

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 229.

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. I hope you are well. I'm so fabulous. I am loving life, loving the spring, loving the fresh new weather. We have so much fun going on in our lives right now. Our son has been home. We've had lots of travel time. We're kind of back into the land of the living. My girlfriend, Jessica, is expecting her baby at any moment. The baby is due in early June. I cannot wait to hold him. I am so excited. You guys, life is good, and I hope it's great for you.

Okay, I'm gonna talk about an advanced concept today. So if you're new to the podcast, I really invite you to go back and learn about the STEAR cycle. So the STEAR cycle is a tool that I use in my coaching work. It's based off the model from The Life Coach School. I like to give Brooke credit because Brooke invented the model. I call it the STEAR cycle. It's just an easier acronym for my principles to remember. But I'm going to talk about STEAR cycles today. So if you're not familiar with the STEAR cycle, this might feel advanced.

This is something I have been developing and thinking about. I've had some big ah-ha's that I want to share with you because I think it might help you feel so much better about you as a school leader and leading other people. Because we are in the business of people, and this is all about understanding how we feel as a school leader and understanding other people's emotions and their reactions to us and then how we engage with them.

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

So this is really about learning how to separate your emotions from other people's emotions. I've been helping people process their experience of other people's emotions. So I've had clients in different scenarios who are being challenged by the emotions of other people, and I have some examples I'll share with you. Some people are dealing with their families and interacting with their families and their family's emotions and reactions to them. Other people are dealing with colleagues or teachers, okay.

There has been a lot of conversation around this and how to navigate other people's emotions while keeping yourself regulated when you're being emotionally triggered. Let me teach you quickly about the emotional Venn diagram that I created.

The emotional Venn diagram is basically, you know, just like the diagram where there's two circles and then there's an overlap. In one circle is your set of emotions. In the other circle separate from your circle is the other people's emotions. Then the overlap is your emotions about their emotions, right. Your emotional reaction based on their emotional reaction. I'm going to go to say like they have an emotional reaction based on your emotions, right. So that gray area, that overlap area, is where it feels convoluted. We get confused.

So with two people interacting with one another, you have two sets of STEAR cycles going on. You have your STEAR cycle, which is your thoughts and feelings and actions and approach to a situation. Then on the other circle, you have the other person's STEAR cycle. What they are thinking, how they are feeling, how they are responding and acting in response to that situation.

Then the two STEAR cycles collide, and they merge into this Venn diagram where you've got a STEAR cycle going on about their STEAR cycle, and they've got one going about your STEAR cycle. That's where it feels very complicated when you're navigating working with other people. So I'm

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

going to show you an example. I'm going to take a real live example from one of my clients to show you how this works in real time.

So one of my clients has a colleague, a fellow principal, who is talking to teachers on her campus and inviting them to work at her school. So my client's STEAR cycle is that her teachers were being convinced to move away. Her thought was, "She's taking my teachers away. She's convincing them to leave."

My client felt very hurt by that. She was shocked and hurt and frustrated and a little bit annoyed. Of course she was. That's normal. It's the reaction that your brain has. It's a visceral response when a situation is presented to you and your thoughts are this person's taking advantage of me or my teachers or somehow you're feeling that you're being taken advantage of. That's very hurtful.

When we're feeling hurt and frustrated or annoyed, we start spinning in our mind about it. We start worrying. Oh, my gosh, what if I lose teachers. I'm going to have to hire new people. I'm going to have to plan to say something to her. I've got to stop her. I got to email her, or I've got to accuse her of soliciting my teachers. I've got to make the stop.

Because if I don't then I'm going to have a problem. I'm not going to have my teachers. I'm going to lose my best teachers. I'm going to have to spend my summer hiring. There's not a lot of people in the candidate pool. See how our brain spins out, right?

The result of that, if you take action on the spin out, you're going to create some unintentional results, some undesired results. This might be a misunderstanding. It might create a conflict. It might create a change in relationship. What's happening is if you react to that emotion, you're telling her how to behave, and you're convincing her to change, and to stop doing what she's doing. Which is what she's doing.

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

She's convincing other people to make different actions, take different actions, and you are trying to convince her to stop taking action, right. So there's that STEAR cycle going on.

But what we want to consider is the colleague's STEAR cycle that's going on. This isn't just about my client. This is also about what's going on for the other person. So in the other circle of the Venn diagram, we've got the colleague, what the colleague's thinking, right? I want to highlight something here.

The colleague's actions of going and talking to the teachers on your campus, that is her A-line, her approach line, how she's approaching a situation, her actions and decisions. That A-line is my clients S-line. So the actions that the other colleague is taking becomes the circumstance or the situation in which my client is now having thoughts about. I just want to highlight that because that's important to see that her actions are your S-line. Okay.

So in this example, the colleague has her own STEAR cycle going on. But what happens with humans, with all of us, is that we focus on our STEAR cycle. We get caught up in what we're thinking, how we're feeling, and how it's impacting us. That is where we get the urge to react to our emotions. When we react to our emotions, that's when the middle gets very cloudy, right?

But good thing for my client because she's got me as her coach and she knows enough to pause. When she feels that intense emotion and she feels the urge to react, she knows to pause and let herself just feel the feelings without giving in to them or reacting to them, and to coach herself or to get coached by me so that she can make a clean decision about how she's going to approach this situation.

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

Had she reacted when her emotions were really high, she might have created those unintended results. But because we coached on the topic before she took any actions, before she made a decision, she was able to pause and work through the situation and decide from a clean mind how she wanted to handle it.

When we're in a situation that triggers us, we think that the person or their words or actions are the problem. Because when we're being in reaction to, like viscerally in a situation or reacting to it in fight or flight, we're not able to access the part of our brain that can see the difference between the person and the actions and then our thoughts about that person and our thoughts about their actions. We're not able to separate that out.

It's hard for us to see that people and their actions don't create our emotions. That we actually are always in charge of our feelings. What people do or say is never really about us. It's about them. This is why what I'm going to talk to you about is so very important.

When you are in the middle of your visceral STEAR cycle, and you're having that gut reaction, that's okay. Let yourself feel it, but you need to be aware enough to pause and not react to that emotion. To let it flow through your body, to be angry or be upset or be frustrated or be hurt or be embarrassed or be rejected, whatever emotion's coming up for you, but pause.

You want to give your brain some time to like let that vibration go through your body so that you can then ask yourself now what. What do I want to do after I felt that? After I've processed my frustration and my anger at my colleague? You're not taking any action. This is key.

What you're going to do is you're going to set your STEAR cycle aside on the nightstand, on the table, and you're just going to let it be there for a

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

minute. You're going to shift gears, and you're going to look at the other person's STEAR cycle. So in this case, the colleague's STEAR cycle.

When you're looking at their STEAR cycle, you're going to become an anthropologist. You're going to be a scientist, and you're going to just observe their STEAR cycle with curiosity. Okay. I wonder what they might be thinking and feeling that's causing them to act in this way.

What this question does is it separates your STEAR cycle from them, from their actions. It allows you to get into a more neutral emotional space so that you can look at their STEAR cycle with curiosity. When you look at their cycle, you're going to put the action, like their actions are talk to my teachers. Then you're going to ask yourself, why might they be doing that?

So I did this exercise with my client. I asked her, let's take a peek at your colleagues stare cycle. Here's the thing. It's just a guess. We don't really know what they're thinking because we haven't asked them yet. We're just theorizing or speculating. We're just taking a guess. What might they be thinking and feeling that would cause them to talk to our teachers? So I asked her, let's take a peek. Let's create a STEAR cycle for her and see what's going on.

Here's what we found out. Why might she be acting this way? How do you think she's feeling? What do you think she's thinking? She said, "Well, here's what I know. I know that she has five openings at her school. I know that we've had conversations about the pool of candidates being really small. There's not a lot of candidates applying for our teaching positions."

So what we theorized was that this other colleague is probably really panicked about getting the teachers she needs for her school. So in her panic, and not maybe thinking clearly all the way through, she's thinking, "I've got five positions. I need to get them filled. I want to make sure I have teachers. I don't want to have to hire all summer long. I don't know where

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

I'm going to get them. I'm freaking out." In that freakout, she made a decision to like, "Hey, let's see if anybody wants to come to my school."

I want you to see something very important here. Her STEAR cycle becomes very evident that her actions aren't being created because she's having thoughts about you, that she's trying to hurt you or take advantage of you. She's not thinking about you. She's thinking about her. Her panic, her worry, her fears about making sure her positions get filled. She's not thinking about the unintended results that it's creating. That she she's not anticipating like she's gonna hurt your feelings. Even if she was, it's her panic that's driving her actions.

This is our theory, right? But when we put our STEAR cycle aside, and we look at theirs it's like oh. It helps us to understand why somebody is behaving the way they are.

Now, we don't know if that's true. Maybe she is being vindictive. She's like, "Yeah, like. I don't care about you. I just care about me, and I want to get my positions filled. I like your teachers, and tough on you." Maybe she is thinking that. We don't know. But to believe that she's out to get you on purpose, that is not going to help you make a clean decision about how to approach her.

You want to see like, oh this human's acting out of fear. No wonder she's acting this way. Not that you're excusing the behavior and not that you're going to let it go, but it helps you ground yourself in deciding how you're going to approach her. It separates the Venn diagram back into two separate entities. There's you and your thoughts and feelings, and there's her and her thoughts and feelings.

When you separate the two, it becomes more clear about how you might want to approach the situation. Because you're not muddled up in here's what I think she's doing. She's doing this to me. I'm mad and blah, blah,

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

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

blah. Then she's like thinking all these nasty thoughts about you, and you get into this conflict or you ruin the relationship because you each are accusing each other of something crazy and something that wasn't even on the table until you made an assumption, right? We make assumptions.

Now, this process is, the practice, a little bit of assuming, but you're just trying to guess what they might be thinking because you're trying to give yourself perspective to keep you grounded. This is very important because what happens next, and what I love about this, is once you observe their STEAR cycle and you put yours away for a second and you're just looking at them with curiosity, like a scientist. It's like oh, that's interesting. Why might they be doing that?

What happens is your STEAR cycle updates. It changes. It evolves. It becomes a higher quality STEAR cycle. Because now what you're thinking is oh, I get what's going on here. I understand now. She's panicking. She's talking to my teachers because she's worried about her. She's worried about her school.

From that place, you can approach her and the conversation with, "Hey, I can imagine you're really worried you've got five positions. I've heard that you've been talking to my teachers. Tell me more. Is that true? First of all, like I don't really know. Is that true? If so, let's talk about it. Why? What's going on for you? I'm sure you're scared. I'm sure you're worried. But tell me what's coming up for you."

You're going to approach that person and that conversation with a higher level of empowerment and confidence and certainty because you have a theory that helps you understand why they might be acting the way they are. We don't want to assume that we know, but we want to come to a place where we have some perspective so we're not reacting from that visceral sphere cycle that took place. If you can see that, okay.

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

When you're able to do this, you're going to be able to connect and communicate with people on such a deeper level. There is your STEAR cycle. There is their STEAR cycle. It's okay that they get convoluted and they overlap in that Venn diagram for a while. But before you take action, I invite you to separate the two so that you can see, put yours aside and see hers or his or theirs, whoever you are working with. Just spend a minute to try and understand why they might be acting the way they are.

Create a theory, come up with a guess to help you ground yourself in, "Oh, okay. Now how do I want to approach them? What would I be thinking and feeling if I were doing that? What would be driving me? If I were asking somebody else's teachers to come to my school, what thoughts and fears might be driving that action?" You want to put yourself in their shoes just for a minute so you can understand. It's going to help you be a better leader, be a better communicator, and to understand people at such a deeper level.

This work, it gets complicated in our brains because it's like whoa, what are we talking about? I feel like this is mind blowing and revolutionary. I'm so proud of my brain for having come up with this theory on how to be calm, better, and more effective leaders and communicators.

If you want support with this, if you've got a situation that you're struggling with, please reach out, schedule a consult, and let's talk through it. I'm here to help you. I want you to become the most empathetic and compassionate and understanding communicator and leader that you can be. That is one way that you can step into your full empowerment as a school leader. Have an amazing, empowered week you guys. I love you. I will talk to you next week. 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

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

Ep #229: Enhanced Communication

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-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.