I know it's time to observe the thoughts, notice them, and do the coaching work with myself, my self-coaching work, to look for thoughts that serve me better. That create the intended outcomes that I want.

So if you're a person who has negative thoughts, so that's all of you by the way. You can just notice them with curiosity without judgement. If you find yourself slipping into criticism and self-judgement and going down that rabbit hole feeling bad about yourself and trying to hide or avoid or change who you are like I was trying to do. We can instead just see the reaction as normal and decide if we want to take the time to explore it more and look for more positive things.

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So, for example, with my shampoo, it's like it was a fleeting moment. It wasn't the end of my day. It didn't really impact my life in any way, shape, or form, but I could also say like hey. I'm kind of grateful. I actually am grateful, not kind of. I'm blessed to have the money to buy shampoo that I like, that I want, and that I have this shampoo to wash my hair.

Now I'm not going to stop and self-coach about every little thing my brain complains about or whines about or gets frustrated about. But I am noticing that oh, there's a negative thought. That's interesting. That I don't have to flip. I call it flipping the thought where you're going from that negative space into more positive energy space. You don't have to flip it every single time.

Let me tell you this. Negative thinking does not mean, it does not equate to you being a good or a bad person. I really want to highlight that because my brain was offering me like I'm a bad person because I'm constantly thinking negative thoughts. No. You're constantly thinking negative thoughts because that's what your brain is offering you. Because you're a human on the planet whose brain offers you negative thinking about 50% of the time.

So you don't have to have positive thoughts to always be a good person. That's not the case. You can simply have negative thoughts and not make them mean something is wrong with you inherently.

The cool thing about this call is that there were 713 people on that call. Had I seen that number before I got coached, I might have been nervous, but I wasn't because it was just my coach and I looking at each other on Zoom. What it does mean is that my vulnerability, my willingness to speak up and say, "Hey, I'm negative, and I'm feeling shameful about that or embarrassed about that or feeling like I'm unfixable. Something's wrong with me."

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There were 712 other people who also heard my message that their negative thoughts aren't wrong and that they aren't broken. It's just that our brain is offering us negative thoughts. My willingness to share this helped 700 other people. I love this about coaching. It's so powerful. I went from feeling shame, guilt, embarrassment and unfixable to feeling relieved and normal and calm and neutral and accepting of myself. So powerful.

I want to share this story with you because even though I've been trained in life coaching for over 10 years and I've been certified through The Life Coach School for over six years, my brain still thinks negatively half of the time. We don't have to coach to never be negative again. We coach to maintain our mental and emotional health.

It's just like working out. You don't achieve a fitness goal and then stop and then never have to work out again. You set the goal, you work to achieve it, and then you maintain that routine to maintain your fitness level, maintain your goal. So I just share that with you to show you the power of coaching and how it helps us in these little tiny ways and really profound big ways.

Okay onto concept number one for the January mid-year reboot for school leaders. Here we go. Concept number one, there is no number we fear. When we are trying to achieve a goal, there is some tangible information that we need in order to know if we've achieved it. Even goals that are emotionally based such as I want to enjoy my job, I want to feel better, I want to love coming to work. We can measure that by the number of days that you wake up eager and excited to go to work.

It's the same with school culture and school climate. Principals will call me and say, "I want to achieve a positive and healthy school culture." I ask them what does that mean? What does that mean for you? How do you know when you've achieved that?

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So the first step of the first concept is choosing a goal, and then determining how you will measure if you've achieved that goal. There has to be some way that you measure the progress. If you think about weight loss, it's pretty easy. You get on the scale and look at the number. Besides that, you can measure your arm or thigh circumference. You can get a tape measure and measure your body. You can measure your BMI? I don't know.

There's lots of biological ways to measure your fitness. You can measure your cardiac fitness. You can measure your strength fitness, like how many pounds can you lift. You can record how many days that you workout or take a walk or do yoga. How far you go on your walks, how long your workouts are, recording your food intake. There's lots of numbers. Lots of choices.

With school goals, there are many goals that are driven by numbers. We know this. We live in the land of numbers, right? Test scores, student attendance, teacher attendance, tardies, absences, number of behavioral referrals, hours spent on investigations. There are many ways to measure our progress as a school leader.

Then there are other goals that we want to accomplish that feel less measurable or unmeasurable. Such as climate, culture, parent satisfaction, leadership impact. A lot of times the goals that feel hardest to measure are goals where we want to create the result of a feeling, of an emotion. We want to feel a certain way. We want to believe we are accomplished. We want to feel productive. We want to believe that we're helping other people. We want to feel impactful and so on.

So for many clients when they first sign up for coaching will say to me, "I want to feel confident. I'm a new school leader. I just feel anxious and I doubt myself all day long. I just want to feel better. So I'll ask them. If

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feeling better is the goal, how will we know that we've reached the goal? When will you feel better? What does that mean? What does feeling better mean to you specifically? What does it look like in your life?

You want to get specific with yourself and answer this question so you will know the progress you're making and you'll know when you've achieved it. And it allows you to acknowledge and celebrate yourself. You have hard evidence to say to you, "Hey, you achieved this goal. Good on you. Be proud. Feel good. Celebrate."

A lot of items we don't have tangible measurement. Therefore our brain keeps telling us we haven't yet achieved it. If we look at the ways in which we have achieved it and we can measure it, we will be able to feel and be in that moment of accomplishment and celebration.

A reminder that feeling goals are those kinds of goals where maintenance is required. You're not going to feel good every single day at work. Some days are just going to suck. Some days you're going to mess them up. They're not going to feel good every day. That's not the goal. The everydayness is the goal. The goal is on the regular, on the 50% or more I'm loving my job. I'm enjoying myself. I'm feeling this way.

It's just like when you're working out. You're not going to have a great big high after every single workout. You're not going to be like huh I feel really good, right? Some days you're not going to enjoy one minute of that workout. You're going to hate it the whole time, but you're going to do it anyways. Sometimes you're going to miss workouts, and you're going to feel bad about it. It's okay.

So the key is know the goal. Know how you personally measure the program and achievement of that goal. You can't just say I want to be a

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good school leader. That really means nothing. You've got to put some meat to it.

I came up with this concept of we're not afraid of numbers when I was working to reduce my weight. I was scared to step on the scale. I didn't want to see the numbers because it would mean that I failed. It would mean that I hadn't done the work. I knew the truth. I knew when I overate or I didn't work out enough. I knew when I consumed flour when I said I wasn't going to or I ate too much sugar or sweets. I knew it. So getting on the scale was just the reminder of the disappointment I had in myself that I failed.

But I decided I'm not going to be afraid of the number. The number on the scale means nothing. It's only what I make of it. What I make it mean about me, what I make it mean about myself, my numbers, my decisions. So I started playing with that with my weight. All of a sudden I looked forward to jumping on the scale.

Here's the thing. When I started jumping on the scale, yeah sometimes in the beginning I felt like ugh the weight of the weight. Eventually I did it every single day and I noticed, oh this fluctuates all the time. This number isn't static. It doesn't mean like I'm all or none. It just is a number on this particular day. It's kind of like test scores. It's a moment in time. It's a snapshot.

So then I started doing it with my finances and tracking my spending. Then I did with my clients in terms of the number of people I serve, the number of downloads of the podcast, the amount of income I was making. The same thing with client goals. We were doing this together. My husband and I also did it with constraint. One thing that we promised ourselves was that we were not going to overstuff and over shop. We're not going to overstuff our

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home and our closet with all kinds of things, especially like clothing. So one thing comes in, one thing goes out.

I decided like we aren't afraid of numbers in this house. That is a philosophy that I coach with. That we're not going to be afraid of numbers. We're not going to be afraid of measuring our goals.

Now the reason we don't want to measure the goals is pretty obvious because that makes it real. When we put numbers to a goal, we put dates and timelines, it's scary. It feels hard. That's when it feels impossible. That's when the brain floods with all of the drama. It goes into the how. How am I going to do this? How can I get this done? I don't know how.

Let your brain freak out. It's okay. It's going to flip out over having some kind of number attached to the goal whether it's a deadline, a date. Whether it's a number amount. That's where we have to allow ourselves to just feel that panic of not knowing how because trust me. If it's a new goal, you won't know how. Your brain's going to want to hustle and to figure it out. It's going to go into urgency energy and overwork, or it's going to procrastinate and sit back in order to avoid having to do that work of figuring out the how.

It's also going to offer you an out to avoid failing and feeling disappointed. It does not want you to fail. It doesn't want you feel disappointed. So it's going to tell you change the goal. Make it easier. This goal is too impossible. Why put out all this effort and energy? It wants to fail ahead of time and quit because the work behind any goal is truly in the belief, in building up the belief. It's not in the actions you take. The actions help you create the result.

The hard work comes into leaning into a belief that it's possible to achieve that goal even when you have no evidence to tell you otherwise. That's the

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hard work. Trusting, believing, having faith, whatever you want to call it. When you lean into belief that you can do something before you've actually done it, that's where the work is.

A part of having and feeling what we want is to flip our thoughts on failure. We teach in our schools that failure is the worst thing that can happen and to avoid it at all costs. Don't fail tests. Don't get a failing grade. Don't fail the class. We celebrate students who get it right and we admonish those for trying and getting it wrong.

Being successful in school means being completely failure adverse. We want to avoid failure. Being successful in life and in the world means the opposite. It means being failure filled. We want to fail a lot of times. We want to fail more than we achieve. We want to celebrate failure. It is the only path to achieving something you've never achieved before. You want to collect data towards your goal. You want to count the number of failed attempts and rack them up as one step closer towards the win. Use your failures as data. One more failure is one step closer to a win.

Focus your brain on the gains that you've made versus the gap ahead. Use the numbers you've accumulated to your benefit. This generates momentum, encouragement, and inspiration. Your belief levels will continue to rise if you focus on the progress and the gains you're making versus the gap of how far you have to go.

Also know this. There are leading number indicators and lagging number indicators. So back to the weight example, when you want to lose weight you're not going to measure your weight as the only source of input. Because the weight on the scale is a lagging indicator.

You're first going to want to measure how many days you're exercising and how long you're exercise because the scale's not going to move

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immediately and you're going to get discouraged. You're going to want to consider numbers that you can measure immediately. Numbers that lag, consider them as a long term result of your progress.

Finally what do you make all of these numbers mean about yourself? Do you believe you're capable of the impossible? Are you proud of yourself for the progress you've made? What about the gap? When you look at the gap versus the gains, do your thoughts shift about you or the goal? It's interesting to notice when we're looking at what we've accomplished and achieved, we feel differently than we look at where we have to go. You want to focus on the gains. What you've gained, what you've achieved, what you've accomplished.

One last thing. This is the summary. Numbers are never the problem. They never are the problem. They're neutral. They're just sitting there. Sitting on the scale, sitting on a piece of paper, sitting on a spreadsheet. The only reason we ever avoid them is because of what we make them mean about ourselves. Our self-worth, our self-concept, our self-abilities to achieve, our willingness to fail, our openness to processing any emotion that comes up during the process of achievement.

So my friends, do not be afraid of numbers. They are your friend. We want to embrace them. Welcome to the midyear reboot for school leaders. We are not afraid of numbers up in here. Join us at the Empowered Principal coaching program. I look forward to coaching with you guys soon. Take care. Bye.

If this podcast resonates with you, you have to sign up for the Empowered Principal coaching program. It's my exclusive one to one coaching and mentorship program for school leaders who believe in possibility. This program is designed for principals who are hungry for the fastest transformation in the industry. If you want to create the best connections,

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impact, and legacy for yourself and your school, the Empowered Principal program was designed for you. Join me at angelakellycoaching.com/work-dash-with-me to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

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