

Ep #330: The Power of Play for YOU



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 330.

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. I am so happy to be here with you today. Happy Tuesday. Are you ready? This is going to be very short, very sweet, very fun. I want to talk to you about the power of play, not for the students, not for the teachers, but for you.

I was working with a client who is very intense with her work. She loves her work. It's her passion. Now, I know most of you feel the same way. We spend a lot of our time working because we love what we do. We care about kids. Even when we're tired, we put in the hours because we love what we do. We're looking for those outcomes. I hear you, I get it, I did it.

We tend to get a lot of pleasure from work. It's very important to not put all of your fun and play eggs in one basket. Because there will be a time when work cannot be your source of pleasure, your source of accomplishment and productivity and collaboration and all the things you love about your work. Feeling productive, feeling supportive, helping other people, solving problems, working together, that synergy that comes from work, being able to check all those boxes off that to-do list, or when you help a student emotionally regulate, or you help a teacher emotionally regulate.

When you help a teacher and you coach them and mentor them. They're now able to get a system for their classroom management, and they're humming along, that feels amazing. Or when you work with your special education team, and you finally figured out the accommodations that work for a student. All of those things are so amazing. They cannot be the only

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thing in your life that gives you life, that brings you joy, that brings you delight.

When your work is your primary source of pleasure, you are very heavily reliant on that job. I've seen people live their entire lives getting their pleasure solely from work. Even when work is sucking the life out of them and exhausting them and taking them away from family and friends and vacations and breaks and weekends and nights, it's almost like an addiction where you can't seem to put it down.

I had a client who was feeling that way. She actually worked abroad for several years and then came back to the States ready to implement and share all of her wisdom. I mean, this woman is so brilliant, so knowledgeable, so skilled, and so advanced in her thoughts and so innovative. She is a gem. She's a treasure. She loves her work with a deep passion. She is also a mother and a wife, and, of course, a daughter and a friend, and she has a full life outside of work.

But the joy came from work. I'm sure joy came from her family too. I'm not saying none of it did. But in terms of what we talk about, the joy in her life, the passion came from her work. There's nothing wrong with that until that's not an option.

So there was an experience in her life that caused her to pause from the work that she was doing. Her brain had a very hard time. Like when people are addicted to gambling, let's say, and they gamble, gamble, gamble, and then somehow they get cut off from gambling. There is an unease, an urgency to fill that addiction, that desire. It's very programmed within us. We want to feel the adrenaline rush of gambling. I'm not a gambler at all. So I don't know what that feels like.

But there are things we want to do. Some people are addicted to video games or other people are addicted to eating food or drinking alcohol or

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taking drugs and that kind of thing, but I'm thinking about something just like, gambling, to me, is like there, available, until it's not. You get cut off. Then you're forced to face that addiction and that urge to keep working.

So I know a lot of people, including principals, can get addicted to their work without calling it addiction. Because it looks very productive. You look like a very productive member of society when you work long hours and you're at your school early and late. You're there on weekends. You're there at night. You're there for all the performances and all the sporting events and all the dances.

People are like she's amazing. She's so dedicated. Then you get all of that dopamine flow of like I'm great. I feel good. I'm a good principal. Everybody loves me. I love what I do. Until a moment where perhaps you're not allowed or you don't have access. Not in a negative way, but let's say you get sick, or you have to take a leave. Or somebody in your family needs you to take a medical leave and to support them. All of a sudden, you're not getting that hit of adrenaline and dopamine that the brain loves to fuel off of, okay.

So I had a client who had some time away from work and found it very uncomfortable, very distressful initially. As we coached, as she leaned into it, she noticed something. She started realizing that she could fulfill her truest desire without work. It could be from work, she's done that, but it also could be fueled outside of work.

What she realized about herself, and last week, I talked about self-identity. The self-identity that this person had was I get my pleasure from work. It shifted into oh, I get my pleasure from learning and growing and evolving and challenging myself. She realized that she could do those things outside of work as much as she could do that at work. So she started playing the guitar. She started painting. She started cooking. Now she's getting joy

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from the art and the craft of painting and cooking and learning how to play the guitar, something she's never done before.

I said that's amazing. Tell me more. How does it feel to get this joy from activities outside of work? She said, "It's actually easier. I feel like I have more to give. Because when I'm contributing at work, there's also energy spent out." So she was working really hard to get that adrenaline dopamine pleasure and that joy and that delight. It took a lot of effort and time and energy, and it would deplete her.

So then after a long day of work, she'd come home and be so tired, she was not even thinking about playing guitar or cooking or painting because she was exhausted. She said, "Doing these things, there just isn't any pressure to perform. I can do them at my leisure. I can fail and nobody knows or cares. We laugh about it. It's lighter. It's easier. I have more to give to other people. I have more fuel in my tank."

She told me this, I thought this was so funny. She said, "When I was in the other job." She's in a different job now that just is a little more relaxing. In the first job she was in, she said, "When people would tell me like you need to self-care, you need to get rest." She thought rest meant literal rest. Like filling her cup up meant getting some sleep, sleeping in on the weekends.

I remember actually, now that I'm thinking about this out loud, when she first hired me, she said, "I am so exhausted that I have to basically sleep most of the Saturday away. So now I'm not spending time with my family because I have to rest and fill myself back up. So I really only have one day a week with my family to play and have fun." We definitely coached on that.

But she said now that she's getting her joy from learning and growing and evolving and playing and having fun outside of work in addition to contributing and having fun at work. She said, "I didn't realize how much it

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still energizes me and how much I need joy in my life, how much I needed to play and relax and have fun.”

So I asked her what desire was work filling for you? There was a desire that you had that you were using work to fulfill. But now you fulfilled it in a different way. What is that? She said, “I desire to expand. Expansion is possibility. I want to be a person who's always learning something new, challenge myself, growing.”

She said, “When I'm believing that I am expanding, that I'm evolving, that I'm growing,” which is another reason why she said she wanted coaching because she knew it would be a different kind of a challenge. It would be a mental and emotional growth challenge for her. So when she feels that she's expanding, she's adventurous and excited. That allows her to tap into what else do I want to learn?

Here's the thing. The fun thing about playing outside of work, if you don't end up liking it, you drop it. There's no baggage. There's no pressure to perform. If you take up piano and you're like give that six months, not loving it. Who cares? Try the guitar, try the drums, try the banjo, I don't know. Or if you're into the arts, or if you're into sports, try different things. Go out and explore, see what feels good.

But the invitation is for you to fulfill yourself in a joyous way that has zero pressure to perform. Because at work, there is pressure to perform. There are people who expect you to do things in a certain way, under a certain timeline, to get a certain result. That can feel fun. It can feel passionate because you do care about kids. But it also can be stressful and anxiety ridden and exhausting.

So when you are filling up your joy bucket from work, I want you to ask yourself what is the actual desire that I'm trying to fulfill? If I had to fulfill it outside of work, what would it look like? What would it be to just have some

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fun? What would it be to be in the self-identity of I'm a person who's balanced? I have fun at work. I have lots of fun outside of work. I grow and evolve when I'm at work, and I grow and evolve just for the fun of it at home.

I don't use up all of my energy at work because I want energy to live my life and to rest and watch movies and go dancing and take walks and be with my kids and cook fun meals and have people over and go wine tasting and take road trips and learn to play the guitar and take a sculpting class or take a pottery class. Go have fun, my friends. You need it. You desire it. You crave it.

There's a part of you deep inside that feels so sad that you've dismissed your desire for fun. You've dismissed your desire for pleasure outside of work just for the fun of it. No pressure at all. It's just for the pure delight of it. I invite you to go and explore what it would feel like to bring that joy back into your life and into your week.

Okay, I want to tell you about one more thing too. The Summer of Fun is going to be underway in June and July this year. The Empowered Principal® Facebook group is an active community of people who love to participate in the Summer of Fun. I've been doing this since I think 2020 or '21. I can't remember. It was during COVID when I started it because I was trying to get people to remember that they can create fun in their lives. That fun is a chapter that you get to write for yourself. People don't tell you how to have fun. You tell you how to have fun.

So in the Facebook group Summer of Fun, we post all the fun we're having. I draw names every single week for prizes. I'll mail you a little gift basket of goodies. I've done it every year. I change it up every year. It's so much fun. We get out. We explore. We move. We create. We move our bodies. We get into the delight with other people, we mingle with others. We have fun

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with ourselves. We have fun with others. We explore our communities. We go out on adventures. We go on misadventures.

We remember to be humans who have fun. We fill that bucket outside of work, and we find that work is more pleasurable when we're having pleasure outside of work. So try that and join the Facebook group. Summer of Fun will be starting in June. I want you they're having all of the fun. Have an amazing week. Talk to you next week. Take good care of yourselves. Bye.

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 likeminded 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 to learn more and join. I'll see you inside of the Empowered Principal® Collaborative.

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