

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 236.

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. Happy Tuesday. I want to shout out to all of our new listeners. So for those of you who have been listening for a long time, thank you so much for putting a five star review and for sharing this with your colleagues and for talking about it and for signing up for consults and just showing up going all in. We have had a huge influx of listeners over this last year.

So I want to take the opportunity to welcome each and every one of you and to tell you how grateful I am for you and the work that you do in our schools. Truly. I know how hard your job is. I have been there. Which is why I'm so happy that this content I share resonates with you.

I told myself from the very beginning of this podcast creation that I was going to commit to being brutally honest and open. I promised myself to be courageous and say the things that we weren't saying about school leadership, that we hide. I want to tell the truth of all that this work entails and what school leaders need the most. I want to be willing to always say the right thing and be willing to say it in the wrong way and have to apologize and adjust and reflect. I'm willing to get it wrong in order to get it right.

When I think back to some of my podcasts from the very beginning, I listened to them and it's like it doesn't even sound like me. I have evolved so much. My thoughts and my viewpoints on some of this work. It's changed. Some of my opinions back there, I don't believe in now.

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

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

This is all about being willing to be human, being willing to be the best version of ourselves, whatever that looks like in that moment, and to grow and evolve as we progress through the work. I've grown so much as a coach and as a leader of my company. This podcast in the beginning, I did it to the very best of my ability back then. Almost five years later, I can see how my brain wants to judge it as oh that's very B minus work. How could you have done that? It's so embarrassing.

But you know what? That's okay. I'm not going to berate myself. I want to model the process of what it's like to be new at something and to fumble around and to say things clumsily and to show up anyway. Just to show up with my opinions, with what I believed was the right theory and the right approach at that moment in time, and to have the best of intentions and to not berate myself for getting some of it wrong.

I really encourage you all to do the same. Be gentle and kind with your past self. That past self, that past version of you, that is the version of you who had the courage to make decisions and to take actions and to show up and to get it wrong and to keep that process up day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year in order to get you into the person you are today. That past version of you is why you are where you're at right now. The work you're doing right now is creating the next version of you for your future. So be kind to yourself now. Be kind to your past self.

Now I want to share something in full disclosure here. I noticed that over the course of this past year, the podcast rating went from a 4.8 down to a 4.6. Now, if we're talking test scores, I had to catch myself, right? 4.8 to 4.6. What am I making this mean? But I'm going to tell you, my brain is just as human as yours. So as more people were being exposed to the podcast, the podcast is very, I feel like it's very different, right? It either resonates with people or it doesn't.

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

So when I saw that it dropped. I don't really pay attention to it that often, but I like people, I remind people often, and I ask people to write a five star review because people's brains will judge the podcast before they've ever listened to the content based on that number. Just like you get judged by the test score before anybody's ever met you as a principal or walked and set foot on your campus, right? So your test score is a representation of you.

So anyway, I'm looking at this and I have to admit like I had that initial visceral reaction. I felt embarrassed. I felt a little disappointed. I was a little bit discouraged by it. I was like a little bit put off. Like what do you mean? This stuff, I think this is 5.0. What are you talking about? I did some compare and despair for a few minutes. I was looking at other educational podcasts. I was like well, they have a 4.8 or they have a 4.9. How come only 50 people have listened to my podcast?

I thought to myself wait a minute. Stop right there. What am I making this mean? Who is this podcast for? It's not about me. It's not about how I feel about 4.6 or a 4.8. I don't care. This podcast is about you, the person that this information and content resonates, with the listener who wants me to be fully honest, to be myself, to have these tools, to hear these stories, to understand these concepts. The principal who feels like this information, this is the solution to your challenge. It's the missing link for you to be able to thrive as a school leader.

Because I know for me, my past self, that poor version of me that was struggling and suffering for seven years. This is what I was missing in school leadership back then. I was missing the perspective and the coaching and the understanding of the mental and emotional impact of school leadership. The experience, mentally and emotionally, and the toll that it took on me. I couldn't understand what was happening.

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

I had no idea why I was so miserable, why I was so suffering. I wanted to do my best. I was a really good teacher. I was a really good teammate, and I had a lot of positivity in my bones to bring to the school leadership position. So I couldn't figure out why my positivity was not overriding my pain. I want you to know, I know that many of you do resonate, that this does feel right to you. The content that I share with you is what you need. I know many of you feel the same way.

So this podcast is all about you. It's not about me or how I feel about my score. The only reason in the world that I would care at all about the rating is I don't want school leaders who are new to dismiss it without hearing the content first, right? Being judged by our character, not by the surface, right? Isn't there a Martin Luther King Jr. quote? Like one day he hopes his children are judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. The content of the character of this podcast matters much more than the few people out there who are judging it by its surface okay.

There's so much content to cover as a school leader. There's so much school leadership content that you are trying to process. I really want you to know I make every effort for this podcast content to be relevant and timely and innovative and honest and clear and simple and as easy as possible to understand and implement.

Leadership coaching for school leaders, it's pretty new in our industry. I've really only seen it pop up on the mainstream channels since COVID. I've been saying we need this for over a decade, but especially coaching that's specifically catered and designed and curated just for you, the school site leader. I consider you to be the ultimate middle manager.

The school leader is the person. You're the heartbeat of the district. You are the person who receives input from every angle that a school deals with. Students, parents, teachers, colleagues, the district, the central office,

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

your community members, the country, the county, the state, the feds. Like if there's an angle, the school leader is a part of it on some level.

Some of you who are leading private or charter schools, you might have, in addition to all what the public schools deal with, you might have additional boards who oversee your school or other organizational mandates that you have to follow and people who are overseeing you. So I get it. I coach a lot of people who they're leading charter schools, they're leading private schools, they're leading choice programs within their district.

You, as the school leader, you're expected to gather all of these various stakeholders input and synthesize it down so that you can make a decision for your school that has the highest impact on everybody involved. That's a big ask. I just want to acknowledge that for you. This job is huge. You are the ultimate middle manager trying to manage every single angle. It sounds extremely daunting when I put it that way, doesn't it? That's because it is.

It's why I left school leadership. It's why I became a full time coach. So I could help every single one of you in the position. It's almost impossible to coach yourself through every situation when you're in it. When you're boots on the ground, you have blinders on. You can't see outside. It's like you're in a fishbowl, and you don't know you're in the fishbowl, but you're like banging your head up against the glass. You just can't see around it.

That's why having a coach who has that outside perspective and somebody who's not from your district who has a neutral stance, it's just so much easier when you have that second pair of eyes on the situation to see those pitfalls when you are out there doing the work of leading. When you're out there leading, your brain is holding on to as much information as it can.

When it's tied up with thinking about this angle and that angle and these people and their opinions and these mandates, your energy is also

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

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

consumed by that. When your energy is being used up with all of this mental strain, your physical energy drops, your emotional energy drops. When you're physically, mentally, and emotionally fatigued, you don't make decisions quickly or clearly. You don't take swift action from clarity. You can't. It's next to impossible. Your mental capacity is completely used up.

So this is why I teach clients how to manage three things, their time, their resources, and their energy and their emotional energy. Emotional energy, mental energy, physical energy. Managing time in this program is about managing the thoughts you have around time. This is huge for school leaders. It is amazing how scarce we, as educators, feel about time.

We unravel those thoughts thought after thought in the Empowered Principal™ program until you can live in the land of and I call it where the rainbows and daisies fly. Where you have plenty of time for the rest and recovery that you need in order to feel like you have plenty of time to give your full attention to solving problems at work. Learning how to manage your time and your thoughts about time is step one of the Empowered Principal™ program. We've got to get that under wraps.

Then two, we look at managing our resources. Managing resources is all about managing your top assets. Your money, your materials, and the time, as I mentioned before, and your human resources. There are people that you can use as a resource to help you, to delegate to, and to bounce ideas off of and to put your brain powers together.

Managing all of your resources, financial, materials, humans, your time, that requires us to challenge all of our current beliefs around our finances, around our money, and what we think we need in terms of materials and supplies and resources to create the results at work that we want.

We think we need other people to do and behave in certain ways in order for us as the school leader to achieve our goals. Teachers need to behave

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

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

this way students need to behave this way. Parents need to behave this way. District officials need to behave this way in order for me to achieve my goals. We cover all of that throughout the course of the Empowered Principal™ coaching program.

Then three, managing the emotions. That is all about understanding what drives emotions and how emotions drive actions. We dive into the purpose of emotions and the value of understanding the emotions and the power of emotions and how emotions impact leadership and those we lead. I'm going to review the STEAR cycle today. For those of you who are newer to the podcast, again, welcome. But if you haven't had a chance to binge on all the episodes and you don't understand what I'm talking about when I say the STEAR cycle, I want to review it again today to catch you up to speed.

But even if you have listened to every episode, and you know what the STEAR cycle is, and you've you understand it when I'm saying it, I have some new insights on the STEAR cycle that I haven't shared before. I taught the STEAR cycle originally in the very first few episodes of the podcast. Now that we're four years in and over 200 episodes later, I have a much deeper level of understanding and coaching using this tool.

The STEAR cycle, I just want to put this out there, is not my invention. I didn't create it completely from my own brain with no influence. I adapted the tool from The Life Coach School, which I will toot their horn every chance I get. It's a Life Coach School tool called the Model.

When I was a student of The Life Coach School back in 2015, my master coach Brooke, as a part of our certification process at the time, asked us to come up with another way to explain the Model. She wanted us to take the Model and teach it in our own way. The STEAR cycle is what I came up with. At the time I was creating it, I wanted to explain it with an acronym. Because I know in education we are all so fond of acronyms.

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

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

I love the acronym STEAR because it refers to our ability to steer, S-T-E-E-R, steer our thoughts, our emotions, our approach to our work and steer the results that we get. We literally have the power to steer our way through our career and to create the experience we want and to create the results that we want and to accomplish the goals that we want. So I love the STEAR cycle, and I acknowledge it's an adaptation of the Model. Okay.

I also extended my exploration with the STEAR cycle by shifting to the emotions and approach. So when you look at the model, it's CTFAR, circumstances, thoughts, feeling, actions, results. I changed it to situation, thoughts, emotions, approach, and results because I wanted clients to notice that one thought might evoke multiple emotions, not just one. One thought can definitely trigger more than one set of action.

So the approach to me is like the series of actions that we take when we're thinking and feeling a certain way, when we're believing something about a situation we're faced with. I really wanted to play with this tool and be a little more flexible with the T line and the E line and the A line to allow me to uncover additional thoughts and emotions.

Like there are almost layers of our brain where we have a thought that we can obviously see, and we know what we're feeling. Then there is a STEAR cycle behind that STEAR cycle. There are layers of STEAR cycles, and I wanted to really figure out what's the cycle behind the cycle to get to the core of where am I really making myself be stuck? What thought is preventing me from taking the action I need to take in order to create my success? Sometimes it takes layers to figure that out.

So this is how I was able to see the nuance of how I spent my time and spent my energy and spent my resources and how this was a mirror into what I valued at a subconscious level so that I can now show you how the nuances of how you're spending your time and your energy and your

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

resources all goes back to what you believe and what you think on a regular basis.

We do have the ability to navigate school leadership in new and different ways. We don't have to do things the way other people have taught us. We don't have to believe thoughts that feel terrible or that don't create the results that we want.

I just want to be clear that STEAR cycle is an adaptation of The Life Coach School Model. Sometimes you're gonna hear me refer to it as the Model, but most of the time I'm going to call it STEAR cycle because that's what my clients know. And it's what I use in all of my teachings. So full credit to the Life Coach School for the tool. And for my clients, I also offer my own take on how principals can apply this work to their unique world of school leadership.

So with the STEAR cycle, we can put whatever we want in any of the lines except the S line. We'll talk about that in the 2.0 version, right. So what I mean by this is the STEAR cycle components are there's an S line, which stands for situation. The situation is the external circumstance that has been presented to you. It is considered a fact.

Like perhaps the circumstance is it's raining outside. We can look outside. We can all agree. When we see the rain, what happens in our brain is we have a thought about it. Some people look at the rain and think oh thank goodness. We're in a severe drought. We desperately need this rain. I'm so happy it's raining. You might feel joy at the rain might go out and do a little rain dance outside, but you have thoughts about the rain.

Now, if you're a school leader and you had field day planned and you wake up and it's pouring rain out, you might have very different thoughts about the rain. Why today? Can it wait just one more day? We haven't had rain for 200 days. What's one more day? Why today? Field day is ruined. Now I

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

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

have to come up with a plan B. What are we going to do with the kids? We've spent all this money and time. Your brain's gonna go spin off into another series of thoughts. Okay?

So the S Line stands for Situation, and it's whatever situation is presented to you. That is the one component of the STEAR cycle that you want to make sure you keep it as neutral and factual as possible. Now, a lot of times we present our thoughts as situations. We think that our thoughts are just facts, and we have to be careful that we're not putting them into the S line. Okay? So S line situation.

T line, our thoughts. It's anything and everything you think when you look at the situation, you're presented with the situation, I call it a brain drain. Your brain kicks into gear and it starts telling you all of the things it thinks. Here are my opinions about this situation. Here's why this is good. Here's why this is bad. It places judgment. It has an opinion. Then those thoughts, and this happens so instantaneously. You don't even realize it's happening in real time.

But the T line is thoughts. It is a sentence in your mind or a story in your mind, a story that your brain creates based on the situation, based on what it believes about that situation, what it thinks is true, what it values, what it doesn't like. It just crafts a story immediately. Then that story or those sentences in your mind trigger emotions. You have feelings. As a human, we have the gift of emotions. We have the gift of feeling emotions.

Now, the good part of emotions is that the fun ones are awesome. We love, love, feeling the positive emotions or the comfortable emotions, the happy emotions, the emotions on the positive end of the emotional spectrum. But, as humans, what we don't like so much are the negative emotions. We don't like feeling uncomfortable emotions, especially intensely uncomfortable emotions.

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

So the way we define emotions. Emotions are a vibration that happens in your body in response to a thought. I like to tell people that emotions are the way that the body communicates. Your brain speaks in language. It has the capacity to speak to you in word. Our brain has evolved into like a really complex and interesting and intriguing way of communicating through language. But our body communicates to us through emotion.

What's so fascinating to me about emotion is that your brain can be telling you a thought, but your body is telling you the truth of what you believe. So you might be saying one thing, but you might be feeling something different. Have you ever had that experience? That's your brain trying to override the discomfort of uncomfortable emotions. So an emotion is a vibration in your body. I want to say this just really bluntly. We feel like an emotion at its most intense level could actually physically harm us or kill us.

I'm sure there's evidence scientifically out there to prove that someone did have a physical reaction to their emotions to the point where maybe their stress was so severe that they got physically sick. Or they were so heartbroken and in grief that they developed a medical condition. But for the most part, the emotion itself, the vibration itself, does not cause disease, does not cause death. The emotion will not kill you, but it feels like it will.

When you are in extreme grief or extreme anger, anything extremely uncomfortable like fear, anything on the fear spectrum, anything on the anger spectrum, anything in the grief, sadness spectrum, anything in the hopeless, depressed spectrum. When you are experiencing emotion that is intense, it can feel like it's unbearable. I want to acknowledge that.

I also want to acknowledge that emotions are temporary based on our thoughts. They come in waves, and the way we can pass through them. They're always temporary. We don't think that at the time, but they are temporary. And emotions can be processed and released. I have podcasts

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

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

on this. I just want to stick to the STEAR cycle today so that you understand what I'm talking about. Go back and listen to all of the podcasts that are on these specific components.

But just know emotion, for me, that is the heart and soul of the STEAR cycle. Because, as humans, we're wired to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and make things as easy as possible. Our brain likes things to be automatic and simple and easy and repeatable and doable. We want to live in the land of happy emotion. We want to avoid the land of discomfort and uncomfortable emotions. So just know that we're very driven by how things make us feel.

I would venture to say that every decision we make and action we take is based on how we're feeling and how we want to feel or how we don't want to feel. We're either chasing an emotion or we're trying to avoid one, okay? That's the heart and soul of the STEAR cycle.

Your emotions impact your approach. That's the A line of the STEAR cycle. The A line is when, the A line is the actions that you take. The series of actions, the way that you show up, the approach you decide. So I consider your action, your approach, the decisions you make, and the actions you take comprise of the approach. Your approach is always impacted by what you're thinking and how you're feeling. It never doesn't impact that.

So what's interesting is you can try to short circuit how you feel with your mind, but it will always show up in the approach line what you're actually doing. So you have a situation. You have thoughts about it, opinions, belief systems. You have an emotional reaction to those thoughts. Then you act on those emotions or you act with intention or you react based on how you're feeling. You devise a set of actions that you're going to take. That approach creates the result, which is the R line. The results are created based on how you decided to approach that given situation. Okay.

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

So, S situation, T thought, E emotions, A approach, R results. That is the STEAR cycle, and that's how they interact with one another. What I love about this is when you use the tool, what you will see is that the R line is always a reflection of the T line. So the results that you create for yourself are a reflection of what you're thinking. You will see how when you work through the STEAR cycle that the R line is really just a reflection of the T line.

So for example, if let's go back to the raining one. It's like oh it's so great it's raining out. You're feeling happy about it. You're feeling joyful. You're just so pleased for the earth that it's getting a drink. Your actions might be to take a walk in the rain or to go out and smell the earth. Perhaps you just leave the window open and listen to the raindrops falling. The result of that is you enjoy the experience of the rain. That is reflected back in your thoughts. Like I'm so happy it's raining. It's a good thing that it's raining. I love the rain.

On the flip side, right? I don't love the rain. Why today? I'm frustrated. You're gonna have thoughts like not today. I don't want it to rain. This is bad. This is ruining everything. We have our plans today. Now we have the rain and we have to have a plan B. You're frustrated. You're annoyed. When you're frustrated and annoyed, you're going to show up rushing around, having a plan B, snapping at people, coming up with you know...Like just not enjoying your day, right? The result of that is you have a miserable day.

So it's a very like simplified example of how the STEAR cycle works in motion. So let's talk about very quickly how do we use the tool? So this is why we use it and how we use it. We use it to find emotions that motivate us to take the actions we want in order to create the results we want. So what I love about STEAR cycle. First of all, the first phase of STEAR cycle is just to understand our current actions. Why are we getting these results?

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

Are these intended results? Do I want these results are not? What is currently creating this?

We just observe and notice ourselves. Oh, I'm 10 pounds overweight. Well, how did I create that result? Well, I said I was going to work out but I slept in instead. I said I was going to walk three days a week and I walked one day a week. I said I was going to reduce my calorie intake, but I ate chocolate cake last night and I had two pieces, right?

Like we can see how our actions created that result. So what are we thinking and feeling that's creating the overeating, that's creating the under working out? What are we doing? We know the math behind losing weight, but what's really going on there, right? So we use the tool to understand where we're currently at. We can use it to understand where we want to be.

Then we can use it to bridge the gap between where we're at and where we want to be. What I think is the most valuable use of this tool is to look for that emotion. What emotion do I need to feel in order to wake up at six and take a walk? What emotions do I need to feel in order to say no thank you to that second piece of cake or the first piece of cake? What emotions do I need to feel to get me motivated to get to the gym or to lift weights? Or to, I don't know, whatever your workout plan is. How do I have to feel? What thoughts would create that feeling.

You can play around with the STEAR cycle like what do thin people think? What do they feel? What are they spending their time and their energy doing? What are they spending their thoughts on? What are they feeling? How are they just living life? You can play around and look at it and say oh, here's the gap. I see. Now I can bridge the gap.

So you can use the tool to find thoughts for the emotions that you want to feel, to understand why we take or don't take action, to understand other people. This is the 2.0 version. I talked about this back in the advanced

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

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

communication or enhanced communication, whatever the title of the podcast was. I call it advanced communication skills.

But when you think about communicating with other people, putting your STEAR cycle down and putting it aside for a moment and studying theirs, it allows you to better understand other people's actions, other people's decisions and their words and their behaviors. You have the tool so you can study them from a place of non-judgment, from a place of curiosity, to take yourself out for a moment and not make it about how you're feeling but make it about being curious about what they might be thinking and feeling.

Then I use the tool to create my vision, my future based on my values. I help clients based on their leadership values, create a school vision, create a career vision, and map all of that out based on thoughts, emotions, and the approach they want to take.

I feel like the STEAR cycle is one of the most powerful tools I've ever learned. It allows you to understand yourself at such a deeper level. It helps you to separate you from your thoughts, even from your actions. It allows you to step out of yourself and observe yourself from a distance, like from above almost. It shows you how your thoughts are always reflected in the results in your life.

It helps you take responsibility and take ownership, but not in a way... You can use it against you, but I invite people to use it in a way that's loving and kind and gentle and just curious. It shows you the power and the purpose of your emotions and how everything we do as humans is based on how we want to feel or what we want to avoid feeling. It allows you to observe other people, as I said before, with curiosity and compassion, and it really humanizes the school leadership experience.

What's wild about this tool, you guys, it's only one of the many tools that I use to help principals solve the problems that they face. I feel like there are

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

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

two kinds of problems in school leadership. There's problems we have control over and there's problems we don't. But either way, both of those problems are located in your mind. They're located in the stories that the brain offers us about the situation. So when you deem a situation as a problem, you can either get to work solving it based on what you do have control over or you can train yourself how to release worrying about it because it's not in your control. Okay.

I have to say like I can't imagine where my life would be, where I would be, if I hadn't been introduced to life coaching and to the model from The Life Coach School. I'd probably still be suffering out there as a school leader. Or let's be really honest, I probably would have resigned. I would have quit, and I would have gone to something less stressful. I needed these coaching tools. I know that you need them too.

I am so glad that the technology exists where I can share these new approaches with you from anywhere in the world globally for free. I mean come on, what kind of a miracle is happening right now. I absolutely love this podcast. I love each and every one of you. I can't wait to meet you. I can't wait to be your coach. I can't wait to see the results you're going to create for your school and your life. Let's go. Have a great week. Talk to you guys soon. Take care. Bye, 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-with-me to learn more. I'd love to support you in becoming an empowered school leader.

Ep #236: STEAR 2.0

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