

Ep #211: The Balance of AND



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 211.

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 happy Tuesday. Welcome my empowered leaders. For those of you who are new to the podcast, welcome. Hey y'all, if you're loving the content of this podcast, you find it innovative and different and intriguing, please leave a five star review. We want other principals finding this podcast, and we want other principals joining into these conversations. This is about you, your ability to lead, and your life.

Here in January of 2022, we are doing the midyear reboot for school leaders as a part of the Empowered Principal coaching program. Last week we talked about not being afraid of numbers. I love the concept of not being afraid of numbers because as a principal I remember not wanting to look at data, right, or just really begrudging having to look at data.

I was like this is old data. This doesn't make any sense. I don't want to do it. I don't like it. Sometimes I didn't understand it. Sometimes I didn't know how to interpret it or how to make it meaningful for myself and my staff. I really resisted it until I realized the value of the numbers, and how they can support my efforts and my goals and my team's efforts and goals. And celebrating my teachers and the staff and the students and looking at what is going well and what is going right. Using those numbers as leverage versus as ammunition to beat ourselves up and to tell us what we're not doing well.

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So if you haven't listened to last week's podcast, listen to that. Today we're jumping into concept number two, the balance of and. Our brains like to think in all or none concepts because it just makes life so much easier for our brain. It makes it easier to make decisions. It doesn't have to really think that hard.

If you think about the brain and how it works, it functions on the premise of increasing pleasure. Making things as pleasurable as possible, as fun, as happy, as feel good as possible. The brain's always seeking out pleasure. In opposite, it's always trying to avoid pain. It does not want you to be in physical pain, mental pain, emotional pain, psychological pain. It doesn't differentiate pain from pain from pain. So it can't tell the difference when you're in emotional pain versus when you're in mental pain versus how you're in physical pain. The brain just knows pain is pain.

So it decides from an all or none thinking either this is painful or it's not. This is scary or it's safe. This is okay. This is not. It just does this very all or none type thinking to increase your pleasure, avoid pain at all costs, and it also strives to make things as easy and simple and doable as possible. The brain likes to be lazy. It wants things to be easy.

When you think about a day at work where you're like, "Ah this day's going to be so easy. I know exactly what I'm doing. There's nothing hard on my agenda. There's no angry parents. There's no frustrated teachers. Students are behaving. I'm living the dream today where things are pleasurable. There's not a lot of pain involved. They feel easy." So the brain's always looking. Increase pleasure, avoid pain, make things easy.

Which is why this all or none thinking works so well for us and why we lean into it without even realizing it that we're telling ourselves something is all or none. Something is right or it's wrong. It's safe or unsafe. It's fun or it's boring. It's this or that. We're taught this as well. So it gets reinforced in our

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brain. Our brain offers it to us, and then externally the people around us, our society, our culture, our values. All of it reinforces this belief that we live in an all or none world.

We're taught that life is an all or none game. You can have this or that. You can have an exceptional career or an exceptional family life. You can have an exceptional personal life or professional life basically. You can have money or happiness, fame or fortune, contributor or a taker. You can have one or the other, but you can't have it all.

So today we're going to ask the question. What if this isn't true? What if it actually isn't true that life is all or none? That things are available or not available to us? Is it actually true that life is an all or none game? Are there people out there who actually have it all? Think about it for a minute. When you spend time on social media or elsewhere comparing and despairing, your brain certainly seems to think so. It seems to think that they have it all and I don't. They're worthy and deserving of it and I'm not. They have their stuff pulled together and I don't. That's still all or none thinking.

What I think people mean when they say you can't have it all is you can't be happy all of the time. Things won't be easy all of the time. You can't live in perpetual bliss. You can't have this happy thing and this happy thing at the same time.

When we think about having it all meaning having happiness all of the time, we want to question that desire. Is our goal in life to be happy all of the time? Do we want work to feel good all of the time? Do we want life to be perfectly balanced all of the time? Do we want there never to be a problem? Never to be an issue? Never to feel negative emotion. Is that what we really want? Do we really want to go sit on a beach and drink Mai Tais and never have a care in the world? How boring would that be?

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You guys know this. You know the reason that we have positive and negative emotions is because of the negative contrast. It's because we have both. We have the and. We don't really want to be happy all of the time. We don't want to be happy about sad things. We want and choose to have both. To have the balance of and in our emotional being, in our mental being. Cognitively, intellectually, spiritually, physically, all of it. In our relationships, in our careers, in our lives. We don't really want things to be all or none. Thank goodness that the universe offers us the balance of and.

Some folks think that having it all means that you're taking away from others. If you have it then they don't. This is zero sum thinking. It assumes that if you have more money or if you have a nice house or you have the job of your dreams that somebody else doesn't. That they will have less. If you have more money, they will have less money. Is that true? Do we honestly know that that's true? Can we prove that in a court of law? No. It's a zero sum game, that way of thinking.

Money is not a zero sum game. It's not you have it and I don't or I have it and you don't. It's we all have money. We all can have success. We all can have our dreams come true. It is the balance of and. You can have this and that. This requires us to push our brain out of the simplicity of making things easy. It requires us to stretch and grow and think. The brain has to put some energy behind it, and it's hard.

When I ask my clients, I always do this to them to stretch their thinking. I'll ask them about the level to which they believe they believe that they can have it all. Can you be in education and be wealthy? Can you make money and be a school leader? Can you have work-life balance and contribute to the field of education in innovative, groundbreaking ways? Can you do both? Is it possible to be amazing at your job and amazing as a parent or a spouse or a partner? Can you do both?

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We think the answer's no because we equate it to the time spent on tasks or the way that we feel or we think that it takes away from somebody or something else. So when I ask my clients this, they pretty much laugh. They'll giggle and say, "Oh, my beliefs not that high. On a scale of one to ten, I'm at like a two or a four at most."

They're so convinced that they can't have it all and that life is an all or none game that it actually hurts their brain to stop and consider the possibility that they might be able to have it all. That they can have a great life and a great career. That they can experience having a lot of money and continuing to be a great human being.

They'll say, "Wait a minute, I can be wealthy and be a good person? I can't make money and be in education? I can be a good employee and not overwork myself to death? I can be amazing at solving problems yet always have a problem that needs solving in my life. Yeah. It's both. It's and thinking. It's the balance of and.

Our brain wants us to think in all or none thinking because it's easy to think this way. It doesn't require any energy. When you think about the balance of and, you have to slow down and stretch your mind to consider what might be possible? There's no rule book out there telling us that you can have this or that. You can be this or that. You can experience this or that.

If you look at the most successful people in life, leaders whether they're in education or not. You're going to see that they live in the life of and. The balance of and. They work and they play. They make lots of money and they donate it. They have plenty of time for themselves and others. They feel positive and negative emotions. They have good and bad days. They're productive and unproductive. They experience life with the and. People who have it all are just people. They're just like us. The only difference is that they believe in the and.

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So I invite you to consider. What would schools look like if we started to believe in the balance of and? How would you experience your life as a school leader if you believed in the balance of and? Schools can offer learning in person and remotely. We've done it. We can do it. It's an and thing. It doesn't have to be an all or none. Curriculum can involve academic activities and physical, mental, and emotional activities. It doesn't have to be all about the academics. It can be an and.

When you start to lean into the balance of and, you're going to see that life has always been about the and. Your current life and career that you have right now are in the world of and. You want to see and seek out the balance of and in your life so that you can deepen your trust and belief in the power of and for your future.

What are you wanting that you don't believe you can have? What are you thinking you have to give up in order to have the next thing you want? Can you see that it's possible to have both? That's where your brain has to stretch and grow and evolve. Your thinking has to stretch and grow and evolve. What you believe is possible has to think and stretch and grow and evolve.

When you do this what happens is you see both sides of the and. You're like ah, there's the space of neutral. There's the space of clean thinking. You're not judging what you want as all or none. You're looking at it from like oh, it's an and. It's both. That's neutral.

That space is where you then decide now what? Now that I know life is 50/50, now that I know that things aren't all or none, good or bad, there is balance in the and. Now, what do I do with that? What do I want to experience? What do I want to create knowing there's an and out there? What can I contribute? How far can I take my life? How big can I be? How big can I live? How much can I experience?

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I want you to feel like you've lived five lifetimes in this one life you're given. What do you desire most and can you have it all? The answer is yes. You can. You have it all by believing you have it all right now, and that you can have more of it all. I invite you into the world of and. Have an amazing week, and I'll see you next week. Love you, take care, bye.

If this podcast resonates with you, you have to sign up for the Empowered Principal coaching program. It's my exclusive one to one coaching and mentorship program for school leaders who believe in possibility. This program is designed for principals who are hungry for the fastest transformation in the industry. If you want to create the best connections, impact, and legacy for yourself and your school, the Empowered Principal program was designed for you. Join me at angelakellycoaching.com/work-dash-with-me to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit angelakellycoaching.com where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.