

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 332.

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. I am so excited to share this podcast episode with you. I interviewed my friend and fellow coach Jess Johnson. She has such insight for all of you. The reason I love Jess is because she has been working with me to help me regulate my nervous system.

So when I go into freakout mode, which is more than I would like to share, I need some kind of thoughts and tools and strategies to reregulate myself so that I can stay present when I feel like I'm in fight or flight. Jess has been able to teach me some very simple techniques that I can use right in the moment when I'm actually in the moment of freaking out.

She also, on this podcast episode, will share with you some ways to proactively take care of your emotional and your nervous system needs so that you can stay present and focused when you are in a situation where you are feeling unsafe, uncertain, a little bit of a threat that's coming up for you in a moment at school. Those moments happen.

Parents come at you sideways, a teacher gets upset, a student's really dysregulated, your boss yells at you. Those are moments where we can feel very unsafe and uncertain. Jess is going to share with you some great tips and strategies. So enjoy the show.

Angela: Hello empowered principals. Welcome to today's episode. I have a very special guest with me here. Her name is Jess Johnson. Jess and I met

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

through our 200k Mastermind, our business mastermind. We are both coaches. I have really been drawn to Jess's work. She's actually done some peer coaching with me and worked with me to help regulate my nervous system when it has been intensely activated.

So I love her work. I love her energy. I wanted to bring her on the podcast to help you all learn a little bit more about the kind of work she does to help you be able to regulate yourself in real time. So Jess, welcome to the podcast.

Jess: Hey, Angela, thank you so much for having me. I cannot wait to talk about all things emotions and courage and compassion because I think that it takes courage to be able to extend ourselves compassion and really emotional work is compassionate work. So that I'm a life coach. I call myself a courage and compassion coach because those are really the qualities that I help my clients build. So they have a level of self-awareness to know what their triggers are, how to talk to themselves in the moment, and how to cultivate the courage to keep getting up and trying again, even when you feel like you're discouraged or you've been knocked down.

Angela: Yes, yes, I love this. Can you just start by giving a little bit of your background and the areas that you study, and some of the tools that you use with your clients?

Jess: Totally. So I am a former licensed clinical social worker. I was a therapist. I started working out with kids actually like way, way back when. I also have a background in working with sexual assault and domestic violence survivors. During my course of working with kids, I worked in residential treatment, and this is actually before I went back to undergrad.

I was working with kids in residential treatment. I just found myself getting discouraged because you would do all of this work with the kids and then

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

they would do what they needed to do to earn passes to go home on the weekends or whatever. Then pretty frequently, one of two things would happen. Either one, the kid was left waiting on Friday for their parents to show up, and they never did, or they would go home and kind of something, again, traumatic or emotional would happen over the weekend, and then they would come back to us pretty dysregulated.

So I started looking like after I went to grad school like, what can I do that would have like a bigger impact on these kids? Okay, that's working with adults. Then I started working in corrections, mental health corrections. For seven years, I did that. Until, once again, I started seeing something that I was identifying as something I wanted to do something to make a bigger impact. I'm a pretty proactive person.

So I was seeing an uptick of veterans on my caseload. I had grown up in the military. Both of my parents served. My dad did 30 years. My mom actually got out when she was pregnant with me. So when I kind of saw this and was just like thinking about this community that I had grown up in, and I started looking into well what can I do to help not let this happen anymore? I was like oh, they take LCSWs in the army. Super.

So then I commissioned into the army, and I was an active duty therapist for five years in the Army. Served, I was stationed at both a hospital here in Hawaii, where I live now, and I also was a behavioral health officer for the Combat Aviation Brigade in Watertown, New York, 10th Mountain. I did a combat deployment right in the middle of my time in Afghanistan and got out of the military to pivot to coaching.

Initially, I did start working with veterans before the pandemic hit because I had been running retreats for veterans in their own transition, helping them in their own transition from the military. Then the pandemic happened. I was like all right, it's time for me to start my own business.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

While I was working with veterans actually is when I found EFT, or Emotional Freedom Techniques, which is one of the major modalities that I use in my coaching practice and that I am so passionate about. It's frequently known as EFT or tapping. It involves tapping on what's known as energy meridian points around the body, which is the same points if you've ever done acupuncture, acupressure, these are very similar points.

When you tap on them while combining putting your attention on whatever like thought or feeling you wish you weren't having and like combining that with an affirmation acceptance, we're actually calming the central nervous system. That's what allows us to feel what we need to feel safely because we're regulating ourselves while putting our attention on that kind of unwanted or uncomfortable thing. That's what allows for a shift in perspective or a shift in how we are thinking or feeling.

Angela: I feel better just listening to you tell. It regulates me just to hear your voice. So as I was telling you guys, Jess did a session with me. I've been going through some personal things, and she was able to really help me regulate myself. In my work with school leaders, they come to the call most often dysregulated.

There's something that about the work that we do as school leaders, we are in the business of people. We are managing adults. We are managing children. We're coaching up to the our district officials and leaders, and we're also coaching out into our community with families, and parents, families, extended care providers for our children.

That's a lot of space to hold the energy for the emotions that children's feel, the emotions that teachers are going through and support staff, the emotions that parents come into the day with, and then the emotions of our bosses coming in or out of our school.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

So the school leaders often come to me and they're kind of one or two ways. They're aware that they're dysregulated, but they're not sure what to do with the energy. Or the only coping mechanism that they are aware of is to stuff the feeling down or to avoid it to push through it, push it away I should say. Not push through it, but really put it at bay at the side because they have to keep going to lead their school.

So principals are busy. Their schedules are really impacted. They're having this emotional experience while they're so busy. So when you think about the life of a school leader, what are some ways that they can, first of all, create awareness? Then second of all, what are those tools that you would recommend that they could use kind of in real time?

Jess: Totally. So I think this is such a multi-layered answer.

Angela: Yes. It was big question. Sorry. How do we solve the world's problems?

Jess: Totally, right. Actually what we were having a discussion, and that's what led to you asking me to be on the podcast. Because I was kind of equating what I'm hearing you talk about and what my perception is from talking to my friends, particularly friends who are teachers, and my experience as a therapist.

Angela: Yes.

Jess: You get into this line of work, right, that helping profession, which I would teaching argue is the type of helping profession, right?

Angela: Yes, yes.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

Jess: Principaling, all of that.

Angela: Yes.

Jess: You get into it, I imagine, because you want to mold the minds of young people and make an impact there and help these kids, help shape them and then their futures? Right. What the job becomes a lot more about though is like managing parents, right and expectations and then throw a pandemic into the mix and test scores and like things that have less to do with what is the actual interaction and shaping of these minds? Versus here's all these check the box things that I have?

So, my first part of answering this is being able to like step into the possibility that there is another way of doing things. Maybe we don't know it, what it looks like yet, but we do know that what is happening now isn't working. Of the amount of burnout that exists in the teaching industry. So it is, first, being able to make that decision. Am I here to like shake things up? Or am I here to do things the same old way?

Because that is what this takes. It is a practice. Learning how to become aware, self-aware, especially of your emotions and learning where they came from and choosing to motivate with space and grace, which I think is like the compassion thing versus constantly going to this place that I often see people go in types of these helping professions where it's like it's always to put everybody else first. Of making that decision of taking a step back and really examining where do I need to reprioritize my time so I can put more into me right now?

Angela: Yes, yeah, one of the things that I tell my clients is I know that intellectually, you understand the need to, and when I say self-care, I'm not talking about a spa day or getting your nails done. Those are lovely, and you should do those to your liking. But I'm talking about like, authentic

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

self-care, which is taking care of yourself mentally, physically, and emotionally and spiritually, however that lands for you.

But truly taking care of yourself, so that you feel rested, you feel fed. Your body is like physically regulated. You're mentally regulated. You're emotionally regulated. Because you need that. I call that clean space, you need that space to be able to lead other people.

Because if your bucket is full up, full to the brim of fatigue, mental fatigue, emotional fatigue, psychological fatigue, emotional, just all of that, and you're full, and you're holding on to all this emotion and all of this energy, and then you go into a school day. There is nowhere for other people's energy, which that's the first thing that hits you when you walk in the door. There's no more for that to go.

Jess: Yeah, I think too like leading, nowhere does leading imply you have to do things perfectly. Or you even have to have everything figured out, right? Leaders don't because they're doing something typically that hasn't been done before. Right? They're going first, and they are letting that inspire other people.

I think that is where the compassion piece comes in so strongly here because you can't be scared of failure. You need to know that you're going to have your own back and that you're going to be able to talk to yourself from a place of love to recover from whatever happens. I think also like one of the things that you said I think right before we got on the call, like Jess, sometimes like these school leaders are in these like public positions, right.

I think number one is like letting it be okay that you might not have all the answers in certain moments or that you are feeling emotional versus feeling like leading and leading in a public arena means I have to be stoic. I am not allowed to show any anything other than staunch.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

Angela: Yeah, I totally know. Yeah, because I did the same thing. I was a kindergarten teacher for 15 years. Then I became, I was a reading specialist instructional coach before I was hired to lead. When I stepped into that role, the sentence I told myself was like I'm in the big leagues now. I need to like step up. But what I thought stepping up meant, as I leveled up my career, was having a thicker skin, like a thicker armor. I had to be professional and polished. I dressed the part, and I spoke the part, and my energy was very bold in the sense that I thought that's what a leader was.

Until I realized I was still a human being. There were things going on at school that I didn't know what I was doing. My self-concept actually dropped, like your self-identity was just all over the map. You were a mess, and you're still a human with all of these emotions coming up. But you're telling yourself I shouldn't be having this emotional experience because now I'm a leader.

I think our brain assumes that being a leader means not having to process a motion. That's not true. Just say it that way. Like, it's farther from the truth because you have up leveled. You are taking the first step. You're leading people, which means you're being innovative. You're trying things. You're doing things you don't know, you've never done before, and you're the one going first. So you're putting yourself in a position to not know, in a position to be thrown off, in a position to have things fail and not work.

We need to, as leaders, understand what that looks like in terms of emotional regulation and also becoming okay or more comfortable or more intimate with the emotions that are going to rise to the surface. I felt like I was going to die, to be honest. Like the emotions were so intense, but I didn't, at the time, have any tools.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

So it was like, let me do this. Let me put an armor around me and bubble wrap and pretend I'm okay. Look good on the surface to everybody else, and then go home and be a mess.

Jess: Yeah. That's what I think. So EFT stands for Emotional Freedom Techniques. I think of emotional freedom is like the ability, the freedom to feel your emotions and knowing you're not going to die. That is what it feels like.

I have heard a couple of times people saying things like oh, nobody ever died from an emotion. I get my ire goes up around that because that's simply not true. That is why we have such rising rates of suicide right now. That is exactly it.

But it is our emotions can be just as painful, if not more than an open wound, because of all that layer of judgment that we put on ourselves from having this. That nobody else can see and that we can't see and that we don't understand.

I think having tools, this is something like if everybody just hears me say this one thing, here's what I want people to understand about tools. Because I am frequently asked how do I use EFT when I'm dysregulated? How do I use, what tools do I need when I'm upset? When honestly when we are upset, when we are in those modes, like it is survival. It is like getting ourselves out of that, right?

Our tools come in, they're the most important using them before and after. Right? Because when we are using those tools to regulate our central nervous system just because, not because we're dysregulated but just because you're humans with a central nervous system with an amygdala and taking in information all the time.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

The more we are doing things to let our bodies feel productive and rest instead of like we're doing something wrong or like simply learning how to relax and giving ourselves permission to do that, then we're slowing down. We're able to think about what we actually want to put off in the world. We're able to daydream about what that might look like. So that way when we're in those situations that feel very scary or hard, like we've got kind of a plan in place because our bodies aren't already taxed. Our brains aren't like grasping at something that we don't have any idea what it looks like.

Angela: Actually, that's so good because people, we wait to regulate until we're dysregulated. I had never thought about it in terms of almost like getting your oil changed on schedule because it's a proactive move that you make to keep your car running. You don't want to get to the point where you desperately, your burn your engine out and need oil or whatever. But this is what you're saying. It's part of the tools that we use can be to just like keep, it's like maintenance on the proactive end.

Jess: Totally. I would say most of your tools are that because I think about these names in terms of pain too. So last year, I had pneumonia, and I developed something, might have been coincidental, but whatever. It was called an occipital neuralgia, and it was horrific headache that was caused by like nerve impingement.

I remember the night before my third trip to the ER in five days, I was in the middle of the night, and I was up. I was trying to wait for it to be a little earlier in the morning. It was the middle of the night from me to wake my husband up. I was like on the couch like rocking in pain and just knowing that like. There's the awareness that we have I am in the midst of this right now. That is like how do I take a step back from this right? Again, I just want to emphasize that the more that you are using your tools before you're dysregulated, the easier that is going to be.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

Angela: That is actually a great example because it's once you break your arm, you can't go in and be proactive about not breaking the arm. It's broken, right? Once you're in an emotional dysregulate, especially if it's really intense. When you're in that, and then you're like feeling like well, I shouldn't be in this. First of all, you're kind of judging it. Then you're like how do I get out of this as soon as possible.

The amygdala has taken over. Your nervous system has taken over. You're in fight or flight. At that point, any kind of like intellectual or rational tools, they don't feel applicable in the moment. They don't have the impact that they might have when you're not in that state of mind.

Jess: One of the things that I always like kind of start with my own clients is like learning how to make decisions ahead of time so far away. I'm not saying yes, some of those decisions are definitely like tangible like what happens like pertaining to my job. But a lot of those are I don't want to think about myself. Right? I know you've talked about like having like that your self-identity, right? You get to think about that before anything happens.

The more that you are reinforcing and telling yourself like I'm choosing to pay attention to what my body is telling me and take three deep breaths every hour or practice EFT for five minutes every morning. Here's the thought that I am going to reinforce every day. I'm a big believer in like not leaving those things to chance. Writing out like several things that make you feel amazing when you think them about yourself. Then like literally like picking one every morning and being like this is what I'm tapping into today.

You can do that while driving your car. When I think this about myself when I think I'm an inspiring leader in the industry, how do I carry myself? What would I say to somebody? You can use tapping to help you regulate your central nervous system and create psychological safety while you imagine those things.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

So this is, I'm using this as an example of like before you're dysregulated, right? Because as kind of crazy as it sounds if you're not in like Angela and my's industry where we talk about like these things all day long like they're mainstream. Our bodies can really freak out, even when things, like specially when things are going well. Like that's where self-sabotage comes in. When we are like relaxing.

We live in a world right now where productivity in forms of lists and tangibles and things that everybody else can see is prioritized over how do I feel? How am I talking about myself? That's why it is so important to be able to also build that skill of self-recognition and being proud of oneself and celebrating oneself. Because the more that you are allowing yourself to do that, you're feeling great about yourself. Then when somebody else comes up and tells you like they think you're doing terrible. You don't have to believe them.

Angela: Right? Yeah, yes. We do a lot on the coaching, and we do a lot on the proactive and building of self-identity, especially with brand new leaders who are just like deer in the headlights. They don't know what they don't know. They're eager and excited, but they're also terrified. It's kind of all the same emotion. It feels similar in the body. So we do some of these techniques to get the visualization going.

I do know the reality of the job is you can be pumped up for the day. You've done your thought work in the morning, and you're feeling great. In an instant, you get an angry parent phone call, or a teacher comes in hot, or a kid is really dysregulated.

For the audience listening, I want you to think about this conversation in terms of student behavior as well. I get a lot of clients who want me to help them manage student behavior. The way we manage student behavior is to start with our own behavior.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

But when we look at a student's behavior, we look at it's the ABC, right. We look at the antecedent, we look at the behavior, and then we look for like the causes, what's going on behind the scenes for them, and how that behavior is displayed and why it might be displayed. So we want to do the same thing. Proactively understanding what triggers us ahead of time, understanding why we behave the way we do, and then looking for the root cause of all of that, and giving ourselves like some space, again, to be human.

But there are things that you can come in feeling pretty good about yourself, and something I'll swoop in and just take over without. You can be as proactive as you want, but at the end of the day, there are moments. So what would you say to a principal who like they're feeling pretty good about themselves most of the time, but they're not sure how to handle that like unanticipated whammy that hits them during the course of a day?

Jess: For me, like there is a tapping point, it's called the well, it's called the collarbone point, but it's actually just underneath your collarbone. If you trace your finger all the way over to the end of your collarbone like around your throat, and you go about an inch down and about an inch or two over to the side. That is my favorite point.

Because it is one I can tap, and you can tap it or you can rub it. It's kind of subtle. People can't really notice that you're doing it. It is a great way to kind of regulate when you feel like something is coming up like right then and you want to slow yourself down. I have ADHD. I use this one all of the time. When I am in meetings, and my brain is going all over the place.

There's also points in your fingernails there in your nail beds on the outer edge of your fingernails that you can tap and just keep going through your fingernail points.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

Angela: When you say, just to clarify for people brand new to tapping, it's you're really just touching. Like you're touching those points with your fingertips. I just wanted to clarify that for people who keep, because this isn't visual. But yeah. So when she says tapping, you're literally just like touching these different parts of your body.

Jess: Either or.

Angela: And putting a little bit of pressure, yeah. You can tap like in multiple times. Yeah.

Jess: Yeah, you're either literally tapping on it, or you can rub and put your attention on that. But I think that also like knowing. I would imagine a kid comes in and is like completely dysregulated A, tapping is incredible for children. Because where's the, like EFT there's what's called feel good right now EFT. That is tapping through the points, talking, and kind of doing something really quickly just to regulate you.

When people work with me, we are using tapping at the root issue. A lot of times like I'm helping my clients answer the question why am I like this? Why is happening to me? It's because like most of our decisions about who we are and our place in the world, we made between the ages of zero and six years old and made them from places of either stress that a three year old is going through and didn't know how to resource themselves differently at the time or things that we were taught by parents or other like kind of authority figures in our lives.

So when we are noticing certain patterns coming up for us all the time is usually related to something that goes back in childhood with us. When we work to find out what those, remember what those experiences are and give ourselves have a chance to make a new decision, that's what kind of

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

strengthens the ability to be able to have a kid fly at you off the handle or a parent come at you, and you'd be all right, I've got this.

Angela: Yeah.

Jess: But in that moment too, maybe even just saying if we're talking about leadership is being trying something new, and I don't have to have everything figured out right now, hey, let's do this together. Let's take a couple of deep breaths together right now. I can sense you're upset. I'm a little upset too about what's happening. Versus feeling oh, I have to have everything all together. This parent feel. I've got to tell them what to do.

Think of a world where we give ourselves and thus the people around us permission to be like oh, no, what is to say in this moment or do in this moment, but I do know I could use the second to maybe take a couple deep breaths. Can you help me do that? Let's do this together and make it this like cocreation?

Because I think that, a tangent's coming. I can tell. When I think about how we humans are wired for connection, and now we're living in this world. we're putting the stress on ourselves like oh, I have to do this all by myself. We're severing that ability to feel connected right then. Yeah, it might feel real weird. Maybe some people will be what does that person want me to do? They're principal? Why am I? Why are they?

Angela: Why are we breathing?

Jess: But okay, we can all extend that a little more honesty of where we're coming from and what we're feeling without judgment. I mean, almost every time that we're catching ourselves in that strong judgment of somebody else, it's really like judgment that we're passing on ourselves. We're either scared of what somebody, when we see somebody do something, and our

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

first thought is oh, what are they doing? That's weird. It's really oh, I can't do that, even if it works. What if people think I'm weird?

It all comes back to that connection piece. That connection piece and that feeling of support is in the 2020s of where we are right now, like that's sorely lacking. I just feel really passionate. That's what we all need to come back to.

Angela: Yes. I love this because we, I think for the I don't know, the last since ever, the beginning of time, we've been told fake it until we make it. When you get into a leadership role, fake it until you make it. I disagree with that so wholeheartedly. I think the solution is authenticity and honesty and openness and transparency. So I'm just thinking of my audience.

Here's the thing. You might want to try this, I call it the HOW method. Honest, open, and willing where you're willing to be honest, you're willing to be open, and willing to be transparent about how you're feeling in a moment. So you might want to start with kids.

If it feels too unsafe to say it to an adult, try it with a kid. If you just said hey, let's you're really upset. Something just happened on the playground. They get sent to the office. Something just happened in the playground. We're going to just take a couple of deep breaths. I'm feeling upset for you. Let's do that. You can start that conversation with kids first.

Kids, I've done this, and kids pick up way easier. They're just okay. They'll do it. You can get them to breathe with you, and start talking about feelings. Kids will talk about feelings so much easier than adults. Because over time, adults have been told not to talk about feelings. It's soft, it's weak. It's not important, whatever. So we have opinions about feelings.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

But I remember doing this with my staff. When I became a life coach, I was still a school leader. I would go into a staff meeting. I had a dad come at me sideways right before the meeting, and I was so dysregulated. I'm walking down the hall. I'm fighting tears. I thought I've got to get through this staff meeting.

There was a moment where I thought I don't need to get through this staff meeting. I'm going to share this. As I walked in the door, I was a couple of minutes late. People were just standing around. I walked in, and I said can I just take a moment to share something with you all? They were like vroom. I will tell you this.

Adults respect that, I call it the HOW method right where you're honest, open, and willing with them. When you are authentic and transparent. with adults, the compassion and like the human to human connection. They would much rather you come in and say can I share something with you? This just happened to me, and I'm feeling this way. Let the tears. They saw the tears roll down my face as I was sharing this. I had to be somewhat cryptic about it, but I just said, this is my experience. I just wanted to let you know that's why I was late. I apologize, but thank you for letting me share.

That changed the dynamic of that staff meeting. People were tuned in. They were listening. They shared more. I had a teacher, she was a fourth grade teacher. She didn't love me as her boss. She walked up to me, and she said, "That just was a game changer for me." I realized I was onto something. I'm going to actually just be authentically me, which is the emotional part of me as well as the other parts of me. I started doing that with kids and teachers.

The last, as you're getting out to more of the community people, it feels a little less safe. But I could see things in special education meetings, like in IEP meetings, where I was okay, guys, everybody, let's just take a deep

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

breath. Everybody take five. We're going to come back. I didn't say anything about emotion, but I knew how to facilitate an emotional reset without anybody feeling awkward about it.

I agree with you. I think that as leaders, the new innovative thing to embrace is actually, it's not some new curriculum. It's not some new technology platform. It's the little old computer that's already been wired inside of us, which is our emotional intellect and it's wisdom that emotions have to share with us. Whether you're in a meeting, like I've tapped too in meetings where you're under the table, right, and you're just is it right here?

Jess: Yep. Side of the hand. The one I, that is where we usually start with tapping, but my go to is, particularly in meetings, is the those fingernail points because yeah, I can do it under the table.

Angela: You can do it under the table. Yeah.

Jess: Like you can't tell I'm doing it. I do it while I'm walking in the morning. I'm walking to the gym, and I'm thinking about my day hitting on those fingernail points. I'm just like all right, what do I have got going today? Where do I feel stuck? What? What do I need to believe about myself to ensure that this happens the way I want it to? How do I even want it to? Because oftentimes we're so scared of exploring our wants that we don't know the answer that question. We don't know the answer that question, of course, we don't know how. We don't know what we want the end game.

Angela: Yes. Yes, I definitely talk about this in the coaching program. Because most of us are thinking. We spend our energy thinking about how bad the meeting might go and preparing for all the worst case scenarios. Then I'll say to my clients but how do you want it to go? It's almost as though they're I had never thought about that. We don't think about the best case scenario or how we want it to go and direct our energy that way.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

Then who would we be if the meeting were going really smoothly, or this conversation with our boss, we're going as best as we can imagine it going, what would that feel like? What would that energy be like? Then spending our, putting our attention to that, at least giving it equal airtime, right? If you want to plan for the worst, go ahead and do that first because the brain is going to offer that but also what if this meeting just went really well?

Jess: Yeah. Being able to acknowledge like the worst, right? Like okay, I see that could happen. Also, yes, let me redirect my brain to the best possible scenario. I actually really love taking it both places. What's the worst case scenario? I always start with what's the best case scenario because that's going to put you in a different feeling and mindset to then explore okay, what's the worst case scenario?

Then okay between these two, knowing what I know about this person or this audience, right now what's the most realistic? Somewhere right there, right? We get trapped in this black and white either or thinking, and really it's just about being able to embrace the and in everything. Being able to just know the nuances. Everything is not all terrible or all good most of the time. How would we know what was good or bad? Right? If something was just fantastic all of the time, and we'd stop learning because we're not challenged anymore.

So, also being able to look at those what we see as setbacks aren't actually setbacks. They're just an opportunity for reminding yourself of what's important or like reminding ourselves or sitting down and doing an evaluation and being oh, that was going really well. These things worked amazing. Here's where some things can change.

Angela: Yeah, I want to also explicitly say to people, and I have learned this myself as I have been more and more open to having emotional experiences. I will say when you feel like you're, when something feels so

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

painful or scary, you feel like you're going to die. I want to validate that because I don't think there's anything worse. I don't think there's anything worse as a human than going through that level of emotion.

It's on a scale of plus 10, minus 10. When you're in the plus minus nine, minus 10, like when you're really in it, and it does feel like. Your brain is like, it's almost like it can't differentiate between I'm physically dying, or I'm emotionally in so much pain it feels like I'm dying. Even though you might not be physically dying at all, you could be in excellent physical health, but having this emotional experience that is so painful that you can lead yourself to like taking physical action, like you had said earlier.

As I do this work, and I'm really studying myself, my emotions, my capacity to feel an emotion, and process it through to see that it is actually always temporary. It does pass, and it tends to pass more fluidly, I would say, not quickly, but it does have a completion cycle to it. Almost like I think of it like a wave.

Before you've acknowledged it, it's like momentum under the ocean. Then it starts to build up, and you feel it. It's at the surface, and it's peaking, and then it kind of like crashes. Then it releases and then you have a little moment of peace there before another round of momentum builds up.

But what I have found is that we think we either can't handle the emotion, or we feel like if we do acknowledge it and process it and bring it up, that it's somehow tied to our self-identity. Right? I must not be a great leader because I seem to be so emotional. Leadership is a masculine experience, and I'm over here feeling my feelings. We start to judge the experience of emotion. I actually think the opposite. I think feeling your emotions is the strongest, most courageous, most leadership thing that you can do.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

Jess: Yeah, I absolutely agree. That's why I call myself that. That's where the courage piece of courage and compassion comes in. Because I think that building that skill, that tolerance, that understanding. I don't think of emotions is something that needs to be managed. I think that there's something to be understood. I do think that is the most courageous work that anybody can do because that is going to allow you to go out and do all of the other courageous stuff.

Angela: Yes, yes. So for you leaders out there, so we've kind of jumped all over the place and talked about a lot of things. So I want to just like start to bring it home for you. Number one, the work that we're talking about is just being proactive in one, your self-identity.

Two, I just think we can make the school leadership so much more simple by asking ourselves two questions. What am I feeling? Labeling that emotion if you can. If not, identifying where it's residing in your body. What am I feeling? Two, why? That's, I call that the brain drain. The brain is going to tell you here's all the reasons I feel this way today. Or I've got this upcoming meeting with this parent. This parent is always goes off the rails, and they're just emotionally dysregulated, which just regulates. The brain is going to chatter, right.

You let it do that. But what really matters the most is the feeling, the emotion, the energy in your body. You want to be aware and understand what that is. When you're feeling it in real time, you can generate positive emotion. You're driving to work, like Jess said, and you are thinking about the best case scenario, the intentions you want to set for that day, how you want to feel as you walk into your campus and manage your day.

Those moments when school is going off the rails. Kids' behavior is off the chain. Parents are, everybody's misbehaving right now. Spring fever is hitting. You want to also be proactive in that moment. Like what do I want to

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

think and feel? When I feel like chaos is all around me? What is it I want to think and feel?

One, you have to be aware that the chaos is happening, and that you're feeling chaotic internally, so that you can just say oh, wait a moment, please. Then it's simple as like tapping, finding. You can look this up online. I'm sorry you can't see us, but there are points on your body. I think Jess the fingernails.

If you're not driving, you can tap your fingernails. If you are driving, you can tap that little spot just under your collarbone and over to your left or your right. You can tap on your top of your head. I know I've tapped on my temples. I think by the eyes, above my lip, kind of on my chin. There's lots of points.

Jess: Yes, you can look me up, I've got a model of all of this. So then you can --

Angela: Okay, perfect.

Jess: One of the things that I am launching this year too is a YouTube channel where people can tap along with all of this and see this. Because a lot of times people don't realize, they call it emotional freedom technique. It's actually emotional freedom techniques is there's 40 different ways to apply the techniques.

So I teach a little bit of that in all of these videos, but it's just easiest to be like okay, I'm just going to go pull it up, and let's tap along with this. Then you will see and feel what that feels like with you. I'm a big believer in being authentic. So there's some videos on there where I am tapping on myself in real time.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

Most notably, the weekend Afghanistan fell, that was a very devastating weekend. I did a live tap on that. You can see me in 20 minutes go from completely dysregulated, unable to talk because I am all in my emotions to damn all right, I'm fine now. As I'm tapping, I'm actually explaining what's going on in my body.

That's something that you can tap along with and feel a reduction in whatever it is for you. Because it's something called borrowed benefits when you're tapping along with somebody else's issue. I was thinking about that story you told when you said you went into the meeting, and you were like I just need to explain how I feel right now. You said I didn't tell them the actual details. I just told them how I felt. I think that's so important to know.

Oftentimes, when we're telling our stories to people or even to ourselves again, we're once again getting caught up in all of those details instead of just being how do I feel right now? I would just add like a third question to list you just added, and that's how can I give myself compassion in this moment? Sometimes we can't answer why because it feels like there's so much in there.

I think about it going back to what I said about most of the lessons that we, or the decisions that we made about ourselves happen between the ages of zero and six. That we're not even conscious of them. When we know that, it's like you can't answer that question to why am I actually feeling this way?

The simplest answer to give yourself is a there is a part of me that is reliving a painful and a young moment from my past. My only job is to, I love to put a hand on my heart and just say I'm listening. I love you. That's it. Frequently, we go immediately into reassuring, but that actually doesn't help us out. Because if you think about ever being like venting to a friend or

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

a partner, and they immediately start telling you like all the reasons why you shouldn't be feeling the way you feel.

Angela: We're trying to help you feel better. Yeah. You're like I don't want to feel better.

Jess: We don't. We feel dismissed. We feel invalidated. Most of the time we know what we want. We just need to get it out. We do that to ourselves all of the time.

Angela: Yes, it's true.

Jess: Knowing when you can't answer why just say all right, I don't need to know the why right now. How do I give that part of me?

Angela: Yes, I so agree with that. I have noticed that with myself. Just even this weekend, I wasn't, I couldn't put my finger on exactly the emotion. I couldn't even articulate why. I was really, and I thought to myself you know what I can do right now? I can breathe. I can slow my breathing down. I can like touch my heart. I can just sit here with it.

I think of it like a best friend. Like when a friend calls me on the phone, and I'm listening. It's not about me. They're not calling to hear me talk at them or to like try and fix it for them. They're just wanting to express it to somebody who's safe. You can be that person for you.

Like when you feel distressed, and I can think of so many moments in my school leadership experience where something just catches you off guard, and your heart starts racing. You have that like panic feeling. Is it adrenaline? I don't even know what it is takes over your body, like that feeling. It's like when you've almost, you had a very near car accident, and

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

your body just like reacts in that motion. That's the same feeling I would get sometimes with at school where I felt unsafe, or I felt like it was a near hit.

In those moments, I couldn't articulate what was going on. I just knew that I needed to like calm myself through breathing or like through touch points. You can do that so subtly. You can be anywhere at any time. Jess, we'll put the links to your, how people can reach you, put the links to those videos and to your website and all of that because I want them to be able to see.

I watch your videos because it regulates me, and I know you and I have done it live. But also like the tapping one on your medical experience, you had an unknown for a while. That really taught me that I can do this work on my own when I'm in a pinch, right? Like I would prefer to have you as the coach doing it with me. But in in that moment, when I'm at school, there are some things you can do.

Jess: The more that you're like doing, you're using those tools in like that maintenance period we talked about, the more like they're going to come to you like naturally in those moments that you need them. So I think it it just becomes second nature, right? Because we've spent all this time kind of getting our body used to like those techniques, it happens much more quickly.

Angela: Yes, one last question. I hope I'm not opening a can of worms because I know we've been on a while. But principals will want to know what they can do, how they can help regulate students or other adults. What is something simple that they can apply when a kid comes in dysregulated or maybe another adult that they're working with?

Jess: Literally what we just talked about before. Taking a breath and just saying hey, I'm in here with you right now. Just take some breaths together. You can teach tapping. You're watching my videos on online. I think we

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

even talked about this before. I could even like create one for people to go and watch specifically on this. Hey, just let's tap through these points with me. Let's breathe together. Really like so you're showing them, you're calming yourself while you're having this.

Angela: You're double dipping.

Jess: You're not only like helping somebody else, but you're also helping yourself in those moments. You're giving both of you or all of you that time that is so necessary and needed to just think about that. When you're tapping on the points, regardless of saying anything, you are lowering cortisol. You are calming the central nervous system. You are tapping in literally to more of a sense of peace.

So just by doing that, you're also regulating to the here and now as well because that's like tapping to those points. So like that would be the best thing. And you're just like hey, let's do this together. Not making it to them versus you thing.

Angela: We're both doing this. Yeah, I think, again, if it feels uncomfortable to ask an adult to do that, you can ask an adult just to take a deep breath. Take a couple of deep breaths. So wow, I can feel, I can see this emotion. I can feel this emotion. But when you're breathing, when you're asking them to take a couple of breaths, you're also doing it. So it's a win.

But with kids, like I think you can really dive into this. I've sat on the floor with kids. I meet them where they're at. You can get them to start breathing. Now, for most of the time, but they do, I have noticed in my own experience that kids pick up on this really quickly because they're so tuned in to how they feel. Yeah.

Jess: They don't have all the baggage that we do.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

Angela: Yeah. They don't have the judgment. The external judgment, the internal judgment, it's just not as developed. The judgment isn't as developed. Like they're very quick to okay. So when I started teaching life coaching tools to kids to help them see and intellectually understand their feelings and their actions, they loved it. They were like oh, this makes total sense where the adults we're like what?

Yeah, so try it with kids. But I want to thank you for being on the podcast. Here's something I want to offer to the audience. This podcast is different in education because I'm bringing alternate techniques. They're tried, they're true, they work in all these other industries. I can't remember it. Maybe it was you and I talking about how similar the nursing industry is to education industry. There was somebody I was talking to about that. Were we talking about that?

Jess: Yeah, we were talking about healthcare.

Angela: Yes, health care and just service providers, which we are as educators. I know the medical field is embracing all of this. There are studies out there. They are doing life coaching tools studies in medical settings and publishing them in journals because the body and our emotions are all in one the same, and they do impact one another.

So if you're a leader who finds this intriguing but feels like it's a little new age or it's like feels a little too innovative, I want to remind you other industries are doing this. Education just kind of takes a little bit longer. So I would explore, be brave try these things, you'll see how well they work. Imagine a school that has the tools to be able to self-regulate themselves, and help others self-regulate when they can't self-regulate. Imagine a school culture like that.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

That is my mission and my goal to bring people like Jess into our world who are experts at this and to have these conversations in a safe space where it might not feel safe to talk to your superintendent about it, but it can feel safe here on this podcast and in Jess's world and in my world. So Jess, if people want to reach out, if they want to learn more about how to work with you, or to watch your videos and get a sense of what tapping looks, where can they reach out?

Jess: Yeah, absolutely. Last thing I'll say just to tag on what you said is peer reviewed, evidence base, there's a lot of research. It is being worked with with the American Psychological Society to be able to help people start billing for this. So there is a, I can give you all research and studies if anybody ever.

Angela: Yeah. It's scientifically proven. It's not just somebody out there rubbing their fingers all over their face or something.

Jess: You can email me at jessjohnsoncoaching@gmail.com, traditional selling. J-E-S-S-J-O-H-N-S-O-N coaching. My website is www.jessjohnsoncoaching.com, and Instagram at Jess.JohnsonCoaching.

Angela: Yeah, we'll put all the links in the show notes. All of her stuff will be there in one place ready for you. But I highly invite you to click on her work, follow her, check her out. Because this I think is going to be a true game changer in the field of education. When we start embracing this as regular practice, it will become a best practice. I mean, that's the lingo we use in education. This is an emotional best practice, which is why I wanted to bring Jess on as an expert on tapping and emotional regulation. So thank you so much for being here. I really appreciate your time.

Jess: Yeah, thank you.

Ep #332: Regulating Your Nervous System in Stressful Moments with Jess Johnson

Angela: All right. Have a good one. We'll talk to you guys all next week. Take good care. Bye.

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