

Ep #260: Your Capacity to be Extraordinary



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 260.

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 there empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday, and welcome to the podcast. I am so happy that the content that I am recording in the month of December is happening in December because I know that most of you have downtime. You've got holiday breaks. You have winter breaks. All kinds of downtime and breaks that you can utilize to listen to these podcasts multiple times.

I'm bringing it home in December because we are going to kick off 2023 with the Empowered Principal™ midyear reboot. I did this last year. It was very successful. We're doing it 2.0 style. I'm really bringing it home. I want to take this moment to invite you into the Empowered Principal™ midyear reboot this coming January.

I am hosting a four part series throughout the month of January on Tuesday afternoons, Tuesday evenings for some of you. It's designed to completely reboot how you think and feel about yourself, other people, your work, and your life. I'm combining my best content and tools into this one training. It's like I'm taking the last five years of my coaching, and I'm putting it into a ball and offering it to you in a new compelling way that I've never done before. I've made this easier and simple and more doable and more understandable.

So you want to be there. You want to be registered so that you can attend all four sessions. You have to register in order to have access to this. This is not going to be a replay for the general public. It's only for people who

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register for the webinar training series. Okay. So if you register for one, you register for all four. It's for a four part series, and I'm bringing it home. You're going to feel better. You're going to be transformed after these four sessions. Let's go let's do this.

Okay, back to today's topic. I'm going to share something very personal with you that has really challenged my mind. I'm going through a situation in my personal life that has very much invited me to question how I currently think and feel and approach things in my business and in my personal life. I want to share this experience with you as I'm processing it in real time because I know that it will help you with whatever you are dealing with personally and professionally.

We're all one human. We have our work lives and our home lives, but we're one human. The version of you that's at home brings that version of you to school, and the version of you at school brings that version of you home to your personal life. So I understand that it can feel convoluted and that people tell you to compartmentalize and leave your home stuff at home and your work stuff at work. But you're one human brain, you're one human body. It doesn't quite work that simply.

So one of the things that I'm going to cover with you in the reboot training is your capacity to be extraordinary as a human, as a school leader in your life, to build and have and experience an extraordinary life. Not just what you think is capable now or possible now, but to expand what you believe is possible, to expand what you believe you are capable of achieving, of experiencing, of impacting, of creating.

Yes, I am speaking to you. You are the person I'm talking to directly. I know that you think right now that being super organized or successful or impactful or empowered is for other people. You're looking online. You're watching other people. You're sitting in meetings. You're looking at social media, and you're seeing other people living their best life and being super

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empowered and having everything that they want and celebrating their life and being happy and feeling fulfilled and not overworking and having balance in their life.

You see other people achieving it. So you know, like, technically, it's possible. But there's a part of your brain telling you that it's for other people, and maybe it's not for you, right. You see other principals being extraordinary leaders. You're thinking to yourself that they have something you don't. They have more support or more resources or more money or more energy or more positivity. Maybe they were just wired to be happy and positive all the time, and unfortunately, you're negative.

I used to think like oh gosh. Something's wrong with me because my brain is super negative. I got coached not that long ago actually, maybe a year ago. The coach said oh, welcome to being human. My brain's negative all the time too. Everybody listening to this call, all of our brains are negative. There were probably 600 people on the call.

I was like oh, I'm normal. This is being ordinary having a negative brain. But what's extraordinary is being able to manage my brain, to allow it to be negative, and to invite it to be positive. That's being extraordinary. These are the kinds of things I'm going to be talking about in the midyear reboot.

Okay, but what's happening in our brains, and I know this because my brain does it too. Every person I coach, every client I have, every principal I work with, their brains do it too. You think you either don't have what other people have—the money, time, resources, energy capacity—or you think those people out in the world, they don't face the same obstacles as you. That they don't have the same problems you have. Like they have it easier than you in some way or that life is better for them in some way.

Trust me, I catch my brain doing this all the time. It offers this story for me as well. It's that good old compare and despair story. It shows up in all the

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chapters of our lives in different ways throughout the course of our life, okay. I have been observing my brain do this to myself, right? Judging myself, giving myself a negative opinion of what I'm capable of, thinking that other people have it easier, thinking that they're doing it better than me, thinking that they have something that I don't have.

I'm noticing why it's telling me this story. It's like wait a minute, why am I believing all this? It became apparent to me that the reason for the story in my brain titled I have it harder than others, and others are more equipped for success than me. This story is all in an effort to protect me from failure, from embarrassment, from disappointment, and to protect me from ownership.

You see, if something outside of me is the reason I can't achieve extraordinary things and to be the best version of myself, the best coach, the best CEO of my company, the best principal coach, the best life coach for school leaders, everything I dream of being, serving every leader on the planet to some capacity, to change the way we approach teaching and learning and school leadership. That's my dream.

If I believe that's not achievable, but I'm thinking that it's something outside of me that's the problem, or it's something inherent that I can't fix about myself that's the problem. If something outside of me is to blame, then I don't get to have ownership of the solution, but I also don't have ownership of the failure. It's basically abdicating the responsibility to what I perceive as the challenge in the way of achieving what I want.

So recently, something has come up into my life that I would identify and label as an adversity, a situation that I consider very distressful and unfortunate, untimely, unwanted, and a situation that is mostly out of my control. This situation has generated a lot of fear and anxiety and other negative emotions that have pulled me under right.

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Of course, I understand logically that there are thoughts about the situation creating my feelings, but I'm sharing with you in real time. Like I feel the fear. I feel the anxiety. I feel the desire to fix, the urge to get in and jump in and fix it and solve it and have it taken care of ASAP because I'm worried, and I'm afraid of what might happen.

And it's not in my control. When I feel that lack of control, it almost ignites a cycle of panic and fear. Because just like you, I'm still human. So even with all of the coaching tools and resources that I have available to me and that I've created for you and other people, my brain still function as the same as other human brains. It goes into shock and disbelief, and then it shifts over into resistance and avoidance, and then it wants to control the situation and fix it. I think I know what's best. I know how to solve this problem. I know the right approach.

I'm a doer. So when I see people like waiting to take action or processing really slowly, I just feel like hurry up. Let's do something. Let's go. Why would you sit on this problem? Let's just fix it and move on. That's how my brain works.

But when it's not my problem to solve, and it's not my body and my brain and my approach that's invited into the situation, I sway. I feel like I'm sitting on a huge pendulum right now where I'm swinging from incredible hopelessness and fear and anxiety and disbelief and discouragement. Then I sway. I'll like have a day where I'm just super down, and I feel like I can't even function. Then I sway over into like hope and possibility and encouragement and empowerment.

So I see myself on this pendulum swing, and I want you to know my brain is doing exactly what everybody else's brains doing. Right? It's in it. It can't see out of it. It's hard to coach myself through it because I'm in the moment of experiencing it. That's okay.

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But what I'm grateful for, what I'm very grateful for, is that I have developed the capacity through coaching to be able to observe my brain doing its thing in real time. I can notice how it's thinking and how my body responds with emotional energy in these intense vibrations, and how I feel the urge to react or to resist or to avoid and ignore and try and push off it, shove it down.

But I also have the capacity because I've learned this skill through coaching how to pause my brain, how to observe it separate from me, and to observe what's happening in my body and in my mind as I go through that initial visceral reaction process without giving into the urge to get out of that negative emotion as fast as possible.

So here's what I've learned as I'm going through this latest round of adversity that's presented itself in my life. Adversity is the invitation required to become an extraordinary human, to live an extraordinary life, to be an extraordinary leader.

When problems present themselves to us, our brain has two options. One, it can give in and give up and remain the same version of yourself. It can just stop and say well, I can't deal with this. Shut down, give up, give in, quit, go around, like just avoid, resist altogether. That's option number one. Option number two is to accept the challenge to expand your brain's capacity to think differently, to problem solve innovatively, to believe that you are capable of handling whatever comes your way, any situation.

None of us want to go through adversity, but it is required of us to become extraordinary. Think about it. Every single human experiences their own form of adversity, obstacles, struggles, challenges, hardships, setbacks. What our brain perceives as a problem in our lives or in our work is simply the brain's way of saying hey, I don't like this. I don't like how this feels. I don't want to do this.

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But if you think about people who we call extraordinary, they are not people who are exempt of challenge. They're not people whose lives are perfect and happy and easy all of the time. Extraordinary people are people who embrace challenges, who don't try to avoid obstacles, or they don't sit up worrying at night about how to extract any problems from their life so that everything can feel good all the time and be happy all the time and be easy all of the time.

Extraordinary people see adversity as the path to becoming the kind of person who learns how to handle anything. Extraordinary people are people who didn't give up or give in when faced with an adversity in their lives.

Now, I can imagine what your brain might be offering you right now because my brain says it too. I get it. What your brain might be thinking right now is I hear you. What I hear you saying is I need to keep going, I need to keep pushing, I need to keep working, but I'm tired. When is enough enough? When do I get to the place where I can relax, where I don't have to be extraordinary? When I can just enjoy myself, where I can relax, where I can have fun, where I can get some rest.

The other thing that might be offering is thinking about your current situation. Maybe you're thinking about school leadership, and you're thinking am I in the right position? Maybe to be extraordinary, I need to get on a different seat on the bus. Maybe it's not possible to be extraordinary where I'm at right now. Maybe my marriage, maybe I need a different person to be married to or to be in partnership with to be extraordinary. Maybe I need to change something outside of me in order to become extraordinary.

Now, two things here. Number one, there is a misconception happening when your brain equates resilience and perseverance and being extraordinary with perfectionism, insufficiency, and hustle, okay. Being

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extraordinary doesn't mean being perfect and hustling around the clock and feeling inadequate and using that inadequacy as a reason to push yourself to do more and be better to try and achieve adequacy, where you feel like you're enough. Sufficient. I feel adequate, sufficient, competent, capable.

We use emotions against ourselves to try and like beat ourselves into submission to get more done and to feel better and to do more. That's not what extraordinary means. It's the opposite.

Being extraordinary is about allowing your imperfections, generating resilience through rest and recovery, building up your perseverance in small and manageable doses, and giving ourselves time and space to grow into the person who's expanded their capacity to achieve the impossible, to trust ourselves, to give ourselves time, to be patient with our goals, to be patient with ourselves as humans, to be patient with our mistakes, to be patient with the path.

When we believe that being extraordinary means overworking, over exerting, and over scheduling ourselves into the ground, we're going to feel extremely fatigued, mentally, emotionally, and physically. We're going to feel anything but extraordinary. You can accomplish a lot. You can check off things on your to do list. That does not make you an extraordinary human.

Creating an extraordinary life and being extraordinary comes from belief, from the belief that you have all the time you need for all of the priorities. That you don't have to get everything done right now that your brain tells you must be done right now, or that other people tell you must be done right now. That presence, true, full presence, and paying attention to the one priority that's right in front of you in that moment, including rest and recovery, is how you create extraordinary lives and become extraordinary leaders.

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When you believe that there's time to be extraordinary and rest along the way, you won't have to think the thought when will I finally get rest? When is it going to be about me? When can I ever slow down? When is enough enough?

You won't think those thoughts anymore because you will embed in the journey the rest and recovery that you need to stay on the path to being extraordinary. You just stop telling yourself that you don't have time to deal with this, and that you need to get this problem solved ASAP, or you need to work on all of your areas. You need to be perfect. You need to fix this about yourself and that about yourself and this about your leadership and that about your school.

When you've included rest and recovery in your path to it being extraordinary, you don't need to cross the finish line before you can rest. Okay, that's number one. There's a misconception. Perfectionism and overworking does not equal extraordinary leadership. It's the opposite.

Number two, thinking that changing your situation, expecting that change to help you feel better, does not work. Let me explain why. If you were not a school leader right now, I promise you if you were in another position, whether it's in education or elsewhere, you would be experiencing other forms of adversity. I have experienced this time and time again in my own life.

As a teacher, I thought becoming an instructional coach was going to be the best thing ever. It was going to be more fun. It was going to be easier. It was going to be better. I was going to have more status, kind of positional authority. Wrong.

It was hard. It was a different kind of hard. I had to learn how to build trust with my colleagues and learn how to coach adults and adult brains. It was really hard. I was met with rejection and judgment and criticism and people

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gossiping about me. There were people who enjoyed my coaching people who didn't. It was a whole nother level of adversity.

So then when I went from being an instructional coach, to being a principal, before I got into the principalship and I was applying and daydreaming about it, I was thinking oh, I'm going to have so much more freedom in my schedule. I'm not going to be tied to a classroom. I'm going to be so much more impactful. I'm going to have so much more influence and impact. I'm going to be able to create bigger results and faster results because I'm going to be in the position of school leader. Wrong.

Right? I never felt more restricted and less impactful as an educator than when I was a principal, at least not until I found out about coaching. I applied the coaching to be able to find ways to feel less restricted and more impactful. But I thought that the position itself was going to give me the feeling of freedom and flexibility and impact.

But what I found is that it's hard to be a school leader. That it's a struggle. That there's so many more moving parts I had never considered. There's so many people you're managing. There's so many people's emotions you're dealing with. Everybody has a different belief and different priorities and different expectations and different desires and different wants and different standards that you're struggling and juggling all of that.

It was really hard, as you all know, because you're in school leadership. If you are an aspiring school leader, I promise you, where you're at in this moment is not worse than where you're going to be. School Leadership isn't better, but it's not worse. It's 50/50 no matter what position you're in. I don't care if it's in education or outside. There is never a time when you will avoid or be exempt from adversity.

Now, when I was a school leader, there was kind of like before coaching and after coaching. When I think about before, I was just constantly in a

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state of overwhelm, exhaustion, fatigue, discouragement because I didn't know how to create the impact I wanted and how to expand my capacity to influence and inspire people and to create an aligned vision.

Even with coaching, once I hired a life coach and I got certified as a coach, even then while I was still in the position, which was two years before I decided to leave in order to start this company. I still struggled. There were times where I felt that I was on the pendulum. Days I felt super successful, days that I felt completely ineffective, days that I enjoyed, days that I did not enjoy.

So it doesn't matter where you're at along the journey. There is going to be that sway. I just want to tell you upfront and personal that this pendulum swing is the journey. It is the process. If you feel like you're crazy because one day you feel this way and then another day you feel totally opposite, you're right on track. Okay.

Being an entrepreneur, being a coach for school leaders, it's been more challenging than I ever thought. It's the hardest thing I've ever done. But I thought school leadership was hard. Now, I think this is the hardest because this is the challenge I'm facing. This is the adversity I'm facing. But I bring it on. I want to be here because I know the reward and the benefit. I know the value of coaching. I know it's short term, and it's long term benefits. I see how it's helping other people. I know that each and every one of you want and need this level of support.

Look, there's a bazillion million group coaching masterminding groups, conferences that you can attend, and they're all amazing. But this one on one support is what I believe the missing link for school leaders. Receiving one on one support, at least for me, was a game changer. Because I could be honest about how I really felt, what I really thought. I could talk about my boss. I could talk about my teachers. I could talk about students. I could

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talk about parents. I could get it all out and get coached on the real thoughts that were coming up.

Because when I was at school, I had to like mask those thoughts. Kind of fake it until you make it where you're like oh I don't think anything negative about my boss or about my school or about my teachers or about students or staff. Heaven forbid. What would people think if I had a human emotion and thoughts about other people I'm working with right? Having a one on one coach, it lets you rip the band aid off and tell the truth. Be honest with yourself and get to the point, which is how I was able to coach myself and stay in the position and really truly learn to enjoy it. Okay.

Now, I am going to say this because it's my honest experience. I was a principal for six years before I got promoted up into a district level position. I lasted in that district level position one year, primarily because my mother was terminally ill, and the job just didn't give me the flexibility to come and go as I wanted to be with her and care for her.

But the other compelling reason to leave was that I knew how to create happiness in my life whether I was in education, no matter what seat on the bus I was in in education, I knew how to manage my thoughts and emotions. I will say this. I am a proponent of changing your situation after you've coached yourself on ways to be happy.

Now look, I could have stayed in school leadership for life. I could have, but I still desired to become a coach, to create a service that no one else has created so that you could get the level of support from somebody who's been in your shoes, who knows the job, who's an advocate for you. Not for your district, but for you.

I still desired that. It was my calling. I changed my circumstances. I quit my job, and I started this business. You can change your situation if you want to be extraordinary. But if you change it because you hate it so much and

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you just want out, and you think that running away is going to solve the problem. Look, if I had done that, which I could have. I could have left leadership years before.

If I had done it when I was in the middle of hating it so much, I would have felt temporary relief, but I wouldn't have truly understood that it was my thoughts about the job creating the pain. I would not have seen that. It was not the job itself. It was my thoughts about the job creating my pain. It didn't mean that the job wasn't difficult or challenging or adverse at times, but my thoughts about it created my emotions.

I stayed in the position long enough to see the truth of that and to play with it, to try on new thoughts. What if I wasn't so concerned about this? What if I let this go? What if I started going home before five o'clock? What if I stopped working on weekends? What would that look like? How would it feel? What if I whatever, right? I wouldn't have been able to see that I was adding suffering to the hard parts of the job by wishing that I didn't have to deal with the people or the problem.

I spent a lot of time and energy attempting to control the circumstance ahead of time so that I wouldn't have to ever deal with an uncomfortable situation. You know what I'm talking about? Where you're so focused on anticipating what someone might think or what someone might feel or what someone might say or do, and you try to manipulate that situation ahead of time so they don't have a negative reaction or they aren't unhappy. You're basically trying to make everybody happy so that you don't have to deal with them being unhappy. You know what I'm talking about?

Once I could see how I was doing this in the job, I was able to transfer that ownership back to what is in my control? What do I have ownership of, and how can I take responsibility for my thoughts and my emotions and the way that I show up? How can I be the best version of myself even when other

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people don't like me? How can I be extraordinary even when people hate me? Even when people think I'm terrible at my job?

How can I decide that I'm extraordinary? I'm an extraordinary leader. I'm a thought leader. How can I believe these things about myself and show up as that version of myself regardless of what anybody else, including my superintendent, thought about me? Once I was able to do that, then I was able to quit the job and transfer that skill set and that knowledge into building this business, this coaching business.

Look, I admit there are times when changing, your circumstance is far easier than coaching your brain on how to be happy. I get that. I get that it's not a problem to change your circumstance if, listen to this caveat, if you realize that the reason the new circumstance feels better.

So let's say you're really unhappy in your current job, and you leave it because you want to feel better. You want to be happier. You have to recognize that if you do get a new job, and you do feel happier, it's only because you have different thoughts about that job than you had about your former job. It's not the job. It's the thoughts that have changed, okay?

If you're aspiring to be a leader, it's the thoughts about being a school leader and get landing that job. If you want out of school leadership, it's the thoughts about what you think is going to happen on the other side, and how you'll feel okay.

So in my current situation, I'm facing something that is mostly out of my control. It involves a very precious loved one in my life. This person in my life approaches situations very differently than I do. The process that we're going through right now is taking much longer, and it's feels very slow and laborious to me than my brain wants it to be. The emotions that I'm having to process are feelings I do not want to feel. The actions that I'm taking are

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requiring me to spend more time in my personal life than I normally do. My brain is freaking out about this.

I want to focus on work because that's my happy place. I love it. I get really resentful when I feel like personal issues are being a burden on my business or are taking time away from my productivity. That is how I know when I'm feeling this way, and I'm feeling that resistance and I'm feeling resentful.

That emotion is a signal to me. It's a little flag that's telling me that this adversity that I'm dealing with in my life is an opportunity. It's inviting me in to create more awareness about my thoughts and my approach, and to sit with the discomfort of going slower and letting things take the time they need to take.

It's inviting me to believe that I have the capacity to be extraordinary. Even when hard things are happening, even when emotional, intense situations are occurring. It's inviting me to run my company, and take the time I need to be fully present and patient and loving and compassionate to my loved ones in my personal life. The thoughts before this situation presented itself were things like my business and my clients are my top priority right now.

So we have one child, he's 23 going on 24. He's in his own little adult life. I don't have to worry about him on a daily basis, on a 24 hour seven basis. I'm not raising him. He doesn't live with us. So it's just my husband and I right now. Our dog has gone over the rainbow into doggy heaven. So I don't have a pet to care for. I simply have my husband and I.

It's very easy to allow myself the pleasure of building my business and working with clients and coaching all day and creating content and doing webinars and posting in our Facebook group and being on social media. Like I get the pleasure of doing all of that fun stuff. I truly believe there's just so much suffering in school leadership, and that I have the capacity to be

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extraordinary and to help all of you, each and every one of you. I want to be extraordinary in this way. I want to be 100% committed to helping every single school leader out there who wants help.

But now I see that, that thinking had a little bit of all or none happening, right? It was either I'm 100% committed, or I'm not committed at all. If I'm taking time out personally then I'm not fully committed to my clients in the business. This adversity in my life is showing me. It's teaching me. It's inviting me to see how I can be extraordinary in my capacity to be 100% committed to my business and to all of you and 100% committed to my life, my loved ones, my personal time, myself. To love myself and be 100% committed to every priority in my life.

There was a part of me that couldn't imagine life where I wasn't working so hard to coach and create content and help more and more school leaders become aware of life coaching and leadership coaching. I just was so consumed by it for the last three years that I couldn't imagine a world where my clients were getting everything they needed. My audience was growing and building, and the coaching industry was allowing you all to get the results you want, and that I could step away from that work and be present in my personal life without it being a problem at all.

So what I'm seeing right now is that this adversity I'm dealing with is inviting me to believe that I am capable of holding space for multiple things at once in my life. That thought hit me when I woke up this morning. I wrote this podcast this morning. I'm recording it now. It's 4:30 in the afternoon. I had the thought when I woke up oh, this adversity is inviting me to believe in myself. That I am capable of being extraordinary for holding space for multiple things to go on in my life all at once, and that I can handle it.

I am the person who believes I'm capable of having space in my life for multiple things. The person who believes that they are capable of having space in their life for multiple things and the patience and the grace to

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handle multiple things at once is the person who is truly extraordinary. I want you to let that sink in this week.

So in the Empowered Principal™ midyear reboot, I'm going to share in more detail how this looks without you overworking and over exerting yourself. So be sure to sign up for the midyear reboot. It's going to change lives. The link is in the show notes. Until then, I want you to think about how this is true, how you are capable of holding space for multiple things at once in your life in order to be extraordinary professionally and personally.

Think of past adversities you've had in your life and see the truth of how they have invited you to uplevel your self-belief in that you can truly handle anything that comes your way, which makes you extraordinary. I love you. I can't wait to work with you in the midyear reboot. I will see you all there. I'm going to talk with you all next week. Take good care. Have a happy holiday break. Happy lovely winter break. I'll talk to you next week. Take good care.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal™ Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit angelakellycoaching.com where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.