

## Ep #329: The Impact of Your Self-Identity



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

## Ep #329: The Impact of Your Self-Identity

Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 329.

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. How are you doing today? I'm fabulous. The sun is finally shining in sunny California. It's April. What is happening? El Nino, La Nina, whatever it is, has been pummeling us over here. We have had so much rain, cold, clouds. I thought I had moved to Seattle. It has been cold and windy, but the sun is coming. I can feel my little heart singing. I'm going out on my walks again, enjoying life, just loving where I live. I love, love California so much. We just took it. We took one for the team this year. We had a really, really rainy and cold winter and spring.

So I feel delightful. I'm light on my toes. I'm out in the sun getting my vitamin D again, and it's wonderful. I hope you wherever you live in your part of the world, it is glorious and happy and you are getting your vitamin D as well.

So we're going to talk about you today, my friend, my empowered principals. I'm going to go through a conversation that I had with one of my clients because it matters so much. We don't stop to take time to think about it. We don't think that it does. But I want to show you how it does.

So this podcast is really talking about the impact of your leadership identity. What I mean by that is you have a self-identity. You have a self-concept. It's the way that you think about yourself. It's how you self-identify, how you label yourself. I'm an early riser. I like to sleep in. I work out in the mornings. No, I'm an evening person. I love to drink water, or I love to drink iced tea.

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I'm a person who dot, dot, dot procrastinates. I'm a person who gets stuff done. I'm a person who gets distracted. I'm a person who fill in the blank, right? We have a self-identity about ourselves, just who we are as humans. We will think this is just how I'm wired. This is just how I was born. This is just who I am. It's not changeable.

I'm here to tell you that you have characteristics that you exhibit and what is changeable is the way you think about those characteristics, the way you describe yourself-and your characteristics, and how you feel about yourself. That is your identity.

It's not the fact that you get distracted easily, like me. It's how you think and feel about getting distracted, what you make it mean about yourself and your ability to lead your school and lead the life that you want to live. This is very powerful. So turn it up, take notes, listen to it multiple times if you have to because we're talking about the impact and the power of your self-identity. Okay.

I've been working with a client on this. Now this client has been a principal for 15 years. This person is not new to school leadership. Yet this person is having self-identity doubts, self-worth doubts, questioning themselves, doubting themselves, in lots of anxiety, in lots of fear that they're not doing the job right, that they will be caught being a fraud, right?

We have the fraud complex. We're worried that someone's going to find out the truth that we really don't know what we're doing, and that we've been hiding it all this time. We've been faking it, but we really aren't an expert. We really shouldn't be a school leader. We don't have the traits we should have. We think we should be some version of ourselves that we're not and then we get down on ourselves for it.

So this client of mine, this is work we have been doing throughout this entire school year. This is so, so important because it requires us to slow

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down and create some awareness around what we think about ourselves. That process, like opening that door and being willing to look at what you think about you, it can be very painful. How do I know? I have done this work. I have been in personal development as a client for well over a decade, I would say pushing two decades now.

When I went through my divorce from my son's father back when I was, gosh, early 30s, I can't even remember now. I had a little meltdown, an identity meltdown of who I was. I was going from being a wife to not being a wife. To being a part of a family to having a family of separation, right? Wanting to work that out very amicably because we wanted to co-parent and do that in a very loving and compassionate way with one another.

So I remember that's when I got into personal development. Like identifying who am I in this marriage, who am I as a teacher, who am I as a friend. I question all of it. I was consumed with learning about myself so that I could evolve and grow and be the best version of me in my young 30 self, right? I wanted to be the best mom I could be, the best co-parent I could be, the best dating material I could be because I wanted another relationship.

My first husband and I, we met in college. We were first loves. We loved each other very much. We were married 10 years. We just started to like evolve apart into separate desires and separate dreams for our future. So we lovingly went our separate ways. It was still very hard because we were loving to one another and compassionate and kind and friendly. We knew that it was in both of our best interests to follow our separate paths.

So I say that to tell you I've been in the personal development world for a very long time. I became certified as a coach in back in 2012 when I was a school leader because whoa did I need it. I was having another mini life crisis over there when I became a school leader. It was so hard.

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I was a single mom. Alex was just going to middle school, and he was having a really hard time transitioning into the middle school life. He was still going between two homes. I was a single mom trying to open a brand new school as a brand new principal. I can't even tell you. My world felt like a hurricane.

So I dove into personal development. I got certified. Then I used it just to kind of clean up my own life. But my self-identity has evolved year after year, decade after decade. It continues to evolve. I think it's one of the most magical experiences to go through. But I will say this from the onset, it can bring up really painful emotions if you've tucked away your self-identity for a long time.

So I'm not going to sugarcoat this, but I am going to tell you it is worth it every single time. I literally as a coach for school leaders watch magic unfold with the clients that I work with. There hasn't been a client that I haven't watched transform their lives completely. I'm talking all areas of their life.

Definitely their leadership, their career path, their leadership skills, their leadership mindset, their self-identity as a leader, but also their relationship, their partnerships, their family, relationship with moms and dads, relationship with siblings, relationship with their friends, relationship with their own children, relationship with themselves, which is what we're going to talk about today. But also their relationship with time, their relationship with money, their relationship with planning, their relationship with colleagues and friends, their relationship with resources, like having material things. Everything changes.

Their spiritual journeys, their friendship journeys, their vision for their life. It's all magical to watch somebody go through and break through some old identities and step into the identity that they want to step into.

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So back to my client. I went on a tangent there sorry, guys, but I'm so passionate about this. I just have to tell you the backstory here. So I'm with this client, and this person has been struggling emotionally. When it comes down to it, the struggle is not in the skill set. The person's been doing the job for 15 years. It's not in the skill set. The person has the skill set.

But it's the thoughts about the skill set, the thoughts about themselves, that bring up these painful emotions and this anxiety and this stress and this worry about what that person thinks of themselves and what other people think about them. So I have been gently pulling this person in to self-reflection because there's three steps to The Empowered Principal® process. Step one is awareness. Step two is alignment. Step three is momentum.

So the first part is awareness. When we go from not being aware at all to being aware, it feels like a splash in the face. It's like whoa, that's a lot. Sometimes it's too much. So sometimes we have to take a step back, and we have to inch our way in. Other times people dive right in. They go way deep really fast.

That's me. I like to go deep fast. When I discover something about myself, I'm lean in really hard and I want to feel it. I want to explore it. I want to understand it so that I can align to what feels good, what feels true, and what I want in my life because that is what generates momentum. So I just prefer to go through the awareness stage, faster, deeper, I just lean way in.

But other people, if it's your first time like creating this newer identity, you might want to take it a little slower. You can stay in the shallow end. It's not a problem. We'll get the floaties. We'll work our way down. Okay.

So with this person, we've been doing that. We've got the floaties on. We're working a little bit at a time. I asked them a question. The response was, "I'm trying so hard to keep up, but nothing seems to work. I can't seem to

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be on top of things. I can't seem to sit down enough to plan ahead. I feel like I can't stop playing Whack a Mole. I feel like I'm in a whirlwind. My brain is spinning. I can't sleep. I feel off.”

I asked the person to fill in this blank. There's something different that I need to do, what is that? Fill in the blank. If I did that thing, then what? The brain wants to offer this if I just would make myself-do this one thing, if I would just plan better, if I would just show up earlier, if I would just stay later, if I would just stop visiting with my teachers in the hallway and stay focused.

If I could just not have an open door policy, I would get my work done. If I could just get more teachers or if I could just get a different boss, then fill in the blank, everything would be perfect, right? We think there's one thing and then a big solution. But we feel like we can't get to the one thing.

I want you to notice why you feel you can't get to the thing. That is where the self-identity steps in. Because I'm this. Because I talk too much. I'm distractible. I'm too emotional. I care too much what people think. I have a hard time letting go of fear. I am worried I'm going to lose my job, or I'm not really that good at this, or I don't really know what I'm doing.

We have so many thoughts about ourselves that form this story of who we are and how we show up. When that story feels painful for us, but we continue to tell it without examining it or without questioning or doubting it, it sinks in. It feels like an anchor that sinks you down to the depths of the ocean, and there's no way out of it. You feel like you cannot change. You're stuck in an overwhelm cycle. You're spinning around. There's no way out because it's you. It's inherently your self-identity that you're not going to be able to fix this or change this.

So I was asking this client. This is a Byron Katie question by the way. I want to make sure I give her credit for this. But she asks the question who would

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you be without that thought? I love this question because we don't ask ourselves to answer it. We don't ask ourselves, first of all, but then we don't answer it.

It just gives us a little bit of space to create the awareness that it's actually a thought, not the truth. There's a difference. There are thoughts and then there's what we believe to be true. That's why truth is in the eye of the beholder. Because what feels absolutely true for you based on your core values, your belief system, could feel the opposite to another person, and that could be their truth. That's why when people say I want to speak my truth, it's their version of the truth. Their truth, their opinion. It doesn't make it fact.

Now, I could go deep down and start talking about facts about your self-identity. But for the purpose of this, I just want you to understand that how you think about yourself and how you interpret the thoughts you have about yourself, that is what sinks into your emotional energy, your emotional state, how you feel about yourself. So when you think I'm this, I'm that, I'm not this, I'm not that. I can't change this. I tried to change it. It doesn't seem to work. You're fighting almost with yourself, and you're thinking this must just be my self-identity. It's just who I am.

Ask yourself-this question. Who would you be without that belief system? Who would you be without that thought? What if it wasn't true that you were this or that? Or what if you were different? What if? Imagine how it would feel. Who would you be in all aspects of your life if you were genuinely not afraid of what people thought or genuinely not afraid to let your test scores drop, or genuinely not afraid to have that conversation, or genuinely not afraid to speak up and say I've evolved. I'm ready for more. I want to level up in this district. If not, I'm going to level up somewhere else.

Imagine how freeing that would feel in your self-identity. What would you be thinking and feeling about yourself? The empowerment of The Empowered



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Principal® Program comes from self-identity, the power of it. When you believe you're worthy, you're capable, you're competent, you're resilient, that you're fun, that you are a solution creator, that you are, what does Gabby Bernstein call it? A super attractor, right? There's all these phrases that people say to help other people, like us, all of us, improve our self-identity.

Why? Because of the impact. The impact of what you think about yourself and how you feel about yourself, it's everything. It's the thing that holds you back, or it's the thing that propels you. If you believe in yourself, you move forward. If you believe in your school, it moves forward. If you believe in your staff and teachers, they move forward. Students, they move forward.

When we think about ourselves that well, we're not that good, or we really don't know how to do this, or we're not capable of learning that, or we don't have time for this, or we're just too distracted to be able to do that thing. There's no way I can get a walk in. I'm too busy. When we identify as a busy person, an overworked person, an overwhelmed person, a stressed out person, just notice what you're thinking about yourself because it impacts the decisions you make, the approach that you take to school leadership.

It impacts how you show up. It impacts the words you say, the energy behind your actions and decisions. It impacts your results. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of understanding your current self-identity and then your desired self-identity. I'm going to share with you a little secret.

This is why I love bringing personal development into professional development for school leaders. You get to pick your identity. You get to pick it out of thin air. You get to decide when you were a little kid and somebody said you're this and you're that and you're messy and you're disheveled and you don't follow through, or you're not really good at

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planning or whatever. Like we have things that we're told we weren't good at, or we got scolded for, or we got labeled. It's like we went through childhood, and it was like we got labeled as this. Labeled as a good reader, labeled as a not good reader, labeled good at math.

Somebody told me very recently, and maybe I've already shared this on the podcast. They're like you're not really good with numbers, are you? I was like what? I was like probably not. I took it on immediately and then I caught it. I was like wait a minute. No, I'm really good with numbers. Just because I can't do mental math doesn't mean I'm not good with numbers. That's a pretty big identity to take on. Not good with numbers. Like I don't want to identify as a person who's not good with numbers.

Another thought I used to have, I'm not good at technology. Then my friends would come over they're like God, you're amazing. Like you did all these like slideshows. For girls weekend, I put it to music, and I had the slideshow and everything. They're like you're so amazing at technology. I'm like what?

So I realized I was the one telling myself I'm not good at tech. I was the one who was about to take on somebody else's comment of I'm not good with numbers. Notice that. All through childhood people put little labels, little stickers on you. The stickers peel off. You can just take off that identity.

If someone told you you're not good at this or not good at that, please check in now that you're an adult. Do you want to believe you're not good at math or you're not good at reading or you're not good at public speaking or you're not good at spreadsheets or whatever it is you're struggling with? Do you want to continue to believe that about yourself? It impacts you.

All of you out there, people who say I'm not good with money. A lot of women especially have been told their whole lives men do the money.

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You're not good with money. Not good with numbers, not good with math. You don't even know investment. Right? Is that true?

Hey, there's a difference between identifying as somebody who isn't good, like it's an inherent problem that was instilled upon you when you were born versus I'm learning how to invest money. I'm learning how to be good with numbers. I'm learning this technology. I'm evolving, I'm growing. I'm transforming my self-identity. You do not have to believe anything that anyone tells you that you are.

If they put a sticker on you, a label that says you're this or you're that, you're emotional, you're irrational, you're crazy. There's other ones, like you're so brilliant, and you're like no, I'm not. They tell you the great things. They put on brilliant sticker, and you take it off. No, I'm not. Then they put on okay, well, then you're not brilliant.

I want you to create awareness around your self-identity. Write it down. Make a list. Who am I? What's my self-identity? What do I believe about myself? What am I good at? What am I not good at? What do I believe about myself? What do I want to believe about myself? Think about this. You do not have to identify as a person that isn't good enough, that isn't smart enough, that isn't cut out to be a leader, that can't handle hard things.

What do you want your identity to be? You get to pick it. You get to write it. You get to script it. It's yours for the making. You sculpt it. If you want to be good at numbers, decide you're going to be good at numbers. If something comes up that feels hard with numbers, tell yourself I'm going to learn it. I'm going to figure it out.

If you want to be good at technology but right now you don't feel like you're good at technology, decide I'm going to be good at technology. Here's all the ways I know how to do my phone. I know how to plug it into my car that's basically a computer now. I know how to check email. There are

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technology things you do know. There are a number of things you are good at. There are scheduling things you do know how to do.

You're not in a school leadership position with an identity of I'm incapable, I'm incompetent, I have no skills. Right? But we get lost in it because the job is hard. It's challenging. It requires us to reevaluate and reexamine and reidentify.

When you go from being a teacher and you have a self-identity as a teacher and then you walk into a leadership position, it challenges your identity. Your past identity has to dissolve almost completely as you're evolving and like metamorphosing into the new version of you as a leader. You're going from I'm a teacher, this is how I identify. This is what I'm good at. These are my skills into I'm a leader. New skill sets, new ways of thinking. You have to transform and evolve your self-identity every time you uplevel.

Here's what I have found to be true for me and for my clients. The self-identity usually comes first. So before you ever became a school leader, you were thinking about what it would be like. You were envisioning what it would look like, how it would feel, what you'd be able to do. The self-identity, like you kind of role played it in your mind.

It's like being a little kid and trying on your mom's dress clothes or something where you're just pretending to be mommy or pretending in a wedding dress or pretending to play house. You're not really in that position yet, but you're envisioning it. You're role playing it, and you're feeling. You're testing how it would feel to be the school leader. Your self-identity starts to evolve before you ever set foot in the school leadership job.

So for those of you who are in a school leadership job and are thinking of advancing up to a district level position, you've been playing around with it in your mind. What would it be like to be a superintendent or not? What

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would it be like to be the curriculum director or the bilingual director? What would it feel like to be the special education director or the accounting director? Whatever role you're interested in playing. Before you ever actually set foot in it, you already stepped into and played around with the self-identity.

Now once you get into it, what you envisioned and what it is tends to be different, and that's where the cognitive dissonance kicks in. You're like whoa, this is not what I expected. It's like parenting. If you went from not being a parent to being a parent, you know what I'm talking about. It's a whole new ballgame.

But you envision it. It's going to be love and fun. Yes, you're going to lose a little sleep. That's okay. Yes, you're going to change a little diapers. That's okay. Then you're in it, you're like oh, my goodness. Then your self-identity gets shaken, and you have to decide as a parent who am I going to be? What kind of parent? Am I going to be resilient? Am I going to teach my child this or that? Am I going to model this or that? How am I going to feed them? How am I going to educate them? How am I going to love them? How am I going to express what they mean to me?

You have to decide your identity, instead of letting people put labels on you and deciding for you. So I'm inviting you to step into your empowerment and create the identity that you want.

Guess what? I can help you with that. Come on in. Experience coaching, experience the power of stepping into your empowerment. Imagine stepping into an identity where you feel limitless. You feel like you could do anything. That's what we're over here talking about stepping into full empowerment, stepping into the identity that you want to experience. Come on over. Let's go. I'll talk to you guys next week. Take good care of yourselves. Bye, bye.

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Hey, 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](http://angelakellycoaching.com/work-with-me) to learn more and join. I'll see you inside of The Empowered Principal® Collaborative.

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