

Ep #304: Handling Public Scrutiny



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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The Empowered Principal® Podcast

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 304.

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.

Welcome to this week's podcast. So happy you are here. It's such a joy and a delight to be with you each and every week. I'm so grateful for all of you. I have a topic that I wasn't really planning to address, but my heart spoke to it. It felt like I needed to share this in case any of you are going through something that is exceptionally challenging for you right now.

I'm going to be a little cryptic because this is a real life situation that could happen to anyone. I'm not saying that to stimulate fear in you. I'm offering it in case any of you are in the experience of public scrutiny. I do know that as a school leader, you are a public figure. The public does believe that they have the right to scrutinize you to the capacity at which they feel it necessary.

So as a school leader, you may at some point in your career experience scrutiny. I want to first of all validate your feelings. Public scrutiny is very scary. It feels very scary because we are wired for connection and belonging and acceptance as human beings. We are not wired for isolation. We're not designed to survive and thrive in isolation. We're designed to survive and thrive based on the support and the connection and the collaboration and the belongingness of being with other humans.

Okay. So I'm dealing with a situation with a client where she is under some public scrutiny. You can define public scrutiny however you define it. In this situation, I'm going to define it as a very public display of conflict and a difference of opinion around a given situation, and in how different people

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approached that situation and handled a situation. Everyone in the public around you has their own opinion. In those opinions come some intense emotional responses and reactions. Okay.

So in this situation where you are under public scrutiny, I want you first to understand that your fight or flight response is the real deal. It does feel true, and it feels real. There is a surge of panic and fright that is going to explode in your body. That reaction is valid, and it's normal.

I have learned this personally that when you're in fight or flight, you aren't able to rationalize thought. You're not able to self-coach because you're not in your prefrontal cortex. You are literally in fight or flight. Your nervous system is taking over. So I know that your nervous system is taking over because you're having thoughts that are generating intense panic and fear. That still is true. Your STEAR cycle, your thoughts and emotions and that urgency to act, that's still a STEAR cycle in motion, but it feels like it's out of your control because the nervous system is taking over.

I'm not a doctor. This is just my own observation of my own experience when I feel that I am being publicly scrutinized. This has happened to me recently. It's happening with one of my clients. So I am in real time sharing this rawness and vulnerability with you. Because what happens is the brain is going to want to, what I have researched. There's a term called JADE. It wants to justify, argue, defend, and explain yourself when you feel like you're being scrutinized.

When you feel like you're being accused of something, especially when you feel wrongly accused but any kind of accusation, your body and brain are going to want to justify, argue, defend, and explain. That is normal. I want you to just tell yourself how I'm feeling is normal. This is a normal human reaction that everyone feels when they feel under public scrutiny.

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So, in working with my client, I asked her are these fears relevant and valid? We want to ask this question because it helps us, just for a second, slip back into our prefrontal cortex and say wait a minute, is this relevant? Is it valid? Because that part of our brain is like going to decipher, am I safe right here, right now? Is this relevant and valid? We can start to rationalize, just for a minute, what's going on? The answer might be yes. This is relevant, and this is valid.

Okay. So we want to break down let's look at facts. So what is true right now? What is true is that you're a school leader, that you have a job, words were said, and then your brain has an instantaneous reaction to the words or the accusations. That you misstepped, you misspoke, you handled something wrong.

Your brain is going to think oh, my gosh. If I did do something wrong, this is going to happen to me. Or if I didn't do that, if I'm being wrongly accused, it's going to want to defend and protect. If you think you did something wrong, you're going to have the fear of the outcome of that mistake. If you feel you have been wrongly accused, you're going to deeply want to defend and protect yourself.

Now, I want to keep in mind that when people say words to you, they accuse you have something, you have to ask yourself what is my opinion of these words? Is what they're saying valid and relevant? Is there any truth, in my opinion, of these words? So if you're being accused of something and you feel fight or flight, you want to ask yourself what am I afraid of? What am I feeling? Fear, why? Why do I feel the fear? Let your brain list out this is why I'm scared.

It might be that I'm scared because I can see the truth in this. I can see in hindsight, or maybe I misstepped or misspoke or mishandled something. That will feel very heavy for you. Okay.

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Here's what I want to reassure you. It's okay to be human. It's okay to have made a mistake or a misstep or have misspoken. Everyone does it. Everyone makes mistakes. You are not the only human who's made a mistake. Just sit with that for a moment.

Now, this is why I want to sell you hard on having a coach. When you're in a moment where you've been accused, whether there is truth to it or not, you are going to have an extremely difficult time self-coaching. I know this because I am a coach. I am a trained certified coach who's been a coach since 2012. I got an additional certification in 2015. I've been at this a long time.

When I am in extreme fight or flight, when I have been wrongly accused or I've been accused and partial of the accusation is true, like there is some truth to it, I cannot see around it. I cannot self-coach out of it, which is why I need a coach to help me neutralize what's going on, to help me see alternate ways of thinking, alternate ways of like a perspective. I cannot create perspective for myself when I'm so in fight or flight.

This has happened to me very recently. I could not be more grateful for coaching. I promise you this. If there's any service that I could ask for in my life while I've been going through one of the worst chapters of my personal life, it is the gift of coaching. My client said the same to me. She could not imagine going through this experience without coaching, without knowing there was an advocate in her corner that would listen to her and believe her, where she could tell her whole story, process those emotions, let it all out. I held space and love for this woman.

I wish that every single human on the planet had somebody as an advocate in their corner who could hold space and love on them and offer them the coaching and perspective and alternate ways of thinking and feeling that provide some relief. It's like grief. You might have big waves of grief and

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then a little relief and then another big wave of grief because that's what this is.

We're grieving. We're grieving the loss of what we think has happened to us, the fear of losing our job, the fear of losing our reputation, the fear of losing our career, the fear of the impact on our family, and our children, our personal family and children. The impact on what people will think of us.

It is very scary. It feels like you're being ostracized from the crowd. That you're being isolated, that you're being hated on. It's cancel culture. You've seen it. You've seen it in the world happening. So when it happens to you, it feels extremely scary. So I really recommend if you're experiencing this in any capacity that you consider hiring a coach. You're always welcome to come to EPC, the Empowered Principal® Collaborative. It's my group coaching program. But you might want one on one coaching to help you through the school year.

I do offer a limited number of one on one coaching positions. So if you're struggling, please, please schedule a consult. The link is in the show notes. Click on that. Schedule a free call with me. I will stay on the call with you for an entire hour to talk through and work through and come up with a plan. It will be worth every penny, every minute. It will be the best investment of your career and your life. I promise you. Okay.

So when I'm working with my client, we first had to allow and acknowledge her opinion. Where did she see the truth in it? Where did she not see the truth in it? We had to get clear on where she stood because we get knocked down with what other people think and what other people are feeling and what other people are saying and doing. We have to stand back up and say what do I think? What do I feel? What do I believe?

Then we also want to look at what else is true. You're not all good or all bad. You are a human being on the planet who makes mistakes like

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everybody else. But because you are in a public position, people believe they have the right to hurt you, to cause harm, emotionally, verbally, psychologically, or financially, professionally.

I want to offer that even when people are behaving at their worst, you can create certainty and safety inside of you. Certainty and safety is an emotion that you create based on your beliefs, your values, and the thoughts that you decide to believe about yourself.

I feel like it was a miracle. I got coached at my mastermind event in Nashville about creating safety and certainty in my body when nothing in my external world felt safe. This coach was able to help me see how I can create safety and certainty in my body when everything else around me feels scary and unsafe. I want to offer that this is available for you as well.

So when you think about I could lose my job, what are you making that mean about you? Are you making it mean you'll never have another opportunity? You're never going to be able to work in education again. Everybody's going to think poorly of you. You're going to have a bad reputation for life. The brain goes into all or none thinking when it's in crisis mode.

We've got to get it back to the land of and. There's a world of possibility. There is endless possibility for you even if you have been through something very public and what feels very humiliating. You can recover by having your own back and having an advocate, a coach, a therapist, a mentor in your corner that knows and understands how to mentor and coach you through the process.

Eventually, what you'll see is that we can get your brain to a place where we start to dip our toe into the possibility that even the worst experiences of your career happen for you. We start to leverage. What about this is

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happening for me? How is the universe having my back? How is it providing this experience for my benefit?

I know when you're in the beginning stages, that question doesn't even feel possible to answer. Don't worry about that. But I guarantee you, there is a process that I teach my clients to get from that locked down fear into accepting and acknowledging and validating their feelings. Into being able to stand in their truth and their own opinion, and then finally into embracing and accepting and allowing the situation and learning from it.

This is something I said to my client. I'll end with this. What grounds you during times of intensity is staying true to your values, aligning yourself with integrity based on what you believe, knowing that even in the darkest of times, you have opportunities available to you, and you will always have the agency to manage your mind and your emotion.

That is the gift of coaching. You will rise from this stronger, wiser, and happier. I invite you to join the Empowered Principal® Collaborative so that you can feel as empowered even in the darkest of times. Be well, be safe, be happy, my friends. I will talk to you all next week. Take good care. Bye.

Hey there, empowered principal. If you enjoyed the content in this podcast, I invite you to join the Empowered Principal® Collaborative. It's my latest offer for aspiring and current school leaders who want to experience exceptional impact and enjoy the school leadership experience.

Look, you don't have to overwork and overexert to be a successful school leader. You'll be mentored weekly and surrounded by supportive like minded colleagues who truly understand what it means to be a school leader. So join us today and become a member of the only certified life and leadership coaching program for school leaders in the country. Just head on over to angelakellycoaching.com/work-with-me to learn more and join. I'll see you inside of the Empowered Principal® Collaborative.

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