

Ep #309: Stop Fixing Things



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 309.

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. How are you today? I'm fabulous, thank you for asking. I wish I could work with all of you in person. I just spent a week with an amazing school in the middle of Illinois. I had so much fun. I realized that the topics I talk about on a regular basis that light me up and jazz me up, they're actually really heavy for some people.

I talk about feelings all the time and people are like whoa, can we take a break from all this feeling business. So I don't mean to be Debbie Downer. I just want to help people understand their emotions so they can leverage them to create joy. I think I had a podcast come out in November or October some time on joy. Allowing yourself to feel joy and happy. That's a part of this work too.

But when I'm talking to you on a daily, I'm telling you the real deal. I'm talking to clients and then bringing their work here to you so that you can gain benefit from the experiences that they're having and learn how to get through hard things so that they don't feel so hard.

We want to make light and have fun with our jobs. But we can't do that if everything around us feels chaotic and heavy and messy and exhausting and overwhelming. Okay, so today I want to talk about, I'm going to go on a little rant here called stop fixing everything. Principals, when you get hired, the job description did not read fix everything.

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Now, I know that the expectation is fix everything. But I'm going to sell your brain on why it's not the job, and it's not what you should be doing in terms of moving your school forward. It actually slows your progress when you fix everything. Okay.

So I was talking to a client. She was feeling the burn. The fall dip is real you guys, and I know you're still kind of coming out of it. The overwhelm is real. Behaviors are ramping up. Everything feels really hard. It feels like emergencies are starting to bubble up all the time. Okay.

So I was talking to a client and asking her why she felt she was having so many emergencies. She said, "Well, it's behavior. Behaviors are coming up, and I need to go and fix these behaviors, I need to be with the students." I said why you? Why does it have to be you? Is there somebody else on staff that's available? And her first answer was no.

Then we thought about it a little more. I said well, what if you were out sick? Or what if you were away at a training for a week, and you couldn't be there to intervene for the student. Then what? Let's problem solve for that. Because the first problem with fixing everything is that you become a funnel.

Everything has to funnel through you, and you get backlogged. Because there's only one of you, and you have 30 or 40 or 50 staff members, and you've got two, three, four, five, 700 kids that you're dealing with. If you, as one human, have to deal with all the people, you can just see it's going to back up very quickly.

So if you couldn't be the person, meaning you weren't on campus or you were away or you were out sick, what would be backup plan? Who would you have follow up with this student? You want to think about these things because I know you all have that little group of students that you are

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attending to as the principal. Here's like the problem behind the problem. I'm going to uncover the layer here.

The problem is that we think as school leaders that it's just easier for us to take care of it ourselves. Nobody else is as skilled or as knowledgeable about the student as we are, or we say to ourselves we just have a better rapport with the student. Okay.

So now every single time that you are called out of your office and you have to go to a student and fix this problem, right. Teacher says it's a problem because they're disrupting class or the student's not doing the work. The paraprofessional tried, and the student's not doing the work. Now you're coming in, and the child starts to regulate themselves because of your presence and because of your skill set and knowledge.

When you believe that you're the one who comes in to reregulate this child, every time you do it, you are reinforcing it for yourself, for the student, for the paraprofessional, for the teacher. Every time you come in and fix that problem, not only are you backlogging all of your work and other responsibilities, you're now reinforcing that you're the only one who has the solution to this issue. Okay.

Instead of sitting down and problem solving and saying okay, look? What is the kid's words and behavior? What are his actions, his thoughts, or her thoughts, her actions? What are they doing, or not doing in this case, and why is the actions they are taking a problem?

So for example, if a student is on an IEP, and the student refuses to do work, but as a part of their IEP refusal to do work is one of the issues or kind of the goals you're working on. The solution isn't forced the kid to do the work, it's usually an accommodation is made. They get time to self-regulate, or we break down the requirement or the ask that we would like

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them to complete. Let's just do one problem instead of five. Let's take a five minute stretch.

Like usually, if you have an IEP or a 504, there are accommodations because the student doesn't know how to regulate on their own, which is why they have the IEP. So we want to remember, first of all, if you're being called out and there's an issue in the classroom, the teacher sees it as a sign of disrespect or not doing what they're told to do. The paraprofessional is stressed out because their problem is they should be able to get this kid to do what they are supposed to do because that's their job as the one on one paraprofessional for the student.

So now you've got teacher thinks that the problem is child's not doing work. Para thinks the problem is she's going to look bad, or he's going to look bad if they don't get this student to get in line and do the work. Right. So now you have all these little power struggles going on. Then you come in, and you just allow the teacher to teach, and the para to a break. You just come in and you regulate the child.

Versus okay, let's problem solve this. When child is at home, let's sit down. Let's look at the lenses of the paraprofessional and the teacher to see how we can empower them to problem solve for the student. Instead of being the one with the skill set and reinforcing that we're the only ones who can regulate a child, how about we don't fix it. We allow the para and the teacher to get to work at fixing this problem by empowering them to have permission to solve it.

You can say look, this kid has an IEP. They don't need to do the work. What they need is to learn emotional regulation. So when the child is dysregulated, you have permission to let them go regulate, to not do the work. Because if they're not emotionally regulated, they're not learning anyway.

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For a child to fill out a work page or a practice sheet or review spiral, whatever, they are not intellectually learning if they're emotionally dysregulated because they're not in their prefrontal cortex where the learning takes place. The cognitive intellectual learning is not available because they're in fight or flight. Their body's saying I gotta move. I can't sit down. I don't want to do this. This feels uncomfortable. This feels hard.

They're out of regulation, and they need to do the thing that regulates them so they are ready to come and try again. We have to give paras and teachers permission to have the power to handle that on their own. The more we come in and fix for them, the more we disempower the other adults on our campus.

The reason that's a problem, and this is the biggest reason why I want you to stop fixing everything, is that every time you go and fix things yourself, you are not able to scale your impact as a leader. When you were in your classroom, you were able to handle things on your own. It was a contained classroom. You had so many students, and you maximized your potential, your leverage to create an impact with your students. You empowered kids to be independent through routines and procedures so that you could expand your ability to pull a small group or work with a child one on one, right?

The more independent your students became, the greater the impact you could make as a teacher in your classroom. Now you have to scale your impact to an entire school, which means you have to empower your teachers and your paraprofessionals and your support staff members to be problem solvers so that your funnel doesn't backlog so that you're not reinforcing that you're the only person with the solution.

So that, in the end, your legacy as a leader is much more impactful because you've scaled and leveraged the resources available to you, which are the other adults on campus. Imagine where your paraprofessionals are

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working with teachers and other paraprofessionals to problem solve with one another, instead of coming to you to solve it. Imagine teachers doing the same thing. Imagine custodians doing the same thing. Imagine your office staff, everybody on your campus.

Imagine if they felt empowered to go solve the problems on their own so that you could stay in your lane and do the problems that were meant for you to solve versus solving everybody else's problem. Imagine the power in that, imagine the impact that that would have. Not just in the short term, but for the legacy of your career. You want to leverage other people's brilliance and empowerment and their ideas.

There are a lot of smart people out there working for you. You can trust and empower them by giving them the permission and the skills and the training, whatever it is they need to then go do the thing instead of you having to do it. But every time you try to fix and solve for them, what you're saying to them is I don't trust you to do it. I don't believe that you can fix it. I don't think you have the capability or the potential. You're communicating that you're the savior, and they don't know how. But that doesn't empower you. So stop fixing everything.

Let them have a shot, empower them. You can support them, facilitate conversations, give them the tools, the information, the skills, training, whatever they need to be successful. If they come to you with questions, that's different than saying I don't know. I'm completely helpless. Come in and fix the problem. All right?

If you want to sign up for the Empowered Principal® Collaborative, doors are open for the January cohort. We're going to talk about all of this. There are six pillars in the Empowered Principal® Collaborative. There is a relationship with time and time management mastery. There's planning mastery, balanced mastery where we talk about work, rest, and play, and having a big, fulfilled life and all of your buckets filled.

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That's what balance looks like. We talk about relationships, which are some of the hardest things we do working with the humans. We talk about your leadership skills and self-concept. We talk about emotional regulation for ourselves and for others so that this job doesn't have to be so heavy and so hard. We don't have to fix all the things. We can allow things to be unfixed, just untouched. They can be just as they are. It's okay.

We can have a great leadership experience, have fun while we're doing it, enjoy the people we work with, not take work so seriously, get our priorities done, and still have energy and time for rest and play. That is the magic that we create in the Empowered Principal® Collaborative. I encourage you strongly sign up for the January cohort. Doors are open. You want to come in.

When you sign up, you're going to get access to the six pillars of EPC and the workbooks that are included in the program. You can jump start and get started right away on that before the cohort even starts. So come on in. The link to register for EPC is in the show notes. If you have any questions, you can schedule a 15 minute Q&A call with me directly. I'll jump on the phone with you and answer any questions that you have. It will be the best use of your time, energy, effort and resources. I will see you inside EPC talk to you soon. See you next week. Take good care. Bye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal® Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit angelakellycoaching.com where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.