

Ep #242: The Power of Celebration with 4 of My Incredible Clients



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 242.

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. Welcome to the podcast. This one is a very special episode. I'm so excited to share it with you today. We are honoring and celebrating the end of the year.

So a few of my clients were able to join me in celebrating their accomplishments at the end of the school year. So you are going to have the privilege of listening to several of my clients talk about their successes, their big accomplishments, their small accomplishments, the surprises along the way, how they got there. So they're going to share with you how they accomplished what they did.

We talk about the value of taking time to celebrate yourself and honoring yourself and being proud of yourself for the work you are doing. This job is not easy. You know this. People who aren't in the position cannot imagine what you've been through over the last year, two years, five years as a school leader.

We are here to celebrate, to discuss the value of celebrating and how it actually makes you a better leader when you stop to acknowledge yourself and to celebrate yourself and support yourself and treat yourself to something special. So I welcome to you Amy, Erika, Jena, and Wendy. These are four of my many clients who joined us in our celebration of the end of the school year. Please enjoy.

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Angela: This conversation is really going to be about school leaders slowing down, taking a deep breath, and spending some time acknowledging the hard work and the effort you have put into this job. It's about celebrating the small accomplishments and the big accomplishments. It's about honoring ourselves.

I think that this job is really hard. I think that we're always thinking three months ahead, like we talk about in the three month plan. When we do that, we're not slowing ourselves down enough to be in this moment to say to ourselves what have we done? What have we accomplished? What worked? What do I want to bring with me for next year that did work? Why did it work? So we're going to spend some time talking about that today.

So for all of you listeners out there, welcome to the podcast. This is a very, very special episode. We have several of the empowered principals who have decided to join us and celebrate together with us. Really, we really invite you to invite this practice into your own school leadership experience.

Because if you can't take the time to celebrate and acknowledge and be proud of the work you've done and the accomplishments you've made, and even being proud of the fails, I would say. Like what didn't work, and what did you learn. That whole piece of this job, that is what makes you who you are. You are stepping into the person that is a school leader.

So when you feel brand new, and you don't know what you're doing, you actually do. How do we know? You're in the job doing it every single day. That's what the end of this year is all about, is about celebrating this. So I'm going to introduce. We'll just go around and one at a time, I'm going to ask these empowered leaders what they're most proud of, their celebrations, their small and big accomplishments.

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Then also how they got there, how they feel the accomplishment, what do they think they had to think and feel and act in order to make this possible for themselves. Then we're gonna wrap up with talking about our primary focus for next fall. So I'm just gonna go according to my screen. So Amy, you're on top. Can you go first? Just introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your first year.

Amy: Okay. Yes, my name is Amy. I'm from Indiana, and I just finished my first year as a principal. I had been in education for 21 years prior to that as a classroom teacher and then as an assistant principal. Then I decided that I was ready to make the leap into being a head principal. So I just finished up my first year, and finished up my first year coaching with you, Angela. Felt like I had a really good year.

Angela: Great. Tell us a little bit about it. Like what stands out to you in terms of what do you feel most proud of yourself for? What are the biggest accomplishments you've had? Then what do you think contributed to those accomplishments?

Amy: One thing I was really worried about going into it was if I could maintain work-life balance. I have two kids that are both very active in sports, and my husband coaches, and I help him coach. I wanted to be a principal, but not be a principal who's sacrificing family time at the expense of my job. So that was something that was really important to me, and something I worked on throughout the year.

Now that the school year is over, I feel like I can look back and be like you know what? I did it. Like I was a mom, and I was a wife, and I was a coach. I still made time for myself, and I was a successful principal. So I'm really proud that I was just able to juggle all those hats and manage that.

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Angela: When you look back at your year, was there a cost associated? Or did you feel energized? I mean some people can do it all but at the expense of their own emotional, physical, mental wellbeing. Do you feel like when you say you were able to juggle it all, does that resonate positively for you?

Amy: Yes, it does. I can look back at different times throughout the year where I felt like I maybe kind of started plateauing a little bit, and then it was like okay, I have not been exercising. I need to get back into my exercise routine, or different things like that to kind of get me to where I needed to be so that I felt like I was effectively juggling everything. But overall, I feel like it went really well for my first year.

Angela: I actually just, I thought I have another question for you kind of on a sidenote. Many school leaders, they have mom guilt or parent guilt because the job can consume them and take so much time. What were your thoughts as a parent as you entered into this role? How did you maintain your relationship and your ability to parent without it sacrificing either your parenting relationship or the school leadership relationship?

Amy: Yeah. You and I, in an early session, had worked on just the concept of time. So changing my thoughts around time really helped me to see that I do have time. Like I have time for each of these parts of my life, and that I can be effective at each of those parts. As opposed to always thinking like I'm so busy. I don't have enough time to do this. I don't have enough time to do that. Flipping the switch to like I do have time, and I'm going to be in control of how I manage my time.

Angela: Great, great. How did your kids respond to you being a school leader?

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Amy: They were really excited. I told them when I was interviewing for the position, and they were excited for me then. I think it's been a great life lesson just for them to be able to see that mom can go out there and do this stuff. Be a leader and still be at our sporting events and take care of us and make suppers. It's empowering for me when I think about that. But I'm really proud of the fact that my kids can watch it too.

Angela: Yes. Yeah. I mean what an example you're setting for them that they can go and achieve their biggest dreams or highest goals and still be human and have a life outside of that professional goal. So yeah. You have knocked it out of the park. I'm so proud of you. All I can say is if this was year one, I can't imagine what's coming for you down the road. It's gonna be so fun to see what happens next year.

Amy: Yeah, I'm really excited.

Angela: Yeah. Thanks. Jena, give it to us.

Jena: Yes, ma'am. Okay. Hi, everyone. I'm Jena. I am closing out my third year as an elementary principal. I've worked with Angela for all three. Just having three successful years, all of which were very different in their own challenging way. I wrote down two thoughts that I had that helped me get there. I wrote down I can figure out the solution to any problem, and I have the tools to be a successful principal. They make me feel secure and empowered, which I think is a really like beautiful place to be.

Angela: Can you tell us about some of the times you like implemented those thoughts? Maybe when you were faced with a challenge, and you had to kind of apply those thoughts in a new or different way?

Jena: Absolutely. I mean there were staffing concerns and issues that you just can't make some of the stuff up, truthfully. There's no manual for it.

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There's no one there to tell you what to do. Your it. Even like student discipline things, those were all things that year one, even into year two, like obviously I did those things, but they would affect me. I would go home. I would whatever, be snacking or be stressed.

I've just noticed a big shift in myself that I just kind of expect it and accept it. I think before I was resisting the problems. Now it's like, of course. That's part of this. There are problems in life. There are problems in schools. I don't have to have the answer. I just have to know I have the tools to find a solution. That has been such a game changer for me.

Angela: Good for you. Tell us some of the things you're most proud of yourself for this past year.

Jena: Well, I, through this journey as well, have been applying for different positions and looking for a change. So I had to learn to process rejection. Which in case you're wondering doesn't feel very good.

Angela: No, it doesn't.

Jena: It does not. It does not.

Angela: Especially when it happens more than once.

Jena: Yeah. But like I kind of got to the place where like I'm willing to feel rejection to see if this is the right one. Like, I'm fine with it. If that's what I need to do then fine. I ended up actually going into coach training myself because I just feel like oh my gosh. This is so life changing. I want everyone to have the tools and be able to have this life changing experience. So I'm actually in the process of doing that as well, which is super exciting.

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Angela: Yes, very. I'm so excited for you.

Jena: Yeah. Thank you.

Angela: Yeah. Tell us a little bit about what you have learned over the past three years. Like if you could give the listeners some nuggets of information from that first year when you reached out to me to now? What is it that has developed within you to make you truly believe that you can solve any problem that comes your way, and that you have the tools and resources necessary to do that?

Jena: What makes me believe that?

Angela: Like tell us about your journey from the beginning when you didn't believe it to now.

Jena: Well, I mean in the beginning, it was my heart was and is, as is all of all of us here on this podcast, in the right place. We want to do right by students. We want to make positive change. So you're coming at something with this good intention. At least for me, it was really easy to feel like when you're coming at something with such positive intent, when things don't go well, like I definitely was in like the self-pity for a bit of time. Like the woe is me. Why is it this way? Spinning in that kind of cycle, and that was not productive. All that did was make me feel awful.

So through working with you, I didn't realize before working with you that what I was feeling was optional. I just thought that that was just the way it was.

Angela: The way it was. Yeah.

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Jena: A lot of people who are administrators talk about it as like yeah, this is the job. This is the grind. This is the like it like is the fact like it has to be that way. I just didn't want to believe that. But at the same breath, I didn't know how to change it. So that's where you came in. You taught me how to do it. How to change it.

Angela: Nice. So Jena, I want to share something special about Jena. Her spouse is also a school administrator. One of the things I hear from school leadership is that the job negatively impacts the marriage. That if one person is a school leader, that they're consumed with the job. The job's overwhelming, and they're overworking, and that the relationship suffers because of the job.

The school leader feels like they need to either quit to save the marriage, or they end up having marital problems. How do you and your husband, who's also an administrator, how do you stay connected even though you're both running schools? How is that possible?

Jena: Oh, well, it's totally possible because we have been doing it. We have a wonderful relationship. I would say that there is a comfort in we completely understand each other. I can imagine if you aren't married to another administrator, you could maybe make that mean that they don't understand you. I know that my husband does because he does the same job.

So we honestly don't talk all that much about work. We come home, and kind of that's our time to be together and be with our family. When it's been a special kind of day, either on the good or the really bad, then we just listen and just support, and we kind of just move on. I don't know. I mean it sounds really simple. But that's just not true with if you have a fear that this position would interfere with your marriage that I'm telling you. You can totally do it.

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Angela: Well, and I think you just hit on something very important. It's that as if you're a school leader and your spouse or your partner is not, expecting to come home and vent it out or talk about it or be consumed by the job in conversation at night, that is probably not the most effective way to navigate your mental and emotional wellness. If you're expecting your partner to be able to hold that kind of space for you every single night, right.

It sounds like what you guys do, you found other ways to release that energy, to release the day in some way. This is what happens. When you are consumed with the job, and it's all you can think about and all you can talk about, and you just live and breathe the job, yeah. It is going to come home into your personal space.

So for school leaders out there who are experiencing this, and I'm actually doing a podcast on this topic with a marriage life coach. So that's coming up in the future. But it's been so prevalent on social media lately that people have been talking about it.

I wanted to highlight you, Jena, because I know you have such a wonderful relationship with your husband, and he's a school leader. So it can't be the job that's causing the problem if two school leaders are married, and they're having a lovely, wonderful marriage. So I just want to just celebrate Jena in that way. That she's able to do her work and not make it mean everything about her life. I think that's something that's a huge celebration for you, Jena.

Jena: Yeah. Thank you so much. I I'm actually glad that you said that because you are right. I don't always celebrate and recognize that. So thank you.

Angela: Yeah, you're welcome. Thanks for sharing so much. Miss Wendy.

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Wendy: Hi.

Angela: Hi there. Introduce yourself.

Wendy: I scribbled so many notes as these ladies were speaking. My name is Wendy. I am based in New York City. I am now in year three. I became an assistant principal end of February 2020 and have been figuring things out throughout COVID. I started working with Angela in June of 2020. So just a few months after I started in my first admin role. She's never getting rid of me now, as Jena says too. A couple of connections, I am going to try and share things that haven't already been said or say it in a new way.

One of the things I thought about with Jena is this saying that's like pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional. So kind of understanding that the job is hard, but we can make it harder on ourselves when we are not being mindful of the thoughts and the feelings and the actions that we're creating. Right.

So knowing that we get to control our experience, and we have full control over our thoughts and feelings. Yes, there's going to be just tough days and tough circumstances and sad stories and things like that. But that idea that we make our suffering even worse by not managing our mind, that was something that definitely helped me get through this year and the last three years overall.

Connected with that, now that I'm in my third year, but I've done two full school year cycles, I'm understanding a little bit more the rhythm of the year, and the different seasons of the year. There are sometimes of year when observations are more intense. There are times of year when launching a new initiative is more intense. There's times of year when state exams come in.

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Just kind of understanding the ebb and flow of things, and how that might impact stress levels for teachers, for students, for parents. I'm thinking about like middle school applications. Then for me and trying to be a little bit more proactive about how I'm going to tend to myself and care for myself during those seasons of the year.

So like this February, I spent my whole break typing up observations, and then returned from break not feeling rested. Then was annoyed at myself for having spent my break that way and heading into a busy testing season. Lesson learned. Anticipate that that is a time of year when I'm going to need that R&R and plan a trip that's really something enjoyable for me. Maybe not going to spend time with my in-laws. Maybe that's not the way to spend the break where you want to feel relaxed and rejuvenated when you come back. Maybe you want to do something different.

So I feel like learning the flow of the year and those times of year when I need to like schedule a massage the day after this, or have lunch with your friends when it's this time of year. Because you know you're not going to prioritize your community and things like that. So that was another big one.

Angela: I want to interject here for a second. A couple of things. Number one, I love this so much. So for those of you who are on Facebook, and you're in the Empowered Principal™ group, that is the purpose of the Summer of Fun. It's to see the value of fun and putting it into your calendar so that you can create balance in your life.

So when you are in the throes of observations, you can look forward to a massage or a lunch with a girlfriend or dinner or a weekend away in the middle of all of that. So work can be intense, but you're also balancing that with something else that is calming and relaxing, and it can help you get back to neutral.

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I know Erika did this, she's going to talk in a minute. She did this at the beginning of her career where we started putting—There was a weeknight dinner that she started having with some friends. That just really changed the game for her.

But number one, the value of fun is so under rated. I think the purpose of it is so beneficial to school leaders. So thank you for saying that Wendy. The other thing you're talking about is once you have a year under your belt, you can start to see an ebb and flow to the year. It has a rhythm. Which is why I talk about the three month plan so much. Because it really breaks the school year into seasons, right?

There's a fall season, a winter, a spring, and a summer. You can kind of identify with your three month plan like in the next three months, in the fall season, here's what to expect. In the winter, in the spring, in the summer all of those seasons, you can now know what to expect.

P.S., I'm actually writing the Empowered Principal™ Playbook, which is going to highlight and prepare people, to give you guys what to expect in each of the seasons and how to plan and prepare for that. So that is going to be coming out at a later date. It's not done yet, but I'm working on that now. So anyway, thank you for sharing that Wendy because it really does tie into the work that we've been doing over the last year.

Wendy: Yeah. I think that that playbook will be huge. I think one of the skills I honed this year was sort of my little antenna for how my burnout levels are doing and my like adrenals and how my energy levels are. Being able to look at the calendar and say okay, next couple of weeks are going to be a lot of late night events, or next couple of weeks are going to be a lot of compliance deadlines.

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Just anticipating that you might have some times of year when you need to be a little bit more mindful of your boundaries as far as your work hours and how much pressure you're putting on yourself in the stress levels and all that. So I feel like the playbook is gonna be like before the antenna goes off is a little pressure release valve where Angela is going to be like alert, alert. Care for yourself.

Angela: Yeah, exactly.

Wendy: So I can't wait for that. A lot of the other things that I was going to mention were already spoken about, like Jena's connection about everything's figure outable. I think that was Jena. Like this idea that I don't have to know every answer. I don't have to already anticipate how I'm going to solve a problem that has not yet existed. I can just have this belief that I can get someone on the phone who can help me, or I can email this person and reach out. Or I can just say I don't know, and that's okay.

So that has helped a lot with my confidence in that. But what if this happens, and I don't know what to do? It's like well, no one would know what to do. It's never happened yet. So perfect example, global pandemic. If you had asked a principal five years ago, what would you do if there was a global pandemic? They probably would say I really don't know. So.

Angela: You said it when we were in it. Right?

Wendy: Exactly, exactly. So just that idea that you don't have to have all the answers or be like the ultimate problem solver. Then my last big one, I guess just being really protective of my time and a little bit more intentional about how I spend it. That means being really present at work when I'm here and being really present at home when I'm home.

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If I'm going to make a choice to break that barrier at all, meaning I'm going to take a personal call and on my lunch break or I'm going to do a little bit of schoolwork when I'm at home, it's in a mindful way and not like a robotic I'm just in this. I have no choice autopilot of I go home, and I open my computer.

Now if I choose to do something I'm gonna say huh, like future Wendy is going to be really glad that I spent one hour now doing this. So even though present Wendy thinks it's a little bit annoying and a little bit inconvenient, I'm going to be so glad that I did this tomorrow or on Monday. So I'm going to intentionally make a conscious choice to do that. I think just being able to be okay with making choices that align with how I want to feel both in that moment and in the future Wendy has given me a little bit more freedom.

I think Angela and I coached on this like all or nothing. You don't have to say I'll never answer an email outside of school. You can just say I'm gonna put a container around it and be a little bit intentional and a little bit purposeful about when and how I do it and under what circumstances.

I'm not going to do it in the middle of my best friend's wedding. I'm going to do it when I know I have that like early morning Sunday trip to the coffee shop where I can spend an hour getting organized for the week and enjoy the rest of my day knowing that Monday morning Wendy will be very pleased that I did that. So.

Angela: I love it. I love it. That's so great.

Wendy: That has been very helpful.

Angela: Nice. Okay, I'm gonna move over to Erika.

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Erika: Hello.

Angela: Hello, my friend. It's been so long. I know you have such amazing news to share with the world.

Erika: I do. So my name is Erika Gutierrez, and I just completed my sixth year as an administrator and my third year as a principal. This summer, I'm actually transitioning into a new role of director in my district. So I'm really excited, which is great. It's what I've been wanting to do since I started the career as an administrator was that this was kind of that goal was to be the director in my district.

So I'm really excited. The work that I've done as a principal has been I feel like amazing. If I'm being completely honest, I've kind of had a little—I've been in the new role or have known about the new role probably since the end of May. So I've had some time to process it. I can honestly say that I'm gonna miss being a principal so much.

Angela: Of course you are.

Erika: I am. It's been a wonderful journey. I've learned so much and so many things that have prepared me for I think the next step. So it's exciting. It's exciting time for sure.

Angela: Okay, so what are you most proud of yourself for? Like so we've coached at least for a year, maybe longer?

Erika: Yes. Longer.

Angela: Yeah, it's been longer. You have had some pretty major accomplishments just personally and professionally along the path, right? Because, and I know Erika has been on the podcast before, but this

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woman is not just a principal moving up to a director. She's also a mom of an elementary age student. She's also getting her PhD. She's married.

This woman is living out all the areas of her life to her fullest capacity. Tell us what you're most proud of. How do you believe you're able to manage all of this and the principalship given all that was going on at your school with staffing and all of that for the past year and a half?

Erika: Yeah, well, just the year that I think I reached out to Angela that I needed someone. I needed someone. I think I've said this before. Someone that was this was my person, my go to person. At that moment, it had been right after COVID where nobody really knew what was going on. It just felt overwhelming. I was ready to just give up because I felt so overwhelmed. There were just so many things that were going on it, not even in my personal life but just in my professional world. It just felt so overwhelming.

I think one of the most important thing that I've learned as I've coached with you is that you have to allow yourself time to process your emotions. Like you have to allow yourself to go through those emotions to feel them, but then to know what are emotions and what really are the problems? How are you going to like from a mind of you're not emotional anymore to that mindset of okay now what? Now what's next?

I think that's something that I've been able to just kind of take with me. I feel like it's helped me not only professionally but also with my family. Like as we've had some difficult moments, just being able to process okay, what's going on? Is this really that as big as I think it is? Let me get out of those emotions. What is really going on?

So that has been extremely important. I think that's one of the biggest things that I will have taken is just that ability of allowing myself to feel that.

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Then knowing okay, I've let myself feel it, and now I'm gonna move on and let's get going. I think that's been so important. Because before I would just kind of sit in that emotion.

Angela: Yes.

Erika: Now it's okay, I'm gonna allow myself time, but then I'm gonna move on. Then I think every something that everyone else has talked about is that planning fun. It's interesting because at first it was just planning fun for me because I needed that time to go out with friends, to have time with my husband.

But then it eventually became to hey, I'm doing this in my life. Like I'm allowing myself time to have fun. I'm allowing myself time to shut down my email. I'm planning when I'm doing my Sunday memos for my staff or planning where I'm doing observations or writing after school to I'm going to have to I have to share this with my teachers. So it went from something that was kind of selfish at the beginning to really sharing with my staff. Telling them when you leave here at a certain time, like that is your time. You need to refill your bucket, your cup, that joy that you have.

So I would even tell them sometimes we have to plan fun. Because if fun isn't planned then it doesn't happen. That's something that is silly, but it's so true. As we get busy with our careers, with our kids, with the million other things, you have to plan for it. So I think that has kind of helped me stay a little bit sane with the writing a dissertation, hopefully finishing in May of 2023.

Angela: Yay!

Erika: The new job. I think that has kind of helped us just knowing that yes, it's important work that we do, but it's okay for you to go and have fun. It's

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okay for you to plan those things. It's okay for you to shut it down when you need to and know that it's still going to be there. You will get it done because you will meet those deadlines.

Angela: Of course.

Erika: You're not worrying about it constantly.

Angela: Right. I think this is so important what Eric is saying because it is very easy for us to forget the purpose of our life, for us to forget to experience the wholeness of being human and the wholeness of our life. So when she talks about processing emotion, what she's really saying is she gives herself time to one, identify what emotion is actually coming up for her versus feeling like when you just blanket label it like I'm happy, or I'm sad, or I'm upset.

Versus getting into the nuance of like what am I really feeling? Then feeling that vibration in your body for as long as it takes to pass. Versus like ignoring it. Then it's just kind of like vibrating in there, but it's never going away. Because that vibration that goes on the back burner is always impacting every decision you make and action you take.

So you could be checking the box and doing all the right things. But if that emotion hasn't been processed and it's humming in the background, it is going to impact the results that you're creating and the slight nuance of the actions that you're taking. That's so good. That's so, so good.

So Erika, I just can't celebrate Erika enough. Like we have been through some wild rides together on her journey. What I love about Erika is she stuck with it. She was determined and committed. I mean I'm choked up in pride and joy and the honor of coaching her because no matter how hard things got, she followed through. She stuck it out. She held space for

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herself. She believed in the possibility of what she wanted to accomplish. Here she is right now in this moment sitting in her dream job. I'm so happy for you. So congratulations to you, Erika,

Erika: Thank you.

Angela: I'm really, really happy for you. Oh, I just have goosebumps. So one of the things I hear from my newer clients, my newer school leaders is that they ask me the question like okay, you're telling me to honor and celebrate myself, but how do I do that? I don't know how.

So what are some of the ways that each of you—Can you guys share a couple of ways that each of us take time to acknowledge and really celebrate yourself and your accomplishments? This is something I'm even personally working on. Just that that self-love, self-compassion, self-acknowledgement. Because we tend to want to look for that externally, but we want to train ourselves how to do that for ourselves.

So I'm just going to open up the floor and let each of you just take a moment to share. How do you celebrate yourself and your accomplishments and honor the work that you're doing? Just pop on in.

Erika: I'll start.

Angela: Okay.

Erika: I think I think one of the things I do, which I try to do it every night but I'm not the best at it. I'm in love with the idea of having a planner, but I really don't use it because I use my online planner right. But in my planner, I try to write down some three great things that happen that day. They don't have to be huge things because not every day is going to have. Not every moment is going to be a huge accomplishment.

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But just enjoying those little moments. Like I went out for a walk today. Or just spending time with family. That has been—Like at the end of the day, even if it's been a bad day, I know that I can be thankful because there's going to be a couple of things that I'm, even if it was just like I made it home to my bed. Like something really simple. That has been really good for me. Just to take that moment to write it down or even just process it at the end of the night.

I know that I said it already, but just planning those moments to celebrate. Like to celebrate by going out with friends and celebrating those moments that you have with them or like spending time with your family and sharing what it is that you accomplish. I think that's so important. While we would want to maybe celebrate all these amazing things, sometimes it's those small moments that you have to celebrate.

Angela: Yes.

Erika: It can be simple. It doesn't have to be something extraordinary.

Angela: Right. I agree. Yes. You don't have to go on some—I love Erika because she'll send me a little snapshot of her family like took a surprise visit to Hawaii. I'm like go girl. Get your fun on. This is so great. She has the most darling family ever. So I love getting those snapshots. Or of her office. I sent her flowers in honor of her promotion. I was so excited to do that.

So anyway, it can be very small. Like just getting home at night, one of the things my family used to do was we would sit at the dinner table, and each of us would tell like what's the funniest thing that happened today. They would say mom, you have to wait until the end. Because like as a school leader, you always have the best stories, right? Like, you can't write what happens in a school.

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But just acknowledging some of the humorous things or the craziness of the job, and really just finding the levity in the work that we do. Because we are in the business of people. People do funny things. Kids do funny things. Even if it's kind of crazy funny, we can still find some humor in it. Even that can make the job feel lighter. So Erika, thanks for sharing that with us. Who wants to go next?

Amy: I'll go next. I would echo a lot of the same things that Erika said. I have a gratitude app that you can put a picture on from the day and then lists things that you're thankful for or good things that happened that day. I love that because it's so fun just to be able to scroll back through almost like an online journal, but it's just private for you. It's really nice just to capture those memories.

I also just love to be outside. So whether that's taking a walk, or we have some really great bike trails where I live, getting on the bike and just riding. My kids are older. So my husband and I love to leave them at home by themselves, and we go out to eat somewhere really nice. Just prioritizing time, whether it's the two of us together or with friends, like Erika said, are important. Different ways that I just celebrate small wins or big wins.

Angela: That's so great. Jena, how about you? How are you celebrating my friend?

Jena: Well, not that you would do this every single time there's something to celebrate. But my husband and I, we went on a vacation at the end of the school year, just the two of us.

Angela: Yeah.

Jena: Which we had been talking about doing for years. I think my husband may have gotten his doctorate, and I think that may have been like then

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COVID happened. So yeah. So three years in the making. Anyway, so not that we're going to go on vacations every time, but we were kind of like you know what? We need to plan things just the two of us to kind of like celebrate. Since we are both principals as well, it kind of works for both of us. So.

Angela: That's so great. Well, and a special highlight was that Jena and I got to meet in person on her vacation because she was out here in California.

Jena: Yeah, it was so fun.

Angela: Yeah, we did. So we met up for lunch. It was like we've known each other our whole lives. It was so good. So much fun. Wendy, how are you celebrating? I love how you celebrate Wendy. You've got to share all.

Wendy: Oh boy. I feel like on the micro level, like the day to day, I feel like the celebration is just giving myself permission to be done when I go home. Like being home and being present and not having the guilt of like should I? Shouldn't I? I don't know. To not have that questioning of like is there something else that had to get done today that now I'm at home relaxing that I shouldn't be doing?

That being home and relaxing and just having that time is like the little mini celebration every day of like what had to get done today got done. Tomorrow's a new day. I'm just going to like fully be here now that I'm home.

One thing that comes to mind that Angela helped me with, and you just made me think of it, was spending a little time to make my office a place that feels like me. To not be so shy about like my quirky funny things and like putting photos up or having like my crystals or like whatever my feel

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good, woo-woo stuff is. It just is like part of my morning routine to put on the oil diffuser, and it takes two seconds. The mornings when I rush through and don't take that minute, it's not about the oil. It's about taking the minute, right? So that's like another little thing.

Then this is going to be like the I guess my more scandalous response. I had to uplevel my self-image a little bit when I became a school administrator from a teacher, and learning to be okay with celebrating my successes by spending a little money on myself from time to time.

Angela: Yes.

Wendy: I think that money, I definitely had a little bit of scarcity mindset stuff. Even now like Angela had to coach me through like buying my first car at age 30. I think when I went from a teacher to admin, I had to uplevel my self-concept that hey, you're someone who makes this amount of money. You're now someone who can also spend this amount of money when it's called for. I'm not talking about being frivolous or being excessive or being irresponsible.

But like my birthday last year, I bought myself like a new work bag that made me just like feel really excited to get ready to go to work in the morning. This year was an espresso machine. Best thing I ever purchased. Highly recommend to everyone. Not if you're trying to kick your coffee habit. But if you love coffee, I highly recommend.

Did I have to go through the well, it's kind of expensive, and this and this. I'm like, I work really hard. I'm not spending frivolously all the time. This is like something that makes me feel good that I use every single day that I love. So I don't know if that's like a controversial scandalous answer. But I feel like celebrating by if your love language is gifts, maybe you get yourself something nice, and that feels really good. It is what it is.

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Angela: I think that is a perfect way. I actually make myself by myself something when I've achieved a goal. Because the way we think about money is also the way we think about time. I want to believe I have an abundance of time, which means I also need to believe I have an abundance of money.

Time and money are top assets. They are resources. They are the ultimate resources. Like we have our brain. We have time. We've got money or other financial resources. So how we think about those and how we interact and engage with them, it really does matter. Because if we're not willing, and this is kind of what I want to close with too.

If we aren't willing to take time to celebrate our hard work and accomplishments, what are we saying to ourselves about who we are and the work that we've done and the goals that we've-- We worked so hard to set these goals and then achieve them, and then to not celebrate them is to not acknowledge them.

You would never do that to a child. You would never do that to a student. You would not do that to a teacher. So it's really not acceptable for us not to do it with ourselves. So for anybody listening out there who feels like they're uncomfortable celebrating themselves or they don't feel like it's like either time worthy or money worthy to invest in themselves or to spend money on themselves.

I mean each one of these clients of mine, they invest a lot of money in their coaching services. This is the best use of that money because we spend so much time learning how to maximize our time, maximize our resources, maximize our pleasure and our happiness and our joy, and our ability to celebrate. Not just to accomplish, but to celebrate those accomplishments. So I am so proud of all of you.

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I just want to kind of wrap up with one last little question. To make it really quick, we're just gonna whip around. I talk a lot about the three month plan. The three month plan includes having one primary focus. So one of the things that school leaders have a hard time doing is constraining their focus. That's why we play whack a mole. That's why we think everything's a priority. That's why we try to do it all. That's how we overwork and burnout.

If you had to say, just from your gut, your belly, what's the one next best step that you could focus on for the next three months, what do you think personally it's going to be in your space? This is just a theory. You're just going to make a best guess as to what's the next best step. What's that primary focus, and why.

This doesn't have to be like super complicated. But when you're thinking about going into the school year. So it's what end of July now. We've got August, September, and October ahead of us. What's the one thing you want to focus on in those first three months of school? Amy? I'll just call names be easier.

Amy: Yeah, I thought about this because I'm one of those people that it's really easy in my brain to have like 35 different things going on. So I really do have to be intentional about being focused and having clarity and all of that stuff.

So when I think about that, I think about like let's just not overcomplicate it. At the root of it, I really want to continue building relationships. I want to love my people and serve my people and extend grace and push people out of their comfort zone when they need it. Just work on celebrating big and small wins with my staff and with students. Just focusing on that relationship piece with students, staff, and the community.

Angela: Yeah, I agree. 100%. Erika, I saw you nodding.

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Erika: Gosh, there's so much to focus on learning a new role, right? But I think it's a lot of what Amy says. Well yes, there's a lot to learn, but at the end of the day, we are service. So just building those relationships, making sure that my district has what it is, the support that they need. So to me, it's more of figuring out what support that is. But again, building those relationships with the principals, the administrators, other directors, and then the teachers. Kind of not losing focus of the community and the students. So it probably is very similar to what you said Amy.

Angela: Erika, for you, I just see you as continuing on the same approach that you had as a school leader. Your new team is going to be all of the principals in the district administration, and then those select teachers who are going to be a part of the specific things you're working on as the new director. But like that is such a gift of yours. You have such a talent for connection and relationship building and authenticity. I just see you bringing that right on into your new role. I think you're gonna have a blast.

Erika: Yes, I think so. It's gonna be fun.

Angela: It is. Congratulations again. Jena, what's your focus this year, honey?

Jena: Well, there's a very good possibility that I will be transitioning to another district. So I want to just make sure I have the school that I would be leaving just set up ready to go, and set that new principal up as best I possibly can.

Angela: Yeah.

Jena: Then it would just be the new chapter that would begin. Learning a new role and a new level and all the fun things.

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Angela: Yeah. I assume you're going to be working on connection and relationships as well.

Jena: Absolutely. Yes.

Angela: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Keep me posted.

Jena: I will.

Angela: Okay. Ms. Wendy, wrap it up. Bring us home.

Wendy: I think specifically relationships with families is going to be really key. We have a whole new crop of new families joining our school community. We also have two buildings. So I have the whole second grade coming to the new building for the first time, and they really haven't worked with me. They've primarily worked with the AP who works in that building.

So I feel like just a lot of new faces and wanting to make sure everyone has a smooth transition. Not just the kids, but also the families. Like we're talking about the highs and lows of the years. Like September's one of those times when you just put a lot of energy toward like town halls, coffee with admin, meet the teacher, orientation, let's do a tour. Like all that good quality time with the families is really going to be August, September, October. Making sure that we start strong and forge relationships between the families and the teachers really strong too.

Angela: That's awesome. So if there's any theme that you heard as we wrap up today's celebration is that if you're a brand new school administrator, and I see so many of you on Facebook and Instagram and all of the social media platforms, saying yay congratulations. I'm celebrating my brand new first year principal position. What are tips and suggestions? I see this all the time.

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This is it. Building relationships, the value of that, the benefit of that, short and long term benefits of building relationships with people and having connection be your primary focus. You cannot go wrong. Because when you do that, all other problems are solvable. So I think that that's the big takeaway here.

Number one, celebrate your wins as big wins, small wins, all the wins every single day. Put in time in your calendar for fun, and then focus on connection and relationships. It will serve you well. So ladies, thank you again so much. Congratulations to all of you on such a successful year. We can't wait to hear how next year goes for you all. Keep us posted, okay. All right. Talk to you guys later.

Jena: Thank you.

Wendy: Thank you.

Erika: Bye.

Amy: Thank you. Nice to meet you.

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