

Ep #310: Why This Is Happening



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 310.

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 December. What a beautiful month this is. It's glorious. We have a break coming up. I'm thinking about all of you. I'm recording this in the beginning of November. So we haven't had Thanksgiving yet in real time as I'm recording. So I'm thinking about you getting your Thanksgiving break and then your holiday break and your New Year's celebrations and time with family and friends and rest and fun and sleep and all of it. I am so excited for you.

I love the middle of the school year. I love this time of year. I think it's the most magical reboot that educators can have. So enjoy. Embrace all of December. Let it just be magical, let it be light hearted, have some fun. Look at December as the opportunity to reboot mid-year.

I'm doing a mid-year reboot all throughout January because you still have January, February, March, April, May, and for some of you, all of June. So you have up to seven months left to make your goals happen to make your dreams come true to have the school experience you want.

The doors to the Empowered Principal® Collaborative for the mid-year reboot cohort are open. you need to come in, you need to join us. You need to be with like minded, high powered thinking individuals who are here to have fun and collaborate and connect and solve problems and offer love and support and understanding for fellow colleagues who are in the business of school leadership.

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This is unlike any other professional development experience that you will have because you cannot fail. This is not a one and done. It's not a sit and get. It is a weekly support group where we get coaching, we get support, we brainstorm ideas, we share our experiences and our knowledge and our wisdom and our brilliance with one another. We leave that hour of conversation stronger, wiser, better. Ready and prepared to go into the next day as an empowered principal. Nothing else like it on the market. Come on in and join EPC.

All right, today I'm going to talk about a question that so many principals and district leaders are either asking themselves or they're asking me as a coach. Here's the question. Why is this happening? Why are behaviors so intense this year?

Why does the pressure feel more than ever? Why are teachers and staff members so discontent? Why are people so unhappy? Why are they grumpy? Why are they complaining? Why does this job feel harder than it did before? Why is this situation with a parent happening or a staff member happening, or a student happening? Or a boss? Why is the district doing this? Why? Why? Why?

We're asking lots of why's. I love to ask questions, but I'd like to deconstruct them with you and talk about answering them. Because many times our brain simply stays with the question. Well, why is this happening? I don't know. Why is this happening? I don't know. It doesn't answer the question. In coaching, we don't let questions go on answered. We don't sit with the question and wonder and wait for the answer to magically show up. We answer it with our brain.

So let's deconstruct these questions. Why is this happening? Answer the question. Why do you think it's happening? What's going on here from your perspective, from your opinion? Why do you think this is occurring? Answer the question. Then when you answer the question well, I think this is

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happening because, right. A lot of people are coming to me and saying my staff's so discontent. They're so grumpy. Nobody cares anymore. Nobody's putting an effort. They're not working as hard as they used to work. Why is this happening?

I'll say why do you think it's happening? And they'll say what they think. It's the pandemic or everything since COVID. Or these kids have never been the same, or this is just a different kind of kid. Like kids are raised differently these days. Like, there's a lot of thoughts that people have around why staff, students, parents are behaving in a particular way.

But then you want to ask yourself why do you think that's the reason? Dig down and look for what you think is really happening. Then I always ask my clients might there be another reason. Your brain is going to offer you. When you ask the first set of questions, it's going to give you what the brain thinks is true. Here's what's happening. Here's the facts, which are really just sometimes opinions.

But here are what's happening. Here are the behaviors I'm witnessing, the words I'm hearing, the actions I'm observing. So those are the facts. Whatever you think about those facts is the story part. Then you have to ask yourself what's the reason behind this, and that is an opinion? Well, I think it's COVID, or I think it's people are raising their kids different, or I think people just don't care anymore. I think there's so much pain going on in the world right now that people can't focus. They can't self-regulate.

We don't really know why people are behaving the way they are in the world right now or at our schools right now, but we can speculate. The brain will speculate whether you realize it speculating or not. You want to know the truth of what your brain is offering you. Okay? Then you want to look at might there be another reason? Here's what I think, like off the cuff. If I went deeper, what else might be true? What else might be going on?

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If the reasons that your brain gives or about you ask if it couldn't be about me, then what? Whatever reason your brain gives, ask it if it couldn't be that reason. Let's say it wasn't COVID. Let's say it has nothing to do with the pandemic. Then what? What else might it be? Just explore what else might it be?

You might feel resistance in your brain. It might say like, I don't want to think of the other things. I believe that it was COVID. That's the end of the story. Okay, we can end there, but then if you think it's COVID's fault or the pandemic's fault, you can't control that we had a pandemic. You can't control that COVID exists in the world. So now what? You're at odds with COVID and the pandemic.

Maybe it is COVID. But if it's COVID, what do we have control over? What do we don't? But if it couldn't be COVID, then what? What's happening at the microlevel? For an individual human, what's happening for them? Whatever situation you're observing, people's behaviors, their actions, their words, their attitudes, whatever you're observing out there in the school leadership world, it's never about you. It ends up always being about the person, the individual at that microlevel.

So you want to ask the question okay, there was a pandemic. Perhaps it did severely impact this individual at an individual level, but how is this person thinking and feeling and responding to the impact of the pandemic on that individual person? We don't know until we ask them, right.

So when your brain offers you why is this happening? First of all, answer the question and see what your brain offers you. It'll be interesting to notice. Why do I think this is happening? What are the reasons I believe this is happening? What else might be happening?

I have noticed with myself personally as I'm going through some significant personal situations in my life, I've watched my brain. I've observed it. I've

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taken note. Here's what I find so fascinating. There is a progression of thinking that our brain offers us. In the beginning, like when a teacher snaps at us or a parent comes in hot sideways at us, we first go into fight or flight. We like whoa, we're kind of in shock. Like what's happening here? Why is this happening? Right? We just like whoa, where did that come from? We go into a little bit of fight or flight.

But as we're able to learn how to self-regulate, there is a progression of thoughts that I've noticed I've watched my brain do. Here's what it does. First of all, it makes it all about me. Why is this happening to me? Poor me. I go into a little bit of self-pity and whining, okay? Why is this happening to me? Then I think about all the answers to that question. Then I'm like, wait a minute. Why is this happening to me? Why is it happening? What do I think is the reason behind why it's happening?

Then I get even more granular, and I'm like oh, why is this specific thing happening to me? Why is this specific incident circumstance, situation, condition, whatever? Why is this specific thing happening to me? Then I go, why is this happening to me? Why is it happening? Right here right now. If timing is all divine, and it's all meant to happen when it's happening, why is it happening right here, right now? Once I can get myself there, I shift gears.

Then I go into the second round of questions. Why is this happening for me? Why is this happening for me? How, why? What is happening here that's for me? Then why is this specific thing happening for me? Why is it happening for me specifically? How is it happening for me? Do you see how the emphasis on each word in the sentence shifts? It goes on why is this happening for me to why is this happening for me to why is this happening for me to why is it happening for me, for my benefit?

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Then why is it happening to me as a magical gift in my life, in my career, in this circumstance? How is this gifting me? Why is it gifting me? How am I the lucky one? How is this happening for me, for my benefit?

Because here's the truth. Everything that happens in your career, at your school, and with the people you work with happens for you, not to you. Happening for you, however, does not mean making life comfortable for you. It means that you are expanding your capacity to handle life and handle hard things. Whatever is being presented for you while it feels terrible, it's expanding your capacity to lead and to gain more followers of your vision.

It's expanding your capacity to self-coach your mind and to self-regulate your emotions. It's an invitation to do the work, to mature yourself, to build your resilience. You're expanding your capacity to receive bigger, greater successes and accomplishments in your life and in your career.

When something presents as a negative, when you see the value of it, and what it's teaching you and how it's training you and how it's conditioning you and expanding you and evolving you, then you can embrace it even though it feels yucky or it feels terrible or it feels hard. You know it's there for you.

It's like when you set a boundary with your own children or your students. They might feel like you're punishing them or it's pain, but you know you're doing it for their greater good. That's what the universe is offering to you when you have painful moments come up at your job or out home, whenever it may be.

You can't achieve your vision, your dream without growing pains along the way. Your dream life, your dream school, your dream career, they all need to be birthed into the world. With the birth of a dream or a goal or an accomplishment comes birthing pains.

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Olympians go through grueling physical training to accomplish their dream of winning gold. It requires them to expand mentally and emotionally.

Doctors, lawyers, astronauts, physicists, all the people, they go through grueling mental training to accomplish their dream of having breakthrough careers, and it requires them to expand mentally and emotionally.

For people who work with people, like educators, coaches, psychologists, therapists, they go through mental and emotional conditioning and training to be the best at what they do, which is help people. It requires us educators to expand mentally and emotionally, to be able to handle the thoughts and emotions that come with the territory of the success we want.

If, as a school leader, you can go through this process of seeing every situation you face through the lens of why this is happening for you, there will be nothing that you can't accomplish. Because here's what happens. Most people stay stuck wondering why it's happening to them. They don't answer the question, and they just stay there.

They feel like victim to the situation. They feel like they have no power over the circumstance. They might panic. They might try to control it externally. They try to control other people or the situation. They try to solve it to get out of the emotion and to avoid the emotion and to run away from it as fast as possible. But if controlling it doesn't work, they simply feel victim to it. It's happening to me. I'm powerless in this situation. There's nothing I can do. It must be me. I'm not cut out for school leadership.

Or the brain turns it to the other person. It must be their fault. It must be their reason. It's all on them. Blame, shaming them, abdicating responsibility, not taking accountability or ownership of what you do have control over. What you do have control over is your thoughts, emotions, and actions. You have the control over the narrative you create in your mind. The story you choose to believe about why this is happening and how it's happening for you.

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So you can choose to believe that you are empowered in your life and in your job, or that you are disempowered in your life and in your career. I want you to imagine that every situation is a conditioning exercise. It's making you stronger, wiser, and more resilient. You'll learn how to handle situations by going through them. You can't go around them. You go through conditioning exercises at every level in every stage of your career and of your life.

Most people see the conditioning exercises as punishments or pain points or signs, like a signal from the universe that something's gone wrong, and you should stop or redirect or turn back completely. They're not signals that you're off track. They are the exercises required to give you the tools, skills, knowledge, and strength that you need at the next level. It's just like a video game.

Your career is one big video game, and you have upleveled to school leadership. You're in the Masters now. You're in the big leagues, and it's going to require you to expand. What I've noticed is that you can either level up and go through the exercises with the understanding that as you're going through them, you're also opening yourself up to more positive experiences, more successes, more wins, more gains than you can ever imagine.

So with this expansion yes, there is pain, but there is also. It's like when you birth a baby. The pain of birth is excruciating, but the love and joy that you get for the rest of your life when you have a child is priceless. It's so priceless that we go through the pain multiple times and have these multiple children. Because the love and the joy, it far outweighs the pain. Because the pain point is temporary. Whatever pain you're going through right now is temporary. On the other side of that is abundance, joy, love, gratitude, expansion, evolution.

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So I want you to think about what's going on in your life right now for you and see if you can look at it through the lens in which it is a conditioning exercise to expand you as an empowered principal. This is the energy of the Empowered Principal® Collaborative. You want to be in this room. We're changing lives, one thought and one leader at a time. Let's go. I'll see you at EPC. Take good care. Talk to you next week. 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.