

Ep #338: Letting Go



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 338.

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. Happy Tuesday, and welcome to the podcast. I hope you are enjoying a fabulous summer. I hope you are enjoying your June. I hope you have planned out your summer of fun, and I hope that you are in The Empowered Principal Facebook group celebrating Summer of Fun, posting about Summer of Fun, and getting your name in the hat for the \$50 Amazon gift cards and 90% off the price of one year of The Empowered Principal® Collaborative.

Come on, let's go. I need you guys in there. There is no shame in your game. There's no reason why you can't be in here having fun this summer, winning prizes, and getting a 90% discount on the registration price for EPC. We want as many people in EPC as possible, the more the merrier. The more people we serve in EPC, the more empowered you will all feel. It's going to be an amazing school year. I am so looking forward. I have so much content to share with you guys. I cannot wait.

So let's dive in. I want to talk with you today about letting go. So many of you are in your summer zone. You are thinking about last year, or maybe you're not. Maybe you're out having so much fun. I hope you are. But most of you are finished or almost finished by now, and there are things about the school year that tend to linger in our minds. They linger in our bodies.

Things that went really well, of course, right? I invite everybody to look at what went well during the year, celebrate your successes, focus on what went well, what were the wins, what was accomplished, and what went smoothly. Really embracing all of the things that actually did work. I know our brains do not tend to think about what worked. So we have to direct it

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over intentionally and say hey, look at all the things we did do this year, all the things we did accomplish, the wins, the things that went smoothly, the systems that did work. We want to take those with us for next year.

But if your brain is every other human brain, it tends to be that we have certain memories, certain situations, certain conversations, certain circumstances that occurred during the past year that our brain and our body want to hold onto.

So I want you to take a moment and think about what didn't work well. It's okay to go there. You're not going to drum up bad vibes for next year if you stop and look at what didn't go well. I want you to actually bring them up to the surface and think about what are those circumstances or conversations or situations that you felt you didn't handle well or turned into a great big nightmare or just something seemed a little but it ended up big or somebody had an intense reaction you weren't anticipating. Think about those times.

Now as you're thinking about them, you get that pit of the stomach feeling, the butterflies come back, the angst, the anxiety, the worry, the guilt, the shame, the embarrassment. All of the yucky feelings that we never enjoy feeling. We don't desire to feel them. They come to the surface.

We typically, what we try to do, we either try to avoid thinking about it. We try to push those feelings away, and we resist it, and we avoid it, and we push it away and we're like I don't even want to think about that ever again. But the problem is it's still inside of us internally. It's still in our mind unprocessed. It's still in our emotional energy, our body. We feel it physically because it's still unprocessed.

So in order to be able to let go of those negative, icky energies, those negative, icky feelings, you need to actually lean into them. I know it sounds counterproductive and it doesn't sound fun, and here's why, it's not fun.

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But I really want you to be able to go into the new school year clean, fresh, ready to go and really having reconciled and let go of any past thoughts and memories and decisions and things that didn't go well. If you bring those into the new school year, what you're doing is you're weighing down your self-efficacy and your self-concept and your identity as a principal.

You're bringing those with you saying oh, I'm a principal who screws up. I'm a principal who doubts herself. I'm a principal who doesn't really know how to do this job. Clearly, I'm a principal that upsets people, or I'm a principal that doesn't know how to communicate effectively, or I'm a principal that doesn't work well with parents. You are going to bring some kind of identity with you if you do not process the experience all the way through.

So lean in to what did not feel good and notice how heavy that feels, how painful it can feel when you think back to those conversations, those situations, those interactions, those decisions that had a backlash.

What we want to do in order to let them go is to learn from them. There's no school leader on the planet that doesn't get it wrong, misspeak, say the wrong thing, do the wrong thing, make the wrong decision according to whatever is considered right or wrong.

People will be unhappy. There will be times that you overthink things and you procrastinate and people needed information sooner than you gave it to them. Other times you won't have thought it through, and you were rushed and you made a decision and you didn't weigh out all of the impact of that decision and then you had negative feedback from that.

So you're a human running a school, doing the best job that you can and there are hiccups. We trip, we fall, we make mistakes, we misspeak, we miss communicate, we misunderstand. That's all a part of it. Guiltting yourself, avoiding it, pretending you didn't do it, or over criticizing yourself, spinning out in it.

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Because the opposite of trying to avoid it all is just perseverating on it. I know I tend to be on the perseveration side of things. I will lean into it deep, and I will feel it so deeply, but I have a hard time letting it go. So I've been studying myself, I've been watching myself in my entire life, personally and professionally, looking at how does one, how does a person let go?

The way I have found that it's easiest for me to let go is to lean in, acknowledge the feelings, and then ask them what I'm here to learn. I made this mistake. It happened for me. I want to understand what I think went well, what I think didn't go well, and why I think it happened this way and what I've learned and see the benefit in the mistake.

See how the misstep invited you into knowing yourself better as a leader, deepening your skills, deepening your knowledge, having to hold space for your emotions, for other people's emotions. Understanding how to make a decision or how to communicate a decision or how to pull out an initiative or to hold professional development meetings or how to better facilitate a meeting or how to better hold people accountable or how to better, I don't know, anything, anything. Answer emails on time. Your job is so vast. There will be things that you naturally excel at and things that you feel aren't as skillful in your identity.

Now, think of those things, let yourself feel them, and then ask yourself, what is still lingering for me from last year? Is there anything I'm holding onto that I'm bringing into my summer that's weighing down the fun I'm going to have or the fun I want to have? What am I bringing into the new school year? Getting really honest with yourself.

Do I want to bring these feelings, this energy, this identity, this self-concept of me as a leader, do I want to bring this into next year? Or can I write my identity? Can I create a self-concept that empowers me because of the mistakes or because of my past experiences? Is there a way I can write the script of last year into a way that allows me to see it as empowerment?

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I learned this when I went through this hard thing. I really learned how to do this. I learned to think this way. I learned to make decisions this way. I learned how to communicate that way. I learned more about laws, policies, procedures, standards, special education, whatever it is you were dealing with.

I learned more about XYZ, and now I can bring that to learning with me. I can bring the growth with me. I can bring the progress with me. I can bring the improved identity. My self-efficacy actually has gone up because last year was hard, and I know I can handle hard things. I know without a doubt I can handle what comes my way. How do we know? I did it. The hard times are what allow you to know that you're capable.

So letting go really is just a shift in how you see the hard things. When you persevere on something that happened last year, and you can't let it go. Have you ever had that thought I can't let this go? It just bothers me. It just, I keep spinning on it. I don't know why. I just can't let it go.

Ask yourself, why am I not letting this go? Why am I choosing to hold on to this story and this thought and this memory and tell it in the way over and over and over again, the way that I'm choosing to tell it?

Another way to ask yourself is how does not letting go of this story benefit me? Why am I holding on? Is there something that's protecting me? Something that's making me feel safe? Something that makes me feel better by telling this story? Is it protecting me in some way? How is it helping?

If you think about it, sometimes you're like yeah, I can see why I'm holding onto this because it feels better to think it's that person's fault than my fault. It's easier on my heart to think that they did that and not me. Or it's even though I can't let it go, they said this. They did that. It's better for me to blame them than to take ownership of my part. It's really hard to take ownership.

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But in order to let go and to be free from somebody's unkind words or negative feedback or a verbal kind of slap down when you get verbally chewed out, right? Someone comes at you sideways, and you have to look at those experiences and say hey, what part of this is my ownership, and what part of it isn't?

Let them own their part, put their part back in their lane. You've got to take your part and you've got to own your part. But once you separate out the two, you don't have to take identity from another person. If they say you're not a good principal or you're never this or you don't communicate or you're blah, blah, blah. All that feedback, you take the feedback, and you look at it, and you're like okay. What of this is true? What do I want to own? Where do I want to improve and grow? Then what do I want to let go of? What doesn't ring true for me?

See how every single experience that you had last year, it really happened for you. It happened to teach you a lesson, to test your strength, to condition you and build you up and make you stronger, or to provide some wisdom or guidance or skill set or something. It didn't happen for zero reason. It didn't happen just to be mean or just to make you doubt yourself or just to make you feel bad.

It's very interesting to watch yourself make up what that circumstance means about you, about them, about the whole situation overall. Notice what part of the story is your brain creating and making up and what part feels fact.

It's easier to separate when you can separate fact from opinion. Fact will feel much more neutral. Opinion feels very emotionally charged. So if you're having trouble letting go of something emotionally or mentally, most often what's happening is you're not looking at the facts as much as you're focused on the opinions. What you made it mean when they said that, what you think they made it mean when you did something. We interpret and we create perspectives and we create stories around uncomfortable situations.

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So if you want to be free and clear going into your summer, going into next school year, instead of avoiding the negative things that happened last year, I invite you to lean into them and to study them. Why do they feel bad? Is it fact or is it opinion? What about this feels bad? Why am I holding on to it? Is it serving me to hold on to this?

If not, am I willing to let it go? Am I willing to reconcile it? Am I willing to see the growth, the wisdom, the skills, the expansion that happened as a school leader? There will always be something new that you're learning, a new experience, a new conversation, a new set of parents, a new set of staff members, kids, all of it. There's never a dull moment, right?

But you can choose to write the past as an opportunity that you grew and learned and evolved your skills, or you can write it as you did something wrong. You're inherently not a good leader. Or somebody else did you wrong. They're inherently a bad person. Notice the stories.

I invite you in to The Empowered Principal® Collaborative where we learn how to let go. Part of this job is heartbreaking. It's hard. It's crushing sometimes, right? Mentally, physically, psychologically, emotionally, socially. We want to be able to learn from our mistakes or learn from mishaps or misspeaks or miscommunications or misunderstandings. Then we want to let it go and write the memory of that experience in the most positive, empowering way possible.

Try it out. Let me know how it goes. Join EPC. Come on in to Summer of Fun. Would love to have you there. Have an amazing rest of your week. Take great care of yourselves, and I'll talk to you next week. Take good care. 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.

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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.

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.