

Ep #268: Compounding Comebacks



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 268.

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. Happy Tuesday. I just want to share with you. I had been hoping to be sharing a client interview with you this week. But between my schedule and my client's schedule, we just weren't able to get it recorded in time for this week's episode. We are going to get that interview scheduled and recorded and get it out to you as soon as possible, and you are going to love it.

This client has had an incredible journey in her first few months of school leadership. Her story is going to inspire you as a school leader. It's going to encourage you and invite you to come into the coaching world and have a coach as a school leader so that you can feel better, have more fun, solve problems faster, really create results for yourself that blow your own mind and the mind of your superintendent and all of the people around you.

For those of you who are veterans, I just want to say her story will help you fall back in love with school leadership. She is just a peach. I love her so much. I can't wait to share her story.

But for now, we're going to talk about something a little heavier because it's come up, and I want to share it with you, as I always do. When something comes up for clients or myself, I share in real time. Okay. The title of this episode is called Compounding Comebacks, and I'm going to explain what this concept means for me and for my school leaders out there. Okay.

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So today, I'm talking to all school leaders, new, veteran, doesn't matter. Anybody who's ever felt the crushing agony of a past mistake or a recent failure. As humans on the planet, we all experience making mistakes and failing and having to own the decisions or actions that we took that somehow led us to a very undesired outcome, whether that was anticipated or not. Normally, it's not. You don't intend to create agony and pain for yourself or for others.

But as school leaders, making these mistakes, having failures, experiencing problems, it is unavoidable. It's inevitable. At some point, you will have this experience. Instead of not going into school leadership because you're afraid of the experience, or playing small and trying to play it super safe in the attempt to avoid this experience, I want you to consider embracing it.

Because there's no human on the planet that doesn't go through an experience such as a crushing failure or something you said that you wish you hadn't, or you sent off an email when you were upset. Or a parent's coming at you sideways. Like think about—There's so many things right? Maybe you didn't follow a district policy, and you got in trouble. I put that in quotes, but you got in trouble by your superintendent or other district officials.

Or maybe you weren't in compliance with the state, and you got a slap on the wrist. Or maybe you didn't do something in alignment with the teacher contract, and the Teacher Union came after you. Or somebody, maybe a staff member, took you to what they call it when you know you have to go through mediation or something like that, right?

Just that there are innocent, unknown mistakes that sometimes bad things come out of it you didn't realize. Sometimes they're bigger things that create real big issues. But sometimes a client will reach out and say, "Hey, I'm having this horrible experience." During our session, we'll talk it through.

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They're just in agony over something that went wrong, something that they're being held accountable for, especially agonizing when they feel like they're being held accountable to something that really wasn't their fault. That's one of the most painful coaching topics we coach on.

I want to start off by saying that we all go through this somehow, somehow every single one of us, okay. You know the feeling I'm talking about. That heavy, sick feeling that has resulted from the anguish of defeat or a significant failure, okay? Let's remind ourselves, they are going to happen. Don't live life trying to tiptoe around them. They happen to every single human, including the people involved.

So if you're thinking about a situation that you're dealing with or that you've dealt with in your past that brings up that heaviness and that fire and that sickness in your belly, and you just feel weighed down by it, every single person that you're working with right now has also been through a similar experience. Your superintendent has been there, the teachers on your staff have been there. That parent, the one who's judging you and coming at you sideways and screaming at you. Yep, they've had it too.

So every person who you believe is upset with you or unhappy about an outcome that was created or you had to apologize or make something right that you didn't realize you had done wrong. Those people that you're interacting with during that situation, they have been on the other side of the table. Keep that in mind. So when someone's judging you and criticizing you and you're taking heat, it doesn't make you feel better to know that they've been through it, but it is the human experience.

Especially in school leadership, because we are so public, and we do have a lot of decisions to make and actions to take and lots of people we're working with. There will be a point where you hit the wall and something big happens, and you feel a major setback, okay?

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Just know that you're not alone, even when it feels like it. You're not alone in the experience, and you can remind yourself that these feelings are normal, and that everyone has them. Look, everyone can relate to the experience because they've had a similar experience. So give yourself permission to take the time you need for as long as it takes. Maybe you have to take a day off, or maybe you have to take a week off. Whatever it takes.

Take some time to feel and process those emotions. Don't waste time trying to avoid it, or ignore it, or pretend it didn't happen, or persevere on it and beat yourself up. Don't try to circumvent it and fake it that you're over it, and it's not a problem anymore. Everybody has a different way of trying to avoid or ignore or unprocess emotion, not have to process it.

But when you try to avoid feeling a certain emotion, especially these really heavy yucky ones, the heaviness actually stays around longer. The longer it stays, it sucks you into a deeper and deeper overwhelm cycle. So I invite you to embrace it and face it head on.

Then once you've done that, you have some space in your mind and in your heart. Only then is it time to consider what I'm going to share with you now. Because you can't consider this when you're in it. You want to consider this when you're in it because you want to skip over the part where it sucks and it hurts and it's painful and you cry and you feel terrible. You want to avoid that. But I'm going to say lean into that first, let yourself go through that process, and then consider this.

For every adversity you face is an adversity you overcome. You literally overcome that obstacle, that challenge, that problem, that failure that you have been facing. For every adversity that you have to deal with in your life, you also overcome that adversity. You can never ever see it when you're in it.

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Trust me. I know it. I'm going through it. I'm starting to just feel like I'm coming out on the other side, but when you're in it, you cannot see it. It feels too heavy. It's like the blinds have closed. It's like the curtain on the stage has just closed, and you've shut down, and it's just darkness. You can't see. You're weighed down in these feelings and in these emotions and your thoughts. You're consumed by it.

You cannot see it when you're in it, but when you look back to your past, everything that felt so heavy and unsolvable at the time, it was temporary and you made it. You not only overcame the adversity, you came back stronger. Think about this. For every awful, hard, and painful experience you've ever had, you've learned from it every single time. You learned what you do differently. What you'd do the same if you had to do it over again. You also learned how you have personally changed from the experience.

For every failure, you have experienced, you've also experienced a win. You learned what you needed to learn to make a more informed and aligned decision in the future. You gain skills for your future self to apply to the next adversity. You evolved your ability to handle new adversities in your future. So what you're going through right now, it might suck. It might hurt.

But you can tell yourself, I'm willing to go through this now to evolve my future self, to give her the skills and the tools and the knowledge and the information and the wisdom that she needs to glide through the next adversity, to stack and compound your comebacks. That's why this is called – You literally are compounding your ability to come back from an adversity every time you go through one. For every loss, there's a win. You come back wiser, smarter, stronger, happier, healthier.

You come back more evolved, more certain, more confident, more empowered. Your self-concept of who you are and what you're capable of achieving and experiencing and becoming. You evolve yourself, your

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self-concept of who you are and where you're headed and how you're going to get there. You have concrete evidence.

Every time you go through a loss and a failure in a really bad situation, that is concrete evidence to your brain to prove to yourself that you can weather any storm. That you can handle anything that comes your way. You create safety and security by knowing that you went through something really painful, emotionally painful, mentally taxing, physically painful. You can feel your emotions to that painful level, right?

But you acknowledge those thoughts, and you acknowledge the feelings. You took ownership, and you took the actions necessary to make things feel right again. You got back into alignment. Now you know, from that experience, that you can come back from whatever next storm is awaiting you.

I call this form of empowerment compounding comebacks. School leadership is a series of setbacks and failures and pain points, but it's also a set of successes and wins and celebrations. Every time you go through a setback, you've added and compounded another layer of ability to come back from it.

If you continue to show up as a school leader, even when it's hard, you show up. Even when you have to take breaks and mental health days and rest and recovery days. One of two things is happening. You're either winning, which equals success and celebration and all of the things that come with that, or you're learning. But the beautiful thing about learning is that that equates to freedom, safety, confidence, security, assuredness.

When you learn that you are capable of weathering a storm, and that you are just putting and compounding tools in your tool belt for adversity, for failures, for challenges, all the setbacks, you're actually compounding your capacity to be more successful in the future, to come back stronger, to

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come out of adversity. You're not just in it for the lifetime experience of your school leadership journey. It's a moment in time. It's a chapter. It grows you to come out and come back stronger.

Massive growth, massive evolution, it comes from learning. Hey, guys, we're in the business of teaching and learning. We're in this for the lifetime experience, for the long haul. You compound your overwhelm cycles into learning cycles so that you can create the next success cycle.

So the next round of adversity is the start of your next round of success. When you can see it from this angle, you can celebrate those stack of comebacks. You can think thoughts like I handled this. I made it through that. I learned how to do X. I know what to do next time. I realize this about myself from that last time I failed. Your losses become your wins.

So what to do with all of these compounded comebacks that you've acquired over the years? You leverage them. Ask yourself what were my hardest moments, and why? What was I thinking and feeling before it happened, during, going through it, and after? How did I overcome this?

What emotions did I have to learn how to process? What thoughts did I have to question and adjust or change completely or drop altogether? How can I apply this learning to moving forward? How did this make me stronger? What emotions am I willing to experience in the future to create my next win?

That is how you know you're taking those losses and leveraging them into skills and knowledge and information and belief systems. You're leveraging them to win. To be a bigger, stronger, wiser version of yourself. That is what adversity is about. I want you to compound as many comebacks as possible. The only way that you will not come out of an overwhelming cycle or a painful failure is if you quit, if you throw your hands up.

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But even then, if you think about it, if you said that's it. I've had it. Enough school leadership. I'm out. You threw your hands up, you still have all those compounded comebacks to take with you to the next chapter of your life. So even then, you're still going to face adversities, and you're still going to bring those compounded comebacks with you.

I don't invite you to quit. I invite you to stay for the ride because it's a lot more fun. You are contributing to the value of the human experience. That is what education is. We're contributing and adding value to the human experience for these children, for the staff members you lead, to contribute because you care, because you love fellow humans on the planet, and you want them to learn how to overcome their own failures, and to create their own compound of comebacks.

I love you guys. If you are experiencing an extreme situation right now where you're facing adversity and you're in the thick of it, know this. We love you. We see you. We care about you. We are here for you. Please reach out for counseling, therapy, coaching, support, whatever level you need to help you overcome and create a stack of comebacks. You've got this. You can handle this. I believe in you. I love you and I care about you. Have an amazing week. I'll talk to you guys next week. Take good care. Bye.

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