

# Ep #307: Allow Hard. Expect Hard. Too Much Hard.



**Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Angela Kelly**

## **Ep #307: Allow Hard. Expect Hard. Too Much Hard.**

Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 307.

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 principals. Happy Tuesday. So happy you're here. I've got a very interesting topic today. I'm just going to cut straight to the chase and talk about the difference between allowing things to be hard, expecting things to be hard, and then how to know when something is too hard. We're allowing too much hard, okay.

I've been doing this in my personal life and in my professional life, but I've been looking at how I show up, how I approach work. I like, many of you, I think all of you. If you're a principal, you dig some hard work. You did not sign up for school leadership thinking it would not be hard.

Now, I have been exploring my brain on what I mean by hard and when it's okay to allow things to be hard, when am I expecting them to be hard, and when do I need a break from the hard? So I wanted to share this with you today because it was very profound for me personally to be able to differentiate the difference between these three. Okay.

So there is a lot going on in my business right now and in my personal life. I've been swimming in the thoughts of too much to do and not enough time, just like all of you. I feel very busy. I feel like there are many big things happening in my life at once. I have been practicing expanding my capacity to handle multiple large situations, big things happening at one time, okay.

I was getting coached by my business coach, and I was telling her like I've had all these amazing things happening. I'm really excited about them. It's

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required me to do a little bit of hustling. I'm afraid that when there's so many things going on at once, I'm going to slip back into my old mental construct, my old way of being. Which is when I was a school leader, I overworked, overexerted, overscheduled, over hustled, exhausted myself.

This is how I know how to coach all of you because I have lived it, I have been it, and I have been the study of my work. I personally have been in the trenches with you doing this, and I felt like I was doing it again. She had such brilliant coaching for me. I took the coaching, sat down, and I processed it. This is what I came up with.

First of all, here's what she said to me. She said, "I think you're just in a period of hard work. Hard work is different than hustle. Hustle is when you're chasing your tail and running circles, but you've lost sight of your purpose. You're going to the point of exhaustion, but with no end in sight. It's this endless cycle of working hard, but it doesn't feel intentional. It doesn't feel purposeful."

She said, "This time, you are not hustling. You're not chasing something. You're just putting in the work, the hard work required, to uplevel your business in a really big way. When you do hard work with intention for a duration of time, the purpose of that hard work is to then systematize the work to make it easier in the long run. So the hard work you're putting in now is setting your future-self up for some major success and some downtime, and to have systems in place to make life easier."

Because I'm at max capacity in so many areas of this business where I'm coaching one on one. I'm full with one on ones. I've got the group running, and now I'm offering professional development curriculum and trainings for entire school districts and entire staffs. It feels like three businesses running. I have EPC, I have one on ones, and now I have all of this professional development that I'm offering, which is amazing. I feel a little underwater. I feel a little overwhelmed.

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So here's what I came up with. Here's what allowing hard looks like. It's when you decide, as a principal or as a district leader, that you know you're stepping in. You're evolving your self-concept. You know you're going to step into something that might feel in the body difficult or challenging or hard. Okay, you've decided to do it. You're taking it on. You're saying yes, please. I'm up leveling my contribution to the world. That's going to require some work on my part.

You anticipate it being hard, but not to the point that it deters you from not doing the work. So you know ahead of time, there's going to be some hard work involved but I'm all in. I'm going to do it anyway in spite of knowing it's going to be hard work. Then you prepare. You map out, here's what I need to do, or here's what I think I need to do. Here's what I think is going to be hard. I'm going to plan what am I going to do when this feels hard?

So that's what I've been doing. I've been breaking down what parts of this field hard? What is my solution to when it feels like it's too hard, or it feels like it's stalling my progress. What are my solutions for that ahead of time? Then I commit. I commit to it being hard, and I get busy and do the work.

But what I have noticed, like yesterday, I did a power day of working. I wasn't coaching. I was simply working. I blocked off two hour blocks. So I had two, two, two, two. Some things bled over and took a little longer. So I ended up working two hours later than I wanted to, but I decided, I booked from eight to four.

I decided at four I was going to work until six because I decided with intention I wanted to get these projects done that I had planned for myself. Of course, life happens in the middle or something took a little longer. I made that decision and worked from eight to six straight. Basically worked through my lunch. Only left my work place to use the restroom, those kinds of things, okay.

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But I also did many breaks. I could feel my brain slipping, losing focus. I got up, empty the dishwasher, right? Or I got up and got a drink of water. Or I just stood up and did a quick like 30 second stretch, and then I kept going to refocus myself. I took small breaks, but very small doses of breaks to keep my focus going so I wouldn't get distracted.

Normally, if I start cleaning one thing, then all of a sudden I'm doing laundry, but I wasn't going to do all that. So I had to focus and take breaks in small doses. But allowing hard, you don't do it forever. There is a duration to it. So you take a significant break, meaning I took off from 6:00 p.m. I did not look at work, think about work. I could hardly keep my eyes open. I took a break from six to nine. Then I let myself go to bed early, read a book, relax, do my meditation, and sleep soundly from ten to six this morning.

I gave myself time to rest and recover because today I got up again and had to do the thing again. I'm doing this for a duration of time because there's some deadlines to be met. I'm traveling on bereavement tomorrow. I'm going out of town for bereavement Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Saturday and Sunday, I have company and plans.

I know Monday, Tuesday are going to be heavy lifters because on Wednesday, I'm flying out to Illinois to provide this professional development training. So I can see I have a limited amount of time. So I need to be very purposeful and intentional about that time.

But I know I'm not going to have to heavy lift forever. I'm allowing it to be hard now knowing there is a duration. That it will come to an end. When I'm ready, then I get in and I go back for more. I let it be hard again, and I embrace that hard but I keep perspective. This is a sprint. It's not a marathon. I'm going to sprint for a couple of weeks, get this done, take some time to breathe, come up for air, rest and recover, and then dive back into the hard.

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Okay, that's allowing things to be hard when you're intentional about the duration of hard, giving yourself rests and breaks. You can give yourself a little break, a medium break, or a big, long fat break. Like summer break or holiday break or whatever. But you have to remember it doesn't last forever because you are driving this train, and you are deciding how long you're going to allow hard work and when you're going to take a break. Okay, there's some balance there.

Versus expecting hard work. Expecting hard work is when you kind of expect everything to be hard. You're just succumbing to the fact it's going to be hard. What happens is people tell you school leadership is going to be hard. You're like, yeah, yeah, yeah. But when the train comes rolling in, you actually feel like you got hit by it. You're not driving the train, you got hit by the train. You didn't really expect it. It's like when you become a parent for the first time. You had no idea how hard it really was. You just can't know until you know, okay.

So sometimes you expect it to be hard, and you're just succumbing to the hard, but you are a little bit shocked. You're a little bit in disbelief. You're a lot in overwhelm. What you do instead of allowing things to be hard and planning breaks and coming up for air, you attempt to keep up. Like the train's chasing you, and you're just running right in front of it trying just to stay one foot ahead of the train coming at you. That is the overwhelm cycle that I speak of, okay.

So you can run for so long, but you know what happens. You're going to fatigue out. You're going to tire out. Either the train is going to hit you, or you're going to jump off the tracks, and you're going to be so exhausted that you slip into what I call the underwhelmed cycle, which is just the reaction to the overwhelm cycle.

Eventually, you just peter out, and then you freeze or you numb up, or you start to blame and complain. It's the system. It's these people. It's this thing.

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It's blah, blah, blah, whatever. You externalize, which disempowers you and you resign. Well, I guess I just have to expect it to be hard. You resign to suffering. You expect it to be hard so it actually feels harder than it would have.

There's a difference between allowing it and being in control in charge of it and driving the train of hard versus feeling like you're getting run over by the train of hard. It just feels hard. You're almost a victim to it. The more you believe it's going to be hard and that you have to just lie down and take it, the harder it gets.

But the problem with that is it gets harder to the point that nothing changes, and you either burn out and you go through school leadership robotically and numbly. You just like go through the motions of it. But you're so miserable and unhappy. Or you quit, and that's the worst thing. Because you're amazing and school needs you and the children and your staff members need your brilliance.

So that, to me, is the biggest tragedy of all is when we expect it to be hard. We succumb to the hardness. We don't feel we have any control over it. We just give into it by either just going numb or giving up completely. Okay.

Now, there's too much hard. Too much hard requires us to know when we're letting it be too hard and when we're doing the right amount of hard. This is like the porridge scenario. Too hot, too cold, just right. So the three bears here. We're looking at too much hard, too letting things just run over us and be just too little control versus just right. Okay.

Here's when you know it's too much hard. When you have allowed hard in the first place. You've done the process of deciding, anticipating, preparing, committing, putting in breaks, taking small doses, giving yourself time to rest and recover, not wavering in commitment, coming up for air, but then going back down.

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When you've been doing that for a while, and it doesn't feel like it ever ends, that's when you have to pause and assess. What is working with this approach? What is not working for me? What do I want to do differently? If it feels like you can never come up for air or the time you come up for air is not long enough, you want to notice that. Your body will tell you. You will feel mentally fatigued, emotionally fatigued, physically fatigued.

Then you ask yourself this question is this hard thing that I'm continuing to do and strive for, is it serving me? Or is it in service of my goals and dreams? Yes, you are in service to your school community, but I'm talking about you. Is it in service to your physical health, mental health, emotional health? Is it in service of the dream and the lifestyle and the professional experience you want to create for yourself?

You have to answer honestly. Is it a yes or no? It might be too much. So if it's a yes, why? If it's a no, why? You need to prioritize your dream come true and your goals. If it's yes, yes you want to continue, but you need to adjust either the capacity or the duration or the schedule so that you're allowing a little more breaks. But you might notice that you're chasing your tail. You kind of got caught up in the overwhelm underwhelm cycle. It's really not in service to you physically, mentally, and emotionally.

So two things need to happen. If you're chasing your tail and you're caught up in an overwhelmed cycle, you have to either adjust your actions and slow down the pace to give yourself more time to rest and play and recover, or you need to drop the story, the mental story. That it's too hard and you can't do it, right?

Sometimes, it's actually we're taking too many actions. We're exhausting ourselves. It's too hard that way. Or we're creating the story that it's too hard. That's when we're just expecting it to be hard. We're blaming it to be hard. It's a mental story that's too hard versus an action story that's too hard. Those are the differences.



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So I hope this has been helpful because there are times where I just expect things to be hard, and lo and behold, they end up being harder than I thought because I'm playing victim to them. Or I'm really doing all the things, and it is actually just too much for me, and I need to take the break.

Then I work towards the sweet spot, which is allowing it to be hard coming up for air, rest, play and recovery, and then repeat and rinsing, doing it all over again. All right. Go be well, my empowered principals. Happy November. Happy Thanksgiving if you celebrate here in the United States. If not, enjoy your time off from school, and we'll talk to you guys next week. Take good care. Bye.

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