

Ep #300: Your Emotions Are Valid



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With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 300.

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. Oh my, oh my here we are at 300 episodes of *The Empowered Principal® Podcast*. I actually am so proud and so excited to be here with you today. 300 weeks into this podcast.

Now, I'm going to be honest with you. I thought that I was going to do all the bells and whistles and a big celebration and really hit a homerun on this 300th episode. But I think the topic that I'm choosing to share with you today is what is most relevant for school leaders right here right now because I've been coaching on it all day today, all week this week. I'm coming off of the raw experience of coaching school leaders in real time with the emotions that they are feeling right now.

I actually believe that this is the perfect way to celebrate 300 episodes of the podcast and celebrate the work that you do with school leaders and the work that I do with you as a coach. We're going to talk about processing emotion. I'm going to go deep into emotions throughout the upcoming months of this podcast. I'm going to share with you all of the amazing insights I learned at my Life Coach School Mastermind event that was in Dallas.

But for today, I want to talk about the art of processing your emotions. Here's what I believe to be true about emotions. Now, I'm not an emotional doctor. I'm not a medical doctor. These are my thoughts and interpretations based on my skill set and background as a life and leadership coach. I

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believe that emotions are the absolute hardest thing that we handle as school leaders and as humans on the planet.

When we say something is really hard, extremely challenging or difficult, we're referring to the emotions that we experience in our bodies when we're doing that thing. So when we're saying something, it's a very hard conversation to have. What we're saying is it's not hard to sit down in a chair and look at another human and have words come out of our mouth. That's not difficult. We know how to speak, and we know how to sit.

What's difficult is the way that it feels. Okay? The reason that a difficult conversation feels difficult and we have that like vibration reaction in our bodies where maybe our jaw's tight, our throat's clenched, our heart is beating fast, our pulse is up. We have butterflies in the stomach, or we have that tightness in our chest, a hole in our heart, or like we feel nauseous. All of that like torso emotional reaction that happens inside of the body, like in our nervous system, that is what feels hard.

Because when you're sitting down having a conversation with somebody, same situation. Two people looking at each other, maybe they're sitting down in chairs, maybe they're at a table, and you can feel completely relaxed and at ease and comfortable.

But it's those times where our brain is firing off thoughts that this is hard. This is challenging, and it's igniting your nervous system. That's what feels hard. So I'm going to talk about what do you do when your body is flooded with emotion.

So I just want to acknowledge that it's true that allowing an emotion to be present in our body feels absolutely terrible. It also feels like the best thing in the world. When you think about the best day of your life and the best moment of your life and the best experiences of your life and you're on

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such a high, that also is equally intense. Like intense pleasure feels amazing.

But on the spectrum of emotions, I picture emotions being on a rubber band, right. The more we stretch, the more we want the high highs, we're going to have to allow the low lows, right. So either way, the nervous system is being activated. These neurotransmitters are firing off, and it throws our body into fight or flight because the brain's job is to protect us, keep us safe.

Now, what I understand about the brain is that there's the part of the brain that controls the nervous system. That part of the brain that some people call it the reptilian brain, the amygdala, it can't distinguish the difference. It's a primitive brain. It doesn't distinguish between a physical attack, a mental attack, an emotional attack. It feels like all threats are equal, whether it's mental, physical, emotional. It doesn't really distinguish between am I really in danger in real time? Is this a real threat, or is it a perceived threat? Is this a threat that we think is a threat? Okay.

So like when a bear jumps out and chases you, you immediately respond. You run, or you freeze, or you try to hide, whatever your brain offers you to do in that moment. Your nervous system kicks in. It just takes over. You don't even have the capacity to think with your prefrontal cortex when the amygdala is running the show. When your primitive brain takes over, it takes over your entire nervous system.

So when you are in that fight or flight, that's what people call it, right? That intense urge to get yourself to safety. When you're in that moment, the part of your brain that can be calm and rationalize, it's not invited to the party.

So I've been coaching all day, and every single person, every single leader in some capacity, for some reason, they have been in a fight or flight

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moment. They're having a very hard day or a very hard week or a very hard year.

What I noticed was that my clients were saying I shouldn't feel this way, or I don't want to feel this way. I'd rather feel this way. They're trying to avoid an emotion. They're trying to resist an emotion, or they're trying to circumvent it to try and just thought swap and feel better. Like kind of bypass it. We're just like well, I really should be feeling this way. I don't want to feel that, okay.

So when we're having those intense emotional reactions, most of us do want to resist and avoid and circumvent them because it does feel so awful to let it flood the body, to let it kind of ravish us. What feels like it's out of our control. Because it is out of the control of the prefrontal cortex. It's the primitive brain taking over. We feel a lack of control.

So it's of course it's natural that we want to avoid this out of body experience or out of control experience. But it's also because it's what we've been taught to do. We've been told don't show your emotions. Be professional, be polished. Emotions are weakness, especially for women. Women, you have been taught. If you show your emotions, you're weak. You're vulnerable. You're not capable as a leader. Or if you don't show emotion, you're callous and cold or the B word. Right?

So we have a very limited window of what we're expected to be as women with emotion. We're not supposed to have too much, or we're going to be weak and vulnerable and incapable of leadership. But don't have too little otherwise, you're a you know what and you're callous and cold and you lack empathy. It feels very all or none. So of course you feel trapped.

Men, you might feel the same way. I just know for us women, we are socially conditioned to believe we can't be too much or too little. So we're playing very small because it's the only safe spot there. What ends up

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happening is it's very, very frustrating. We're not allowed to feel anger. We're not allowed to feel frustration. We shouldn't feel this way. We should feel open and loving and kind and happy and all the little cutesy feels, but don't feel any big, negative masculine feels is what I feel like we've been taught.

So it makes total sense that my clients are feeling trapped and frustrated that they aren't allowed to feel. They don't have time to feel, but everybody else around them gets to feel and splatter their emotions on to the principal.

My clients come to me just distressed. They feel confused. They feel overwhelmed. They feel numb because they've been pushing down their emotions so that other people can just splatter them with their emotions. Now my clients are holding space for other people's emotional reaction. They're not allowed to have one is what they're telling themselves.

So we judge our feelings based on societal norms, standards, teachings. We tell ourselves we shouldn't feel this way, or we should feel this way. We're taught that. So I want to just offer that there is no upside. There is zero value add to judging an emotion. Feeling happy and joyous and delighted, that has equal merit to being angry, frustrated, confused, lonely, any negative feeling you're having.

Those negative emotions, they're no worse than being happy, sad. They're neutral. Emotions are neutral. It's the labeling and the judging that gives them meaning. I want you to think about emotions as a platter. They're all equal. It doesn't matter which one you pick. It's an emotion. They're all on the platter for the human experience.

The point of our lives on this planet as humans is to have and expand and evolve our experience as a human. That's why we're here doing what we do. So there's no better or worse emotion. There's just emotions that we feel very uncomfortable. Then other emotions that feel highly pleasurable.

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That's how I would label them. There's comfortable, pleasurable emotions, and there is uncomfortable emotions, like the discomfort is involved to different degrees. Okay.

Here's what I'd like to offer you today about emotions. Your emotions are your internal compass. Your emotions are how your body, which is where your internal compass lies, your heart, your soul, your knowing, your destiny, your vision, whatever you want to call it. Your compass is located in the body. The only way that the body can communicate to your brain is through emotion. This is my take on emotion.

I feel like it's my body's way, my compass's way of getting my attention, of communicating to my brain hey, hello. I'm your life compass, your north star here talking to you trying to get your attention. Here's what I want to offer.

Anytime you feel an intense emotion, you feel triggered, you feel like an emotion just won't leave you alone, it keeps coming back. I want you to consider that there is a valid reason that that emotion is present. There is validity in every single emotion from your head to your toe. Wherever you feel that emotion, there's validity to it.

It is your body and your compass trying to speak to you. To say hey, let's have an internal conversation here. Your brain's taking you one way. Your compass is maybe taking you another. There's some dissonance inside your body, which feels like an intense vibration. Instead of trying to oh, I shouldn't be frustrated. I don't want to feel angry, or oh that fear coming up there. I don't like that too much. Or oh, feelings of failure, rejection, defeat, disappointment, all of that. Those are really yucky feelings, humiliation, embarrassment. Those are some of my worst nightmares.

So instead of pushing them away, avoiding them, attempting to avoid them, trying to run away from them, trying to chase pleasure and like basically extinguish negative emotion, I want to encourage you to invite it in. Open

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the door and let it in, allow it. Just welcome it in. Hi, frustration. How's it going? Come on in. Have a seat. I'll get you a cup of coffee. Invite it in.

Then I do a body scan, head to toe. Let's find out where frustration is residing in my body right now. Where am I feeling frustration? Now frustration lives somewhere different in my body than grief or hope or elation or discouragement. You want to get intimate with emotions. I have an emotional list on my phone.

So when I can't label the emotion, I go to that and say how am I feeling? Like within the spectrum of anger, am I just a little annoyed? Irritated? Am I agitated? Am I frustrated? Am I angry? Am I raging? Am I furious? So invite it in. Ask it what are you feeling right now? What's the label? Let's name the emotion. Invite it in. This is frustration. I'm frustrated. I'm very frustrated. Let it in. Invite it to express itself. Whether that's through crying, whether that's through just sitting there and just vibrating in your body.

It might make your body shake. Your heart might pound, your blood pressure rises, you feel your face flush, you feel the butterflies in your stomach, you might feel extreme heaviness in your legs. Identify that feeling, get intimate with it in your body. This is how my body responds to intense emotion.

One of the things I do is like this is fear. Okay, this is fear. I'm feeling fear. I'm feeling it in my chest. My heart is pounding. My stomach, I have butterflies. I feel a little nauseous right now. I feel very shaky. My extremities are even shaking. My head is spinning. I don't feel clarity. My throat feels a little closed and tight. That's the kind of allowing and expressing. Expressing it out loud.

I like to think of my emotions as a symptom I'm telling my doctor about. Hey doctor, I'm feeling this. I'm hurting inside of my body. Here's where it hurts. Here's how it feels. Here's the intensity level. Here's the shape, the color,

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the size, the texture of it because those are the kinds of questions that doctors ask us. Like where does it hurt? What's the intensity of pain that you're having?

So when you acknowledge it and you allow it, invite it in, allow it to express itself, you're going to do that. It'll come in waves, I've noticed for me personally. Comes in waves. Kind of comes in intensity. Like the volume goes up and down. When I allow it and I process it, it eventually will start to fade. It will get a little less intense. Eventually it'll deplete. It might come back later on or the next day, but you can feel the waves. Okay.

One of the things I do is I invite my emotions in the door, I feel them. Then I say okay, why are you here frustration? I know you're here for me. Why are you here for me? What do you want me to know? What am I here to learn from you? What can I take away from this?

When I ask these questions, I actually write the answers down on a piece of paper to get them out of my mind and onto paper, something external from me, so that I can look at them and see them as separate from me. Basically, it's just a thought download of all the reasons why I feel the way I do. What am I here to learn? What am I thinking right now? Why am I feeling this way? What is the reason? What's the rationale? Get it all onto paper.

Then once you do that, you can start to read the sentences and say hm, that's interesting. Some of these sentences might be blaming. They might be judging. They might be venting, complaining, but there is validity to that emotion. There's a reason it's there. It didn't just show up out of the blue. It didn't just decide to come haunt you. It's there on purpose.

We want to listen to what it has to say. So write down what it's telling you. Then you can go through the list, and which ones feel the most valid? Pull those out. What sentences on that list actually feel really valid? The way I

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filter this for me is I will say is this a fact or an opinion? Fact or opinion, fact or opinion. I pull kind of what feels kind of like a fact. Right? Because there is validity to our emotions.

Maybe that should be the title of this podcast. I was thinking is processing emotions. But now that I'm saying it out loud, I want you to know that whatever emotion you're experiencing, there is a validity to that emotion. There is a reason it's here. We want to understand it. We want to acknowledge it. We want to see it and learn from it.

So in my program, I teach this. I teach my clients how to process emotion, how to allow it, how to name it and label it, identify it, where it's occurring in the body, where it's residing in the body. We talk about it as though we're describing it to a medical doctor because it is a physical sensation that we're experiencing.

Just in the acknowledgement and the allowance of the emotion, what you'll notice is that act alone can bring down the intensity. It can turn down the volume of the emotion until the thoughts come spinning back again. So we're like oh, I'm having the thought that my boss did this, or the people said that, or that I'm going to lose my job, or that everybody hates me, or that I'm a bad principal, or that I'm not being heard. Or that people are being mean to me, or whatever. Whatever your brain's offering.

Let those thoughts, they're going to come back. You're not going to be a one and done on this. You're going to keep coming back. That's okay. Let them. Let them come, invite them in, and validate them, acknowledge them. So many times we want people, other people, to validate our emotions for us. I invite you to take your empowerment and to own that job for yourself.

Validate your emotions. They're there on purpose. They're there for a reason. They are there to give you insight, brilliance, the solution that

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you're looking for, the answer you're seeking, and it actually creates trust in yourself. It expands your self-concept. You deepen your confidence in yourself when you trust that internal compass, and you validate your emotions.

So welcome to podcast 300 of *The Empowered Principal® Podcast*. This is how we step into empowerment. We validate our emotions, we allow them, we acknowledge them, we process them, and we learn from them. Go validate your emotions, have an amazing week. I'll talk to you guys next week. We'll see you at episode 301. Talk to you soon. Take good care. Bye.

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