

Ep #252: Thoughts About Emotions



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 252.

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. I'm jumping on with a completely different topic than I thought I was going to record on today. I had planned to do leadership entitlement, but not to worry that's coming really soon in November. But I'm jumping on right away because I just got off a coaching call with my master coach. I just had to tell you what I learned today. I had to share it with you right here, right now. I couldn't wait.

So there is something that I talk about on this podcast all of the time. But today, it was presented to me in a new way, in an innovative way, a different way for me to think about it. It was so mind blowing to me that I want to share it with you because I believe you will really find this helpful as you go on leading throughout this school year. So you're going to hear this probably around the end of October. You're at the end of the fall. You're going into the holiday season right now, and you're probably really tired. You're probably really overwhelmed and stressed out. I remember October.

You do all that heavy lifting July, August, September, and then by October, you're about ready to pass out. You're just waiting for Thanksgiving to roll around so that you can catch your breath and have a break. Totally know where you're at. I hope this podcast helps you think about how you're feeling. As you all know, I talk a lot about emotions on this podcast. The reason I talk so much about emotion is because emotional energy is the driving force behind every decision we make and action we take. You know this.

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It's the most important tool that you have access to as a human and as a school leader. You want to become very intimate with your emotions. What I mean by that is you want to deeply understand what you are feeling. So you want to label or name the feeling. You want to identify it if you can. If you can't, that's okay. But grab a list of emotions off the internet. I'm sure there's a million different emotional lists you can find. I'm sure there's books on this. But if you can't yourself come up with a label or an identity to an emotion, you can look up.

I do this all the time. I downloaded Byron Katie's emotional lists. I use it to help me articulate to myself this is exactly how I'm feeling. It's not just I'm angry. It's I'm a little agitated, or I'm slightly annoyed or I'm furious or I'm enraged. There's a whole spectrum of anger emotions that humans have created labels for.

So you want to understand, first of all, what you're feeling, what exact emotion you're feeling. Sometimes you might be feeling multiple emotions at once. You might be bouncing around with emotion. That's okay. You might be angry and scared. You might be nervous and excited, right? You might have multiple and layers of emotions. Name the emotion, step one. The reason you do this is because it helps separate you from the emotion. It's helping you identify that the emotion is separate from who you are as a human. It's just an experience that you're having. Okay? So you're going to label it number one.

Number two, identify why you're feeling it. Basically all that means is what thought is generating the emotional reaction in your body. So what are you feeling? Why are you feeling it? What are you thinking about? Step three is how do you experience that feeling in your body, and it's a little bit different for everyone.

So you need to tune in to your body. I can't tell you how you feel. Nobody can tell you how you feel. You have to tell you how you feel you have to

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describe it. So you want to describe the emotional vibration you are experiencing in your body when you feel frustration, or you feel sadness, or you feel disappointment or you feel embarrassed so that you can learn to recognize this feeling so that you become aware that you can handle it.

So when I'm teaching my clients how to go through the process of emotional processing, creating awareness, creating understanding, creating intimacy with their emotions, creating the space to allow for an emotion and process it. Here's how I teach them to do it. I tell them to describe their feeling as though they were at the doctor's office.

Let's say you woke up feeling terrible. So you wake up. You're feeling awful. You go and schedule an appointment at urgent care or with your physician, and you meet with a doctor. The first thing that the doctor says to you is describe the physical symptoms you're experiencing. Tell me more.

So you might say to your doctor I have a headache. The doctor is most likely going to ask you to describe the headache. Is it dull? Is it sharp? Is it in one specific area of your brain? Or is it all throughout your head? Is it in the front or the back? Is it behind your eyes or maybe at the bottom of your neck? They want you to be as specific as possible.

This is the same process you want to implement when you are experiencing an emotion inside your body. You don't want to tell yourself I'm feeling sad, or I'm feeling frustrated, or I'm feeling down, or I'm feeling tired. Those are very kind of generic terms for how you are feeling today, here, right now.

What you want to do is learn to get intimate with that emotion. What exactly are you feeling? Let's describe it so that we can separate it from who we are. We're not just a person who's melancholy or sad or depressed or tired

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or overwhelmed. We are a human who has having that experience in this moment right now. Okay.

Instead of being very general, about how you're feeling, you want to get very specific about it. So it might sound something like this. You might be feeling some type of sadness. You want to just look on the spectrum of sad.

Are you just slightly sad, a little disappointed? Or are you in grief? Are you in mourning, right? Notice the difference between those two. When you're just a little down today or you're feeling a little less energetic today. Like your energy's a little bit low sad, or are you like in grief? In mourning. It's rapture in your body. It's completely taking over your body. There's a huge difference between sadness levels when you're grieving, and when you're just a little down for a day. Okay?

So it might sound something like this. I'm going to do a body scan. This is something I teach my clients to do. So you start with your head and you describe how each part of your body is feeling from top to bottom. So you might say something like this. My head is feeling cloudy. It feels like kind of gray, like there's a dark cloud hanging over in my head. Maybe my eyes are feeling watery, and my nose is running. Maybe there's tears coming out of your eyes, or they're building up in your eyes and your nose maybe feels a little watery.

Maybe your face feels a little flushed. You might feel physically fatigued. Maybe your heart hurts, maybe you feel a tightness or a pain in your chest. Maybe your heart is pounding or maybe it feels very dull and kind of numb. Maybe there is a heaviness inside of your torso, from your neck down to your stomach. Maybe it feels very dark and hard and very blobby in there. Maybe there feels like there's a purple or black or dark gray blob in there.

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Maybe your throat feels clenched like there's a rock inside of it and it hurts to swallow. You know that feeling when you want to cry. It's just sitting there inside your throat. That heaviness, that lump you get, that feeling, and it kind of hurts to try and swallow that lump down. You might be experiencing that.

Maybe your stomach is churning, or it's in knots, or you have a little appetite. Maybe you're feeling heavy in your legs and cumbersome. Maybe your hands tremble a little or your knee shakes a little bit. Maybe you're having the feeling that you need to cry. This energy wants to be released. Maybe you want to scream or you want to cry or you want to sleep it off.

This is what I mean by getting intimate with an emotion. It's about building a relationship with all of your emotions, with each emotion that you experience. When you have a relationship with sadness and it's varying degrees, you know how it presents itself inside your body, and then you become familiar with it. The more familiar you are with an emotion, the less scary or resistance you will feel to having it.

So when you have a cold, you know the onset of a cold, right? Maybe you start to feel stuffy or you get a headache. Some people their eyes maybe water or get itchy, nose starts to run, maybe you get a sore throat. You know that feeling that onset that comes on inside your body when a cold is coming on. We all have a little bit different experience of it, but we all know oh no, something's off here. I'm not feeling my best.

Just like you know those physical symptoms inside your body, you're not trying to control them. You're not trying to—Well, you are. You want them to go away. You might take medicine or something like that, but when but you can't really control whether they onset or not, right?

Emotions are the same way. You'll have an onset. You'll have an experience. You're like oh, I get this. I know what's coming. Right? You just

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get more familiar with it. Then you're like oh, bummer. I know what this means. I know what I need to do to take care of myself. So you won't try to run around it or avoid it as much as you're like I know how to take this head on.

So when you have a cold, you're like I know exactly what I need. I haven't been sleeping well, I haven't been eating as much. Maybe I haven't been getting as much water. Maybe I need to wear a mask. Maybe I need to wash my hands more. Maybe I need to take some vitamin C. Something like that.

When it comes to emotions, you're going to process this in a similar way. You're going to know what it feels like and how to approach it. You're going to know how it runs its course, just like a cold. Okay? So you might be able to say something like ah, here's my anxiety showing up. I'm feeling anxious, you're labeling it, right? Because I've got so much going on at work, and my brain is worried that I'm not going to get everything done on time.

So you're labeling the emotion. I'm feeling anxious. This is what anxiety feels like. I know why because I'm stressed out at work. There's a lot going on, and I'm not sure I'm gonna get it all done or how to prioritize this. I'm feeling a little overwhelmed and worried. I feel the energy pulsing through my body.

So anxiety for me feels very flittery. It feels very intense energetically. It is fast, and it bounces all over my body. My head spins, my heart beats fast, the torso of my body kind of vibrates. I feel like there's a ping pong ball going in all directions, and it's just bouncing all around. I get very restless. I have a hard time sitting still. My legs get restless. My energy wants to, like I want to be active, physically active, to either burn that energy off, or I want to jump into work action when I'm feeling anxious because I want to release

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that emotional vibration that's happening in my body, which feels like a ping pong ball going all over my head, my brain, and in my body. Right.

But I know I know my anxiety well. I know. I watch it. I observe it. It's like oh, there's the anxiety. There's the worry. I see it ping ponging all over. I see that intensity of it. I feel my heart beating. I feel the restlessness inside of my legs and my arms, and that urge to get up and go do something to try and relieve that energy. Right? But I know how to let it be there, and I know my own solution to releasing it.

Sometimes when I'm in anxiety, I'm thinking oh, but I don't have time. That's doubling down on the anxiety. It's like I don't have time to deal with anxiety. This is not helpful. Why am I feeling this way? I start to judge it. Then it's like wait, timeout.

The truth here is that I am in charge of my time. I can come up with a plan that prioritizes everything. It's called the three month plan. P.S., if you haven't signed up for coaching, come on. Let's go people. Let's get you a coach. Let's get going on your three month plan so that we can reduce this stress, but we are going to feel it regardless from time to time because you're human.

So when anxiety does come up for you and it's about time, you can feel the anxiety and like ah, I'm on to you. I know how this goes. I know how it goes from head to toe. I know what it is. I know why I'm experiencing it. I also know I have I have a solution. I can look at my three month plan, I can adjust my schedule for the week, and I can determine what I'm going to do and delegate what I can. I give myself permission to put a couple things on the backburner so that I can reduce the vibration of anxiety in my body. That's what allowing an emotion looks like. It's knowing what and why and how.

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Now, there is a reason we avoid becoming intimate with our emotions. My coaching session today made it crystal clear as to why we all do that. Here's why. We have thoughts about emotions meaning we have opinions about our emotions. We have belief systems around what we think about our emotions and just having an emotion itself. So there are emotions we believe that are acceptable to feel, and others we believe are unacceptable. We think we should feel one way and not another. We think highly of some emotions, and we think very critically of other emotions.

So really what's happening is we have thoughts and opinions about emotions. Probably based on the way we were raised, based on our experiences and observing other people like the adults in our lives, and how they thought about their emotions.

The emotions they felt comfortable expressing and processing, the emotions they didn't feel comfortable with. Maybe the emotions they felt out of control with, or emotions that they repressed and hid down. Like maybe you never saw your parents fight or get angry, or maybe you saw them out of control. Like the inability to manage their anger and frustration.

So just notice that you have a belief system, a set of opinions and ideas and thoughts around the experience of an emotion. I know society teaches us the goal is happiness. The goal is to feel good all the time. The goal is to only feel the good feels and to avoid the bad feels. So we're very wired to seek out pleasure and avoid any kind of emotional pain. But I want to walk you through this.

Let's take an emotion that's a fan favorite to avoid. One of the emotions most clients or people who get on consults with me, the emotion that they most want to avoid is the feeling of doubt. We hate to experience doubt. All humans do. We don't want to make decisions if we feel any doubt about them, or a doubt that we could be wrong, or a doubt that we won't get what we paid for, or a doubt that we're making the wrong decision.

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We don't want to take any action if we are experiencing any kind of self-doubt or if we're doubting the process, right? If we're not sure that coaching is the solution, or we're not sure that the process that we're implementing is going to fix the problem that we're trying to solve at school.

We're not skilled as humans at experiencing doubt as an emotion in our body and taking action in spite of feeling doubt. Here's why. We have an opinion about the doubt we are experiencing. So if you put doubt into a STEAR cycle, you're going to put the feeling of doubt in the S line.

So you're going to look at your own thoughts and opinions about doubt. Like what is doubt? How do you define it? What does it mean to you? How do you experience it in your body? Like we're going just to look at doubt. We're going to explore it. We're going to be curious about what our thoughts are about doubt. Doubt typically looks like this. We shouldn't be feeling this way.

Doubt can't be present when we're making a decision. I can't take action if I am in the experience of doubt. Doubt means something is wrong. It means a danger. It means avoid, resist, go back, go away. Like a resistant or doubtful mind will always say no.

My coach always says a confused mind always says no, and doubt is definitely the state of confusion. Doubt is when you feel completely confused on what decision to make and what action to take. When you're in doubt, you are in dissonance. Your brain has two opposing ideas that it thinks might be true. Maybe this will work or maybe that will work. I don't know if I can, but maybe I can. I think this is possible. I don't think this is possible.

It's when you're caught in the middle. There's a gap between where you're at what you currently think is true and what you want to believe is true.

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Okay? Doubt is the experience of the dissonance. It is that conflict inside of your mind. Mentally and emotionally, you're having conflict, right?

When we are in the experience of that conflict internally and we have doubt, we want coaching, but we're afraid to pay for it, or we doubt what we're going to get the results, or we doubt that our husbands or spouses will support us, or we don't think our superintendents will support our decisions. Anything where you're experiencing doubt and you think that doubt is the problem, you are going to be very afraid of it. You're going to resist it. You're going to try to avoid it.

It will become very oppositional inside of your body. You do not want to experience doubt basically. You're telling it go away. I don't want doubt. I can't have doubt. Doubt is bad. I don't want to feel it. I don't need it present while I'm trying to make these decisions in my life and lead my school. But what happens is when you're afraid of an emotion, it can be any emotion. If you're afraid to feel embarrassed, if you're afraid to feel disappointment, if you're afraid to feel rejection or failure or heartbreak, any emotion that you are afraid to feel, you're going to go into fight or flight.

Your brain is going to be like I have to protect you at all cost. I'm either going to argue this and defend it and justify why I'm not going to do this. Or you might go into flight or you might procrastinate or delay or avoid it altogether. Just jump ship here. Or you might abdicate responsibility to somebody else. I'll let them make that decision. I'll go ask for somebody else's opinion. I feel doubt, and I don't want to feel doubt. So I'm going to go get reassurance, but I'm going to rely on somebody else's opinion to give me a sense of assurance that what I'm doing is right.

But as you know, play that out. If the thing that you decide doesn't go right, and you think it was that other person's reason or opinion then you're gonna blame them when it goes wrong. But they also get the credit if it

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goes right. What happens is you never get to feel like you have the capacity to make decisions on your own.

So what is the result of resisting doubt, of being afraid of it? The result is that you don't get familiar with doubt. You don't understand how it plays out in your body. It's like when a cold is coming on, and you have no idea what it is, but you're too afraid to like tune into the symptoms or go to the doctor to find out what you have. Is it COVID? Is it just a head cold? Is it strep throat? Is it the stomach flu? Like what are we working with here?

But when you're afraid to find out and explore and describe those symptoms to your doctor, you never get familiar. You don't know how to identify it for yourself. You never get familiar with it. So you avoid doubt. You resist it when it's present. But what happens is this catapults us into fight or flight every single time doubt shows up in our brain. We pause.

We like stall from making decisions or taking actions anytime doubt is triggered because we're so afraid to experience it versus getting comfortable with it and getting very familiar within an intimate with it and be like oh I know what's happening. I'm feeling doubt. Here's how it resonates in my body. Here's the feeling it has. Here's the dissonance I feel. Here's where I feel it. It feels kind of jittery, or it feels kind of shaky, or it feels however it feels in your body when you're feeling doubt.

When you can get familiar with doubt, then you can ask yourself okay, now I'm familiar with it. Now I understand it. I see how it runs its course because every emotion is temporary. It's just like a cold. You're not going to have it forever. It's going to be there for a day or two or an hour or two in some cases. With an emotion they can happen very fast, or they can take days or they can even take a week or two. It just depends on how willing you are to process that emotion. But when you understand it, it's not as scary, and you're more willing to let it in.

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So in summary here, I want you to see. We all have opinions about the emotions that we experience. If we're not aware of those thoughts and opinions of the emotion itself, it can be very easy to focus on the thoughts about the situation at hand.

So, for example, if the situation is you're a new school leader, and you're focusing on all the reasons why you're new and all the ways you're going to try not to be new, you'd never fully unveil what's going on below the surface. So there's your thoughts and feelings about being new, and then there's your thoughts and feelings about how you feel as a result of being new.

So let's go back to this emotion of doubt. If you don't explore the emotions that doubt and the opinions that doubt brings up for you, you can't uncover that deeper reason why you decide to do or not do certain things. You want to get very intimate with your decision making process. That's a whole other podcast, but this is the tip of the iceberg. In order to understand your decision making process, you have to get intimate with your emotions. You have to understand how emotions present themselves inside your body.

So when you're not thinking about the situation, that leads you to the emotion. When you can get to the emotion of it, that is when you unveil the truth of how you're making decisions. Okay? So what we tend to do, and this is what I've been teaching. So this is new for me too. It's a new way to describe it to you, to teach it to you, to explain it to you as my students and my clients.

But what I have been focusing on is your thoughts on the situation, your thoughts on being new, or your thoughts on the person you're working with or your thoughts on your boss or your thoughts on the situation at hand. But now I'm asking you to explore your thoughts on the opinions of the emotion. Okay.

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So here's what the surface level looks like. Lots of people come to me. I'm a new school leader. That's my situation. I'm brand new, or I'm first year, or I'm a veteran, and I'm stressed out, right. But most people come to me. I'm new. I want to be the best I can be. But here are their thoughts and opinions about being new. Being new is a problem. I won't know how to handle things. What if I don't know what to do? I've never done this before. Being new is really hard. Being new is super uncomfortable and awkward and clumsy. I don't like it. The emotion you're experiencing is doubt. Okay.

But when you're focused on being new, here's what we do. We try to avoid the feeling of doubt by learning and reading and overworking and talking to other people and looking for ways to believe that we're not new. We try to change our thoughts and opinions about being new. We focus on that. But the result of that is we just focus more on being new and all of the reasons that we should doubt ourselves. Because we're spending so much time thinking about why we're new and how we're new and all the ways we're new and all the ways we're being awkward and all the things we don't know, that creates more doubt. Right.

So the way to fast track a result you're trying to create for yourself or a goal you're trying to accomplish is to not only focus on your thoughts about the situation that you're facing, that surface level situation, but to also take a look at your thoughts on the emotions that come up for you when you're thinking about the situation at hand. I love this so much.

So when you're feeling doubt about any situation, put the emotion in the S line, and then list out your thoughts about it. What are your opinions of doubt? Is it acceptable? Is it unacceptable? Can you allow it to be present in your body and still take action anyway? Are you willing to experience the vibration of doubt in order to achieve what you want?

What about doubt is actually a problem? What is the problem with experiencing doubt? What is the real problem behind the problem here?

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Right? Like doubt itself is not a problem. It's a vibration in the body. Usually when I ask people what's the problem with doubt, they'll say well, I don't like it, or it doesn't feel good. Or what if I make a mistake?

I say but what's the problem with that? You can handle doubt. We've all handled doubt before. We feel it all the time. Let's just get intimate with it and understand it and say I hear you doubt, but you're going in the backseat because I'm making this decision and I'm moving forward because I'm willing to experience you and have you along for the ride in order for me to achieve what I want.

What if doubt, means nothing other than a symptom your body is temporarily experiencing based on a thought you're having right now in this moment. I'm new. New is hard. This is different. This is expensive. This is scary. Those thoughts generate doubt. Then you say to yourself oh, here's what doubt feels like. I can handle this. I know it's temporary, and I'm willing to feel it for a while in order to get me to what I want.

Because here's the thing. If you don't get familiar with the doubt, you're going to stagnate. You're going to stop yourself from trying something new, from trying a new approach to achieving a goal that you want. Uncovering your opinions about your emotions will help you see the real reason you're holding yourself back from making new decisions and taking different kinds of actions.

You'll see that oftentimes the opinions you hold about the emotion that you think you might experience over the opinions you hold of the situation itself. Uncovering your opinions of your emotions is going to help you see the real reason that you're holding yourself back from making decisions and taking actions that get you closer to accomplishing a goal that you want.

You'll see, most of the time, what's holding you back is more about the emotion that you think you're going to experience than the actual opinion of

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the situation itself. That emotion that fear of experiencing that emotion, the doubt, disappointment, failure, embarrassment, rejection, heartbreak. I'm just trying to think of emotions that really come up for people. Those emotions are what make you say no to moving towards your biggest goals and dreams.

So you want to see the truth behind your decision making process so that you can consciously decide whether or not you love your reason for holding back. Do you love the fear of doubt being the reason you don't apply for your dream job? Or maybe why you refuse to try a different schedule at school or a different approach to school leadership?

Do you love that your opinion of fear is a problem that should be avoided, and this is why you don't try new things are question old belief patterns? Do you admire yourself for letting doubt and awkwardness or discomfort be the determinant of what's possible for you? Is that who you want to be in the world? Do you admire that version of yourself that lets doubt make the decisions for you?

Also, what would your future self say about your thoughts on emotions? What is your future's opinion of the emotions you're willing to experience right now? Does she want you to be courageous enough to feel these emotions now so that you can have what you want in your future?

These are such powerful questions. I am so grateful for this coaching call I had today. Because this for me is such a powerful discovery, and it's going to help you. It's going to help me as a coach for you, and it's gonna help you as a school leader for yourself and your teachers. If you're able to, number one, get intimate with how an emotion feels in your body, and number two, question your opinions about that emotion, there will become a time that there is no emotion you are unwilling to feel.

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What that means is you can stop spending your time and energy dodging emotion and spend it instead with getting familiar with emotion and getting intimate with emotion so that you can leverage your emotion to achieve your biggest and boldest and most empowered dreams. That, my friends, is a dream come true.

Have a wonderful week. I hope this has been as mind blowing for you as it was for me. The power of your opinions and thoughts around your emotions. It's a game changer. It's a win-win. I know that when you apply this, it's going to change the trajectory of your experience as a school leader. Have a wonderful week everybody. I love you guys so much. Take good care. Talk to you soon by.

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