

Ep #255: Coachability



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Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 255.

Welcome to *The Empowered Principal™ Podcast*, a not so typical educational resource that will teach you how to gain control of your career and get emotionally fit to lead your school and your life with joy by refining your most powerful tool, your mind. Here's your host certified life coach Angela Kelly Robeck.

Hello, my empowered leaders. How are you? Welcome to the podcast. For those of you who are new, I'm so excited you're here. Can't wait to dive in and get started today. Okay, today's topic is going to be on coachability. I thought about titling this something to the effect of like giving and receiving feedback, but really what that is is coachability. So we're going to talk about what coachability is and how we become coachable ourselves. Then how we model how to be coachable for our teachers. Okay.

So we're talking about teacher evaluations, and we're giving feedback, right? Well, part of that is we want teachers to be open to receiving that feedback. We want them to be coachable. So anytime we want somebody else to do something as a school leader, it's a great idea to consider how we do that very same thing we're asking them to do and just study ourselves.

Notice for us, how am I easy to coach? How am I difficult to coach? What kinds of feedback do I love to receive? What feedback is hard for me to receive? What triggers me about feedback? Study ourselves. So I've been doing this with myself as a client of my master coach. In my quest to just become more coachable, more open to feedback, I've had to make some decisions about who I am as a client, and how coachable I am, and what I make feedback mean. Okay.

So I'm going to share with you the process that I've been going through in terms of how I am creating more coachability within my own brain, within

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my own self. So coachability is simply the ability to receive coaching and feedback from another person. Okay. If we want our teachers to be highly coachable, we need to practice being open to coaching and feedback equally, right. If we expect them to do it, we want to be able to do it ourselves. It's not as easy as we think.

Let's start by looking at why receiving coaching and feedback feels challenging. Number one, it's challenging because it actually challenges what we currently believe is true. It requires us to slow down and stop and reflect and think about our thoughts. So many times we are on autopilot. Our brain is just firing off thoughts, 60,000 or more of them a day, and we're on autopilot, letting those same thoughts come up every single day over and over on repeat. We don't really slow down to think what are we thinking? Right?

So coaching, it challenges us to stop and question our own thoughts. The brain doesn't like this. It likes to maintain status quo. It likes to be on autopilot. It doesn't like to be challenged or questioned. So it's going to resist any kind of comment or feedback or insight that we perceive as a change. Because it wants things to be as easy as possible.

The brain doesn't like to have to dig in and grind and work and grit and perseverance. Like it doesn't want to do that. It wants to seek out pleasure, avoid pain, and make things as easy as possible. That is the motivational triad of our brains. It wants to live in a hammock and drink Mai Tais on the beach all day every day. Okay.

But on the other hand, the human spirit wants to evolve and grow and learn and explore and discover and innovate. So we have kind of the lazy part of our brain that's like let's just make life easy, and we have the heart and soul, the fire within us that wants to grow and learn and evolve and innovate. We do want this feedback. We do want the coaching, right?

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So, number one, it challenges us because we have to question what we're thinking, first of all, and what we're believing. We have lots of sentences running through our brain like a ticker tape. Some of them we latch on to. Others of them, maybe we don't. But what really challenges us with feedback is when we believe something to be true. When we hold on to that is true. We believe in that.

That's kind of number two why feedback is not easy is we automatically want to go on the defense, at least for me. I automatically want to go on the defense and defend my thoughts, defend my beliefs, defend my rationale, or my strategy or my approach, right? Because our brain's going into fight or flight. So I'm a fighter. Like I want to argue and defend and protect. If I perceive I'm being attacked, I attack back.

Now, other people go into flight. They want to shut down. They just sit there and take it. They just they freeze, they placate. They might be like oh that's a great idea when they are really seething inside. Or they just kind of zone out. They don't even hear it. Because they're like what's happening right now? They just put the wall up.

So I want you to notice what aspect or approach your brain takes when it's receiving feedback. Mine wants to go on the defense. We all go on the defense, but we do it in different ways, right? So when your brain is perceiving any type of danger, whether it's physical, mental, or emotional. When we're receiving feedback, we're going to slip into that fight or flight response when we're perceiving it as an attack in some way.

Now, some feedback is very loving and open and positive. We're like oh, more of that, please. Oh, please don't stop. Right. But when it's feedback that our brains like hey, wait a minute. I disagree. I don't believe that. That's not what I think, or what's the problem with how I'm doing things? When we think we have to change or we think that somebody's attacking us or telling us that we're wrong.

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That's a hard one, right? When someone's saying like you're doing it wrong or try this instead. That's not the right way. When we're told we're wrong, the reason we don't like being wrong is because of the way we feel when we think the thought I'm doing it wrong, or I'm being told I'm wrong. We might feel guilty. Maybe we did know we were doing it wrong. We just were kind of lazy.

Or maybe we feel embarrassed. Like we should know what to do, but we don't know what to do, and we're embarrassed that we don't know what to do. Now somebody's telling us, and we're all new just like fumbling around. Or maybe we feel shame.

I feel like these are different layers, right? Guilty is when we're like yeah, I could have done that better. I kind of knew that, but I didn't do it. Shame on me, right? Guilty. I feel a little guilty for not doing that. Or we just didn't get to it. We forgot it, or we didn't get to it. We didn't have time or something like that. Right?

Embarrassment's when we think we should know something that we don't know, and we feel embarrassed that we don't know it. This happens a lot when we're new. Like we get into a new position, and we think we should know everything. We don't want to ask because we don't want to be perceived as weak. We don't want to be perceived as incompetent because that would be embarrassing if we were to be incompetent. So we go into fight or flight to avoid negative emotion, whether that's guilt or embarrassment.

Now, shame I feel like is when we feel shame with feedback, I feel like that's when the brain is perceiving the feedback as there is something inherently wrong with me. Brené Brown talks about all of this, but I just want to notice like the reason that we feel the need to defend or go into fight or flight with feedback is because of what we're making the feedback mean about us personally. Not about our skill set or the circumstance or

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the situation we're dealing with, right? Just be mindful of that. Is the feedback about you personally, or about the situation at hand, or the skill sets required to handle that situation? Okay.

The third reason that coaching and feedback feel difficult for us is because we've come to believe that feedback is a sign of weakness. It's like telling ourselves that we don't know something, but we should know it. That we must not be competent because we have to ask others, and we shouldn't have to ask others. We should be able to do it on our own and figure it out on our own.

I want to address this right here right now. There is no human on the planet who can do it better on their own. No one. I don't know where this idea came from that asking for help or seeking out feedback is a sign of weakness. I don't know where that came from. It's been from probably the beginning of time. But when we take a look at its truth, it's the most false thought that I can imagine.

When I look around, and I'm watching the best of the best, I study the best of the best because I want to be the best of the best. The best of the best always, always ask for feedback. They have coaches. They invite others to give input. They seek out, intentionally seek out additional perspectives and approaches. They drop their ego at the door. It's not about them. It's about the result they're trying to create or the outcome they're trying to achieve, or the accomplishment they want to experience or the contribution they want to give to the world. It's not about them. It's about how to get to the goal. Okay.

So in general, people who don't welcome feedback either don't enjoy change, insist on being right, or they make the feedback means something personal about them. Which, to be honest, is most people because that's how we've been taught to believe. That's how the human brain is wired. It's wired to protect you from attack, any perceived attack, whether that's

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physical, mental, or emotional. So your brain doesn't want you to have to experience negative emotion. No wonder feedback feels attacking. Right. Okay.

So now we know why. We don't like it because of the way we feel. We don't like it because of what we make it mean. So how do we turn this around? How do we invite ourselves to be more coachable? Here has been my experience. I'm just going to share with you. I came up with four steps to make myself more coachable. I invite you to implement these steps to make yourself more coachable. Then you can model this for your teachers and invite them to be more coachable. Okay.

The way I have developed more coachability is to find ways to think and feel about feedback that helps me to be more open to the experience. My goal is for feedback to feel more neutral and more enjoyable, more inviting. Like I like to think that feedback is the fastest path to my desired accomplishments and success.

So the more I see feedback as the solution to my problem, the more enjoyable the feedback is. The more neutral it becomes about me. I'm not making it about me. We're talking about the goal, the accomplishment, the result I'm trying to create. So when I believe that getting feedback from other people is the fastest path to my desired accomplishment and success, it helps me see obstacles and solutions faster than I can see them on my own.

That inspires me to seek out feedback. I want it. I crave it. I desire it. It's the easiest, fastest solution to any obstacle I'm facing. That thought makes me so open to receiving feedback. I feel eager to know what other people can see that I can't see. We all have blind spots. I want somebody to tell me hey, I can see behind you, or I can see ahead of you. Here's what's coming, or here's what's chasing you or whatever, right? Here are the

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obstacles that are in your way. Let me help you. Or here's where you're tripping. Let me lend you a hand and pick you up. Right?

In order for us to believe this, we have to believe that the person who's giving the feedback and providing the feedback is on our side, is on our team, is doing it for us. They're giving the feedback for our benefit to serve us and our goals. If we think the person who's giving us the feedback is there to manipulate us or control us or try to get gaslight us to get us to believe something different without our consent or to try and fix us because of what they perceive the problem is, we are much less likely to be receptive to any of that feedback at all.

So we have to get to work that believing feedback is for us. It helps us get to our goals faster, and that the person providing the feedback is on our side, is on our team. That's our job to believe that there's no coach or no mentor or no boss. Nobody out there who can tell you what to do if you believe that they're out to get you or they're out to fix you or they're out to control you or change or manipulate you. If you're coming in with that belief, there's no amount of feedback you're going to be open to receiving. You will not be coachable. Okay.

So, number one, you have to believe that feedback is the fastest path. Two, you've got to believe that the person giving it is on your side and doing it for the benefit of your goals and accomplishments. Number three, this one's the hard one. It's the jagged pill. We have to be willing to be wrong. This one feels so tough because we've spent an entire lifetime trying to do everything right so that we could feel and be right.

I want you to ask yourself where might this feedback I'm receiving be true? What part of this feedback triggers me and why? In what ways are my current thoughts and approach be wrong? How might they be wrong? It's really hard to say I was wrong. I'm doing this wrong. I did this wrong. But if you're open to being wrong, you're open to seeing how it might be wrong.

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How is this feedback a good thing for me? Be willing to be wrong as number three.

Finally, number four. Before you make a decision about any feedback, about implementing any given feedback that you've received, I want you always, and I invite every school leader I work with to ask themselves what their opinion is of the feedback. Now, I only invite them to do this after they've gone through every single one of the first three steps.

If you try and jump to step four before you have found ways to find more openness to the coaching, believing that the person giving the feedback is for your benefit, and that every person has something to offer you, be willing to be wrong, seek out the truth in their feedback, and find ways that it might be true, then you can ask yourself now that I've done those three things, what is my opinion of the feedback? Here's why I do this.

You have to have your own back at the end of the day. You don't want to blindly just take somebody's feedback and run with it because they told you so. That's not you being coachable. That's you being dependable. You are depending on other people's feedback to tell you what to do. That's not the Empowered Principal™ way.

You have to value your own opinion as much as you value the opinion of other people. They're going to give you feedback. You're going to seek the truth in it. Then you're going to make a decision about what aspect of the feedback is true for you. Where is it this fastest solution? How is it better? How is it easier for you? How does it make your goal more accomplishable? Right?

I don't want you ever to blindly take feedback from me as your coach or anybody else without going through the process of looking for ways to be open, believing that this is the fastest path and that the person offering it is doing it for you, commit to your success, over committing to being right,

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being willing to be wrong, looking for the value in the feedback, and asking yourself for your opinion. All right, give that a try.

Then when you've practiced that and you start to see the benefits of coaching and why coachability is so valuable for you, it's so fun. It makes life so much easier for you. You're going to be able to easily sell coachability to your teachers. Have a great week. I'll talk to you next week. Take good care. Bye.

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