

Ep #305: Allowing Joy



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 305.

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 my empowered leaders. Happy Tuesday. Happy end of October. It's Halloween today. I'm sending you all the love and vibes because I know that sometimes Halloween can generate a lot of energy at your schools. So if your kids are on sugar highs, I feel you. I'm sending you all the love and support. Know this too shall pass. So Happy Halloween everybody if you celebrate.

All right, we're going to talk about something good today. Something you desire and something that is within your control to create. We're going to talk about allowing joy, allowing yourself to be happy, and to feel joy in whatever leadership experience you're having right now. It is available, and it's possible to you.

So I was coaching a client today. She was sharing with me how she noticed in herself that she's granting herself permission in very small increments to enjoy her day. So she's been coaching with me for three years. She is in her fourth year of school leadership. She said, "I noticed that I'm allowing myself these small." She called them trivial, but we coached on the word trivial. But she said, "These trivial amounts of joy. Things like allowing myself to sit in my office for a few minutes, enjoy a cup of coffee while I prepare myself for the day before I go out into the school and out into the chaos that is a beautiful school day."

Okay, she allows herself that joy. She acknowledges that joy and says I really enjoy this experience. She didn't used to allow herself that. She

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wanted to do it, but she felt like it shouldn't be happening. That she was hiding or being selfish or that people needed her that she should be on 24/7. Now she's in her third and a half year. She is feeling very accepting of allowing herself that joy of coming in when it's nice and quiet, having her coffee, preparing her day, getting her mind ready and her energy ready for the day.

I thought to myself it's these little moments, these little moments where we can embrace joy to its fullest capacity no matter how small we deem the joy. I'm going to talk about that in a minute. But I want to talk about what you can do to allow joy in your current position, to embrace it, to invite it in, and to expand your capacity for okay.

So I was thinking about why we don't allow joy, and I was working with my client on this. So we were talking about why are the reasons that we don't just readily accept joy in our lives? Why do we not allow it, embrace it? Why is it not just a huge part of our day? Why do we deem things as not joyful?

What came up is that we feel very conditioned to believe that joy is, it's selfish or greedy or unnecessary or unproductive. That it feels trivial. My client was saying, "Well, I feel like I want these things, but they're just so trivial. Like I'm being petty or that they're not really necessary. They felt like a luxury." That's how she was defining it.

She said, "I noticed that what felt like a big luxury, like a big ask of myself from years past, is now just a part of who I am." Like she's up leveled herself concept of what she deserves to have in her life or the experience she deserves to experience or the feelings that she deserves to feel.

I want you all to consider that positive emotion, emotions that feel amazing in your body, they're allowed and accepted, and we have to give them permission to reside in our body. We have to invite them in.

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I noticed this with myself. I was getting to a place where I was getting so deep into this work. I love to work. I love coaching. I love clients. I love to be on social media selling and sharing the benefits of coaching, the value of this. I think it's the magic secret to the universe.

I just want everybody to have a piece of it. I want everybody to feel better about themselves, their leadership self-concept. I want you to know that this work doesn't have to be as hard as our body and mind make it feel sometimes. I want you to have permission to go home at the end of the day, to feel sufficient, to feel successful.

That you can create success and productivity and have the impact you want without sacrificing yourself or your emotional wellness or your physical or mental wellness. You don't have to trade out your health mentally, physically, and emotionally to be successful. If I could give that as a gift in a package to each and every one of you, I would hand deliver it to you. But the only way that I can hand deliver that to you is for you to believe that it's possible. Then for you to actively practice this, right?

So we kind of untangled what my client's thoughts were. She realized that allowing herself some luxuries and allowing herself to embrace joy and happiness that doesn't mean she's a diva, or that she's being high maintenance, or that it's a good thing to deny yourself, joy, happiness, relaxation, luxury. That it's acceptable. It's actually a part of the human experience we were meant to have to bring in these little moments, to enhance the quality of your life.

So when I asked her what is the reason your brain gives you as to why you shouldn't allow joy? She said, "I think I'm recovering from a scarcity mindset." I love the way she said that. I'm in recovery of scarcity mindset. I thought so are seven or 8 billion, however many people are on the earth, so are the rest of us. I feel like we have been trained as humans to believe

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that scarcity and staying in scarcity mindset is what keeps us alive, is what keeps us safe, is what protects us from harm.

When interestingly, staying in scarcity mindset is what keeps us in scarcity mindset. It just perpetuate the fear, the doubt the worry, the panic, the discomfort, the urge to control, and to manipulate or protect or defend, to go into fight or flight. Scarcity ignites fight or flight.

So we talked about there is a value to staying in scarcity mindset. It's a badge of pride to say I've overcome something. It's a way to say look how much I sacrificed. It's a little bit of martyrdom. It's unintentional manipulation. But if we don't feel like we can enjoy five minutes of peace and quiet before we start our day, and we get out there and then we're frustrated that we had to be out and running around.

Look, I didn't even get to have my coffee today. Or look, I haven't even had a chance to eat lunch today. Look, I haven't even had a chance to go to the bathroom yet today. We kind of use our sacrifice, our lack of joy or lack of self-care, we use it as a way to unintentionally complain and blame or vent, or use it as the excuse as to why we don't feel happy or we feel joy. We can't feel joy.

So I want you to notice where is your brain offering you that you don't have permission to be happy or take care of yourself or feel moments of joy? That they're too trivial or doesn't really mean that much. It's judging the joy. It's judging the smallness of your desires. Like the desire to have lunch every day. It feels like it's too big of an ask to spend 30 minutes grabbing lunch, or even 20 minutes unpacking and eating the sandwich that you made for your lunch or walking through the lunch line and grabbing a slice of pizza with the kids for lunch, whatever it is.

But just notice how part of ignoring joy, resisting joy, avoiding joy, pushing it away, being dismissive about joy, there is a benefit to that. We're like look

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at us. We're not taking any time for ourselves. We're just all here for you. It's all about you. 24/7. Look how much I'm sacrificing for you. We feel like we should be doing it that way.

There is, I think, a book or a saying, a phrase, like leaders eat last. I disagree. I think that the leader shouldn't always be eating last. If the leader is to eat last, the leader never gets to eat. That's what's happening. You're drowning in always feeding everybody else first, everybody else's needs first.

So, notice when you're leaning into this martyrdom mindset, a scarcity mindset, scarcity of time, scarcity of energy resources, and the belief that it's only up to you to solve everything. Notice how it makes you feel when you think you're the only one that can solve everything. It kind of feels good. But there's a net negative to the scarcity mindset. There are undesired results that are created when we refuse to let ourselves be delighted and be joyful and let things be lighter and not feel like we have to fix everybody else's emotions and everybody else's problem.

So I want to ask you, what is the net negative of scarcity mindset? Why is it safe to let go of that mindset? Because the reason we're holding on to it so tight is that it doesn't feel safe. But you want to calm your nervous system, calm your amygdala, and let it know. It's okay for us to be joyous. It's okay to be happy. It's okay to feel abundant and to appreciate all that's going well at our school and all that's going right.

Because here's what I found to be true. Discomfort is always the currency of our dream come true. The dream of feeling joy, happiness, delight, gratitude, success, productive, impactful. All of the emotions that we're chasing, what requires us to attain them is the discomfort of allowing them. Isn't that crazy?

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I have learned that positive emotion can feel as uncomfortable as negative emotion if we are not used to feeling that. If we're not used to letting them reside in our body and we don't even know what does joyful actually feel like in my body? What does delight feel like? What is ecstatic? What is a productive day?

When you've had a productive day it, you know. You know it in your core. We are almost addicted to the feeling, the emotional response we get in our body, that chemical release of dopamine. It's an addiction that we feel when we're productive. When we've had a good day, it's amazing. It's all that serotonin and that dopamine just flowing in there feeling so good in our bodies. When we've had an unproductive day in were frustrated and disappointed and upset or angry, that feels like a terrible day.

Well, some of us, many of us, I would say, we have become extremely familiar and comfortable with the discomfort of uncomfortable emotions, the negative emotions. We're very good at worrying, doubt, fear, shame, judgment, embarrassment, guilt, insufficiency's a big one. I feel incapable. I lack confident. We're really good at practicing a lack of confidence. We're less practiced at allowing in confidence.

Here's the deal with these emotions. We've become very comfortable with them, and here's why. It's what the brain defaults to. The brain defaults to being on alert, to being vigilant, to like put up the front of I am afraid of feeling these emotions so I'm just going to feel them ahead of time. The reason the brain is doing that is because it is in an effort to be vigilant and protect us from potential harm.

The brain is out there scanning, scanning, scanning for harm. Is this person going to hurt me mentally, physically, emotionally, psychologically? If so, I need to defend and protect myself, or I need to run and get out of here. It goes into fight or flight. It's very good at doing that job. But in doing so we also, as school leaders, do our best to own our mistakes and take on the

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blame and responsibility of not just our mistakes, but we try to take on the emotions and the mistakes of other people.

We think that leader means we own our stuff, and we own everybody else's stuff. The more we try to make other people feel better by solving their problems for them, which never ends up working in the long run. We can't fix people's emotions, and we can't fix problems they've created. They're not our problems to fix.

The more we try to do that, the more we reinforce our own negative experience. The more that we reinforce to the other people, to those that we're leading, that we should be the ones trying to fix it. It's like saying to them yeah, you're right. I'm responsible. Let me keep grinding at this. Let me hustle a little bit more. Let me work a little harder. Let me people please you a little bit more.

I promise you this. I have learned from my own personal experience at a very deep level lately, there is no amount of reassurance or information. There's no amount of action that you can take that's going to help another person feel better for the long run. They might feel better in that little moment when you give them a hit of something. They get the information they wanted. They get the connection that they wanted. They get the emotional high that they were looking for. You can never reassure somebody enough.

Because when they expect you to be responsible for their emotions and their joy, it's like filling a bucket with a big hole in the bottom. You will always be pouring your hard work and effort into trying to fill their bucket. Their job is to plug the hole and to fill the bucket themselves. Okay?

So allowing yourself to feel joy, happiness, and pride, it's an act of practice. Just as you will learn how to grow your capacity to lead your school and do hard things and learn new things and expose yourself to those

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uncomfortable new situations, you also want to learn how to grow your capacity to experience happiness, joy, delight, lightheartedness, gratitude.

I know. I get it. These feelings, they might feel unfamiliar and unsafe and uncomfortable at first. It feels like you're letting your guard down. That's how it feels for me. If I allow myself to be joyous today, what's going to happen? If I let my guard down, then what? Right?

The brain is going to offer you no, need your guard up. You need to be protected because some bad feeling or some bad person or some bad things going to happen to you, and I want to be ready for it. It feels like giving yourself the permission to have joy means defensivelessness or that you're not being vigilant. That's okay. Let it tell you that. You can invite it in for very small amounts of time and then build up your capacity. There is no moment too small or too trivial to exercise your right and your ability to experience joy.

Here are some steps to get you moving in the direction of allowing joy. Number one, give yourself permission to spend time thinking about what is already working in your life, at your school, in your job. Look for ways in which life as a school leader is really good right now as it is. Look for things that feel easy now that weren't easy eight weeks ago or six months ago or a year ago.

Take a peek at five years back and see how far you've come. Feel the pride and joy that comes with being the version of you that your past self dreamed of becoming, and see how it's true that you are living your dream life from five years ago. It's amazing.

Number two, identify and label the feeling of joy. You want to actually name it. This is joy. I'm feeling joy. I'm feeling happy right now. I feel joy inside of my body. Notice how joy shows up for you in your body? Where does it

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reside? Is it in your heart, your chest? Do you feel it in your face? Do you feel it in your knees? Do you feel it in your toes? Where is joy for you?

It can bounce around. It might feel differently. Different kinds of joy, different kinds of places. Get intimate with it inside of your body, how it vibrates, the sensations it offers. Does it have a shape, a color, a size? Does it have a frequency?

Just get very familiar with it, get comfortable with it, and allow it to reside in the body. It might feel almost painful to let joy in because it feels too scary. Try it for a minute. I'm going to feel happy for just one minute. I'm going to be safe being happy for one minute. You'll notice I was happy for a minute and nothing bad happened. It's safe to be happy. It's safe to be joyous.

Number three, once you've learned to allow it and that it's safe and you've created some comfort with it then you can start to anticipate joyful moments in your day, week, month, and year. Plan experiences of joy. Plan that you're going to experience joy in the day. Anticipate that feeling of joy is coming your way.

When you anticipate joy, like you knew wake up and you're I know I'm going to have so much fun today, or I'm looking forward to meeting with my friends after work today, or I'm looking forward to this weekend. We're doing a staycation, whatever. You get to feel the joy in advance. Anticipation of joy allows you to feel joy right now. You get to double dip. It's so beautiful.

The anticipation of vacation is half of the fun. You get to feel it beforehand and then you get to feel it in real time. So double dip on your joy by anticipating it in advance. Then be sure to actually schedule activities and events in your life where you do allow joyful moments to be created in your life.

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Then number four, you simply allow, allow, allow, there is no one way that joy should look or feel. So there's no need to judge it or shame it or criticize it or scold it or resist it or avoid it or tell it to be different than it is. However joy shows up for you is how it shows up for you. Nobody else can tell you what joy should look like or feel like or what should bring you joy. That is an inside job. You get to decide all for yourself this is what brings me joy.

For some people, it's coffee. For other people, it's having a puppy. For other people, it's being with children. For other people, it's being in bed. It doesn't matter what your joy looks like. Let yourself have permission and expand your capacity for joy. I love you all so much. May, you have a delightful and joyous week. Take good care. Bye.

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