

Ep #286: When to Quit



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 286.

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 principals. Happy Tuesday. Happy June. Happy summer. Welcome to the podcast. For those of you who are new, I am thrilled that you're here. There are so many new principals and veteran principals pouring into *The Empowered Principal®* world in our community. I'm so grateful for each and every one of you.

I just want to share the love. I'm feeling it and I want to say it. I love you all so very much, whether we've met or we have yet to meet. I invite you into my world. It is amazing. I work with the smartest and the savviest and the best of the best of principals. I love it, and I love you all.

Now today I'm going to talk about a heavy topic, but it has been coming up in a couple of situations with my clients. So I'll be discreet and confidential, but I have to discuss this with you in case any of you are also in a situation. I want you to recognize the signs and the symptoms to be able to keep yourself from harm's way.

So as part of my coaching philosophy, I very much believe in having a deep commitment to your dreams and goals. When someone signs with me to work with me as their coach, I take that to my soul. I love you. I love your dreams and goals. I advocate for you. I am the advocate of your dreams, of your biggest desires, your most wanted accomplishments, everything you want to experience in school leadership and in your life because I'm a life and leadership coach. I go to bat for you. I work for you. I am in your corner rooting for you all the way.

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Sometimes I have to coach your brain because your brain, your thoughts, are in the way of those goals and dreams. It's creating obstacles for you, and we talk about that. But I teach my clients that they cannot fail at a dream. They can't fail at a goal or an experience they want to have. They cannot fail if they don't give up. You'll hear me say that over and over throughout this podcast.

What I help my clients do is I help them to build resilience and problem solving strength in their brain. It's like a muscle. We come up with creative solutions and ideas. We dust ourselves off when we get knocked down, and we give our wounds a kiss and then we get back up and we keep going. I support them through that journey and all of the challenges that come with school leadership.

Because my goal is to help each and every one of you make peace with the realities of the job and not spend your time and energy and focus arguing against the reality of the job. That's a part of what coaching is about.

Now recently, I have been coaching a couple of my clients through some exceptionally difficult circumstances and giving them a private, safe, confidential space for them to tell their truth. The honest to goodness truth of their experience of what is happening with their particular situations. I'm holding space for them to process very, very painful emotions associated with these situations.

As I've been coaching them, I've noticed within the client an internal conflict that makes that situation even more painful. So I decided to record this podcast on when you should quit. When do you quit? When to quit? I've been thinking about this because I'm not a quitter.

I am one of the most committed, dedicated, convicted persons I know when it comes to my dreams. I fail a lot. I miss the mark of my goals all the time. I

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make really big goals, and I work like hell to get those goals accomplished and achieved. Almost always I fail, especially the first time. Sometimes the second and third time. There's goals that I have right now that I'm missing the mark, and that I'm still figuring out. So I'm a big advocate of not quitting on your deepest desires and dreams.

However, in my coaching experience over the last few months, it's really come to my attention that there are times when clients need to consider the option of quitting but are afraid to because of what they're making it mean. So I'm going to explore and talk about that today. Okay.

Now, I want to highlight this podcast about when to quit is coming from a life and leadership coaching perspective. I am not a certified therapist or a trauma specialist. I'm not a psychologist. I'm not a doctor. The content I'm going to share with you today is coming from my own experience personally and my experience in coaching clients with the life coaching tools that I have been certified in and that I implement and the ones I've created on my own. There is the caveat here, okay.

So when you're in school leadership, you might be thinking about quitting. Quitting the job altogether, like never being a school leader again, going back into the classroom, perhaps not being at this particular district anymore, or not this particular school. Maybe you're thinking of ending a relationship with a colleague or a boss or maybe somebody in your personal life.

Or maybe you're thinking about ending a goal, quitting on a goal or a dream or a project. I'm going to talk about these. The two that seemed like they can go together is quitting the job or quitting a relationship, like ending a relationship. I want you to be able to listen to this content and apply it to whatever experience you're having in your life. I do think it's applicable in relationships and when it comes to your career.

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Because when you think about your career, it is a relationship that you have with the position you're in, with the school that you lead, with the boss that you have, with the district in which you're employed. So it is a form of relationship.

So when to quit. When should we contemplate quitting? There are three circumstances that might invite you to consider either quitting altogether or moving out of a particular situation into a different situation. Number one, when harm is involved. Whether that harm is physical, emotional, mental, psychological, sexual, any kind of harm.

This includes people who are threatening you verbally, harassing you, whether it's online or in person, gaslighting you. Any ism that could come up sexism, you name it, if racism, all of the isms. If there's any kind of harm being done based on bias or unfair treatment, and harm is being done to you mentally, emotionally, physically, psychologically, any of that. You want to consider quitting.

Being in that position, if it's causing you harm and you are chronically feeling emotionally unsafe, physically unsafe, mentally unsafe, professionally unsafe, psychologically unsafe. The idea, the option of quitting just thinking about that as a choice, as an option for you, considering what that would look like, that path, it's a way of protecting yourself.

Some of the people that I've worked with were too afraid to even think about that option without the safety of talking it through with me because it can be incredibly scary to walk down that path just in your mind. You're not actually doing, taking the action. You're not doing the thing. It feels very scary just at the thought of it. So when you're in a situation that is causing harm to you or to others, you want to invite yourself just to consider the option. What would it look like to get out of this situation if it's causing harm?

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Now your brain is going to say that is very scary, and it's going to feel trapped. It feels scary to stay, and it feels scary to go. I want to offer something. When you're in harm's way, it is not quitting. It is a form of self-protection. You are protecting yourself from harm. That's different. That is not quitting.

It's also I might add, if you're in a situation where there are people who are creating emotional unsafety or mental unsafety or psychological unsafety-ness, if that's a word, when it's a cultural situation. If it's a climate culture kind of thing at your school or your district or your corporation, whatever you're working in, you're being a role model to other adults, to your teachers, to your staff members, for them to also consider the question is this a safe place for me? Is this work environment creating harm in my life, in some capacity?

When you stand up and say this is not acceptable, this is not okay, you're not only protecting yourself and your family because I'm sure that energy comes home with you and impacts your friends and family in your personal life. But you're also modeling what it looks like to have the courage to consider the option number one, and then two, to actually do the thing that's going to create safety for you.

When you do it, somebody has to go first. Somebody has to lead that charge. Other people might not leave. They might be feeling safe. They might be feeling comfortable. Not everybody's going to mass exit, but there will be other people. If you feel this way, I promise you somebody else out there feels it too.

Your willingness to go first and to set boundaries and have a standard of how you're going to be treated, and that you're not going to allow harm upon yourself or others. You're not going to stand by that. When you go and leave that situation, other people will be triggered in their mind. Like

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oh, she's leaving. Maybe I should consider it too. Is this the place for me? They can decide that for themselves.

I want to say something, you're not quitting. You're not leaving people behind. It's not like you're jumping ship, a burning cruise ship, and you're leaving people behind. You're simply modeling for them to create awareness for them, what they need to do for themselves as adults. But for you, you have to look out for you. If you are in harm's way, this is going to give you the opportunity to get back into safety.

Now, it might require you to unravel mentally and emotionally what has happened to you. You might not be able to do that while you're in it. You might have to do that when you're out of it. So please, get the level of support that you need. Whether that's coaching or some type of mentor that you trust, a therapist, a psychologist, talk to your medical doctor.

Talk to whomever you feel most comfortable and safe with to be able to say the truth and be honest about how you're feeling and why you're feeling it and what you feel you need to get back into a situation that feels safe and certain for you. Okay?

So from a coaching perspective, the brain might offer you thoughts that feel in conflict. So remember when I said that I could see internal conflict happening with my clients. What was happening in their brain, like my coaching for them, was noticing that they had an intense desire to stay, and they had an intense desire to leave. We had to reconcile those two. What were the thoughts behind the urge to stay? What are the thoughts behind the urge to leave?

Let's just put them down onto paper and look at both of them. Ask ourselves what is our opinion of these thoughts, of these reasons? Do these reasons that my brain is offering, do they align to my values? Which one feels like the priority? We have to kind of deconstruct what are we

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feeling? Why are we feeling it? What are your thoughts about those thoughts? What is your opinion of these reasons? Do you love the reason, yes or no? Which one is more important? Let's prioritize these. Okay?

So it's very scary to want to stay because of how harmful it is. It's also feel scary to leave. We acknowledge that. Because even though you might see that there's very little reason to stay, you still might have feelings of guiltiness or fear, or you might just be intimidated to leave. You might be so afraid that your brain will convince you. It looks for the smallest of reasons as to why you should continue on in that job.

So, for example, if you're telling yourself I know things are really bad, but I feel so guilty if I left my teachers, or I really love my school community. I love this group of kids. I have to be here for them. If your brain is offering those thoughts, I want you to notice why you're choosing to stay for those people, especially when they aren't necessarily having the same experience as you. You're projecting your experience onto them.

Not every teacher, staff member, family or student is having the exact same experience as you. So you've got to look out for you. You have to trust that you're adults and that the adults caring for those students, that they are resourceful enough to make their own determination about what is appropriate and what isn't appropriate for them.

You're not leaving them behind. You're not setting them off to be abused in some way. You're not leaving them in harm's way. Don't let that be the reason that you stay in harm's way yourself. You can't help them if you're not taking care of yourself. Okay.

So here's another opportunity to consider quitting and moving on. When continuing on the path that you're currently on is creating a net negative result. So it might not be the case of where it's extremely harmful or extremely scary. It might not be that bad, might not be that extreme.

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I promise you, when you're in it and it's that bad, it's hard for you to see it because you're in it. So you do want to have an outside perspective, whether that's a coach, a mentor, some type of medical person or therapist to help you make sure that you're grounded in your perspective, and that you're seeing all the angles. Because when you're in it, it's hard to see all those angles.

But warning sign number two, it's not necessarily creating harm, but continuing down the path that you're currently on is creating a net negative result. So it's that mix of where it's good enough to stay and to tempt you to stay, but if you took a step back, and you looked at the full picture, perhaps the long term impact of your decision to stay, the result that it's creating is a net negative. Meaning less positive than good is happening here. Okay.

When you're in this kind of a situation, it requires awareness and data. You have to ground yourself with facts. You want to be grounded in the math and in the facts and the data, not the emotional drama of it all. Okay? Because our brains without some form of data will simply just come to the conclusions it wants to come to. This is called confirmation bias. It filters out the information that doesn't support what the brain wants to believe is true.

All of our brains do this, right? If we want to believe something is true, we look for all the reasons why it's true. The brain just subconsciously filters out any of the information that would prove what we want to believe true wrong. It happens in politics, right? It happens anytime you have an opinion or a belief system that differs from somebody else's opinion or belief system. Your brain is looking for the reasons why your belief system is more accurate or more correct or more truthful, and so is the other person, okay?

So just know that your brain is going to do that. It's wired to do that. It's normal. But when you think about a situation you're in, if you're working

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somewhere and it's good but you notice that you're feeling negative more than you're feeling positive, or you're feeling defeated more than you're feeling successful, and the net result of your experience is not what you're looking for.

This is where it can feel very gray. Some days you have good days and some days you have bad days, and you're kind of swinging on this pendulum, but you never feel satisfied. You never feel a satisfaction of this is who I am. This is what I'm meant to be. This is the school I should be serving. There's no conviction. It's kind of a depending on how the wind blows that day, right?

Now, there are times when we keep doing things as human beings. Because we love routine and we love consistency. We like to know what to expect. We keep doing the same thing, the same job over and over and over expecting different results.

Have y'all heard of this before? Yes, some would call it insanity. That is what we do to ourselves when we get stuck in that routine and that zone of comfort, where we are just going through the motions, some good, some bad, but feeling kind of flatline. You want to let that flatline feeling be a warning signal to you to say hey, I just want to take stock here. Let me look at what's working, what's not, and if I want to stay in this situation or not. There is not a problem with quitting if you're getting a net negative result, and you want to switch things up, okay?

But use data. Make the decision out of math, not out of emotion. The reason I highlight this is because when you're having a great day, it feels very all or none. When things are good, they're really, really good. When things are bad, they're all terrible and awful. You want to get out of there as soon as possible. Just notice if you're finding yourself going from really highs to really lows, being all in, being all out.

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Ground yourself with data. What actually am I accomplishing? What do I feel good about? What don't I feel good about? Think about all the aspects of your job, and is it a net positive for you? Because there's no perfect job. You are going to have rough days, tough days, bad days, really awful days, but do you feel that the good and the positive is at least 50% if not weighing out more than the negative. So keep that in mind, okay.

Number three, this is the third reason why it's okay to quit and you want to give yourself permission to quit. Simply because you have redecided. It is 100% permissible to decide to stop something because you want to stop it. It's no longer a priority, and it's no longer a goal.

So I'm going to give you a caveat on this one because the first one causing harm, we got to get you out. Sometimes you can't help yourself out because you can't see it, and you need the support to help you get out. So then you can get out and then you can process the pain and trauma you've been through with a specialist or a coach. Flag number two is when things are not terrible, but the end result is net negative versus net positive.

But number three, you might just be reprioritizing yourself, redeciding. You might be reinventing yourself and wiping the slate clean and saying hey, you know what? I'm going to read decide some things here. I'm going to reprioritize my values or my goals. That's 100% acceptable. You have permission to do that.

But here's the caveat, I'm going to say. When you are contemplating ending, or stopping, or quitting something, especially a goal, a dream, desire, you have to first explore why you are contemplating that decision. So you go back and you start.

What are the goals I had? What are the values I had? What do I value most, and why? What goals do I want to achieve, and why? What goals do I want for my future? Why am I quitting on myself? Why am I quitting on

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this job? Why am I quitting this dream or goal? Is it simply because I don't think I can have it, because it's hard, because it's taking too long, because it's no longer what I want anymore? You need to be honest with yourself.

You have to love your reasons for quitting on this one. Because what I see people do all of the time is they want to quit something because it's hard, or it's boring, or it's uncomfortable, or your self-concept is telling you you're not good enough. You're not strong enough. You're not capable enough. You're not determined enough. You're too lazy. You don't know. You're incompetent. The brain is so cruel sometimes, right?

But you want to catch on to yourself. If you're just having a rough go have it or something's taking longer than it should or the task you have to do is tedious and boring or you just feel a little uncomfortable being around people. Those might not be the reasons that you decide are good enough, strong enough, or aligned to your values enough to go ahead and give yourself the green light to quit.

Now, we all feel like quitting in the moment at times because we're experiencing something very challenging or very difficult or very boring. I'm the worst when it comes to boring. I'm like nope, don't want to do it. But if you're wanting to quit simply because of an emotion that you're experiencing, but you do love the goal or you do still have the dream and the desire or you still want to accomplish the thing.

Keep in mind that even if you quit this goal and you make up another goal, or you just are feeling uncomfortable being new at this school, and then you want to move to another school, the truth is that you're going to be new every single time you move. You're not going to out chase an emotion. Because whether you are feeling frustrated now in this goal, if you write another goal, you're going to get frustrated at some point in that goal.

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If you move to another school, you're going to have similar emotions. If you're making the decision to quit because of an emotion, you might want to renegotiate with yourself because you cannot out chase an emotion. You cannot quit out an emotion. It will find you in another way, shape, or form because we're humans on the planet. We have all of the emotions, and they come to us no matter what situation we're in. Okay.

So it's just a part of the human experience. Quitting to avoid emotion does not work. If this is the reason that you're feeling like quitting, my recommendation is actually to lean in to the emotion, actually invite it in, get familiar, offer it a cup of coffee, let it stay a while. Learn how it presents itself in your body. Be in the emotional vibrational experience inside of your body.

Once you become familiar, oh, this is what boredom feels like in my body. Oh, this is what frustration feels like in my body. Oh, this is what learning something hard feels like for me. Once you're familiar with them, you're able to identify them. You actually are able to manage them. You can allow that emotion to be present. You might have to take a break, or you might have to come back tomorrow and try it again, but you can understand the emotion enough to keep going and keep pushing through to get to your goal.

Again, I'm referring to that slight discomfort. I'm not referring to any kind of trauma or significant harm that's being done to you. So you can reprioritize and make fresh decisions for yourself and your career at any time. I think it's an interesting exercise to ask of yourself. If you could wipe the slate clean right now, and this is the perfect time to do it because we're in the middle of June.

By the way, I don't know if I've announced this yet. It is the Summer of Fun Challenge in the Facebook group. We are in the middle of it right now. Get your booties on in there. Let's go have some fun, Summer of Fun

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Challenge. Let's go. Shameless plug in the middle of my podcast because I want you to have fun.

All right, let's get back on track here. If you could wipe the slate clean and make all new decisions from scratch, what would you choose? How would you design your career and your life experience? This is a practice I take my clients through. It's called The Life and Leadership legacy plan. This is what we do in *The Empowered Principal*® Program. We wipe the slate clean and say okay, do you actually want this particular position in your life right now? Yes or no?

What do you want to do differently? What are your dreams in three years? Five years? 10 years? 20 years? What do you want your legacy to be? What do you want to leave behind? Who do you want to be remembered as? What do you want to contribute? How do you want to experience not just your career, but your life?

Everything in your life is present because of a decision you made in your past, which means your future is completely determined by the decisions you make now in the present. Because this moment will be your past self making those decisions to get you to the experience that you want. So what is that going to look like for you?

If you want to be a part of this, I highly encourage you to join in *The Empowered Principal*® program and be coached for an entire year. You will be blown away at the results you can create in your life. So we all change as humans. We all evolve and grow. It's okay if you have a goal that no longer aligns to who you are now and what you value. Sometimes things that we used to value are no longer a priority. It's just no longer a goal or desire. It's okay to drop it, and release it, let it go.

Because you are constantly evolving and your desires and your goals and what you want to experience and accomplish, that might change over time.

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They also evolve. Your priorities and your goals and your desires, they evolve as well. You want to give yourself permission to quit something that no longer serves you.

So the last thing I want to offer is I invite you to consider how you define what quitting is. What does quitting mean to you? What do you make it mean about yourself? What do you think others will think? If you were to quit something, if you were to stop prioritizing X and start prioritizing Y, if you were to change jobs, if you were to change school districts or maybe schools, if you were to play around with your career a little bit, what would you make that mean about you? What would you make that mean about others? What do you think they'll make it mean about you?

Because a lot of times people don't quit because they're so afraid of what other people will think. I promise you this. Maybe a handful will have those thoughts. Most people aren't thinking about you. They're thinking about themselves. They're thinking so much more about what they're thinking and what other people are thinking about them than they are spending time thinking about you.

So here's the truth. You just want to explore your own opinion of what quitting is and what you're making it mean and when it feels appropriate and when it doesn't. Because the truth is that quitting is never ever a problem if it's in your best interest.

With that, I'm sending you guys all the love. If any of you are struggling, if you feel you're in harm's way, immediately get the support you need. If you're creating net negative results, get the support you need. If you just want to evolve and grow and wipe the slate clean and change it up, let's go. That's what we're doing over here in *The Empowered Principal*® program. I wish you all well. I wish you all could be a part of this program. Come on in. Let's go.

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