

Ep #344: Radical Empowerment



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 344.

Welcome to *The Empowered Principal® Podcast*, a not so typical educational resource that will teach you how to gain control of your career and get emotionally fit to lead your school and your life with joy by refining your most powerful tool, your mind. Here's your host certified life coach Angela Kelly Robeck.

Well, hello, my empowered principals. Happy Tuesday. How are y'all doing today? Welcome to the podcast. If you're new, a very special welcome. If you're new to school leadership, congratulations, kudos to you. Proud of you for your hard work. I want you to be proud of you for the hard work, and the journey has just begun. This really can be an amazing and fun experience.

Yes, you have stepped into a new role. You are going to have to expand and evolve yourself. You're going to be new. There will be challenges. There's going to be some really difficult situations, but also there is amazingness and wins and celebration that come with school leadership. It's all good. You're in safe hands. Come on over to the EPC program. You're going to be so supported.

Today I want to address an aspect of empowerment and coaching that I realized I haven't been as explicit about recently because I've been so focused on providing guidance on all of this self-love and compassion and worth and ease and flow and fun all summer long. That is a very important component.

I think it's underrepresented in school leadership and in all of the learnings and writings and conversations we're having around school leadership, which is why I like to focus on it to give you the balance of yes, you need to develop your knowledge based on all of the topics, but you also need to be a human. You are a human as a school leader having a human experience. I want you to have the best experience possible.

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Most school leaders that I know, they push themselves to the edge professionally, mentally, physically, right? You're out there working 10, 12, 14, 16 hour days. You work until you drop from fatigue. A lot of people who hire me, working around the clock. They are getting up and they're going in bright and early when the sun rises, and they're staying well after dark.

They are exhausted because then they go home and then they fulfill their parental duties or their partnership duties or their family duties, friends, whatever. They're so busy leading their school and leading their lives that they're fatigued. They push until the fuel tank is empty.

So I spend a great deal of time helping driven school leaders who love their work create perspective and balance physically, mentally, emotionally, and help them balance not just the professional life, the professional demands, but their personal life.

I'm a certified life and leadership coach. I help coach you in leadership, but also in life because it's all one big package. You're one human having one experience in the game of life that you've chosen to play a school leadership. So I'm going to teach you the skillset for that and coach you on how to live a life you love. It's no fun to be a school leader.

If you're fatigued all the time, if you're stressed all the time, if you're overwhelmed all the time, that was the experience I had. For the six years, I was a site principal and for the year I spent up at the district office, I watched my colleagues. I watched myself be stressed, fatigued, pretend to be happy, want leadership development and not receive it.

One of my buddies, Tyler, he got hired to replace me at my first school when I got moved to another school because that principal had been promoted. So there was the shuffling around. Tyler and I became close friends, and he and I would have extensive conversations about craving leadership development, wanting to expand our leadership skills and knowledge, and really wanting to dive into what it looks and feels like to become and empowered, exceptional leader.

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It was something we both wanted, but what ended up happening was a lot of stress, a lot of overwhelm, a lot of confusion, a lot of frustration, a lot of kind of whack-a-mole approach to school leadership. So I thought that it was just me. I thought I was the problem. I thought I wasn't cut out for school leadership.

He went on to another district, and I think is now a director at a different school district and is doing phenomenally. I decided to branch off from education to become a coach for school leaders because I felt this sweet spot of the site leader.

It's the ultimate middle manager experience because you're right in the middle where you're managing from the top down, from all of the demands from your district and your bosses up at the district level, all those administrators. They're telling you what to do and how to do it and when to do it and why to do it. Roll this out, roll that initiative out.

You're managing all of that energy and then you're managing all the energy of your staff, your teachers, your students, your families, the communities, the school board. Whatever systems or whatever structure you have in your particular district, you're managing all of that energy. It's all coming your way. You're right in the middle.

It's like district top down, county, fed, state level. You've got the parents and community coming at you sideways and then you've got all this like from the bottom up, the energy of all the students, your support staff, your office staff, your community resource officers, your counselors, your nurses. You've got special education. You've got general education teachers, all of it. There didn't seem to be a place for that.

So there is a component of this program, of The Empowered Principal® program, that is what makes balance possible. It really struck me the other day when I saw several posts on social media from school leaders who were basically asking other people to think and make decisions for them.

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So a lot of times in these principal groups, I will see posts like what should I do in this case? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Here's the case. Here's the situation. What should I do? Or what books are you reading this summer? What PD should I provide for my staff? What interview questions do you use? Who should I hire? Who's inspirational? Who've you used?

First I want to say, I'm not condemning this practice at all. I think it's a way to connect. I think it's a way to collaborate, to ask these questions. I highly recommend asking questions. So I want to say there's nothing wrong with asking these questions. I definitely recommend asking questions when in doubt, especially when you need specific information and guidance. When you need it.

If you have a legal issue, please ask for legal advice or legal guidance. Do you have policy questions? Ask somebody who knows. Do you have a question about responding to a certain behavior or a policy or procedure that is related to behavior management and behavior responses and consequences? Ask. Questions pertaining to special education, particularly when it comes to law, ask.

There are times and places for you to ask specific information that is going to help you decide what actions you need to take to progress forward. Then there are questions that are asked that do not give you really specific information. The answers that you receive may or may not even pertain to you or your school or your district.

Now I understand that oftentimes people will ask questions on social media, like I said earlier, simply to generate connection and conversation. That's totally cool. But it also made me wonder what people who ask those questions, what they are thinking. Why they're asking the questions and what they do with the information.

Because basically what they're doing when they're creating this connection conversation is they're asking people to take time out from their fun and then pleasure and their rest or from their work and their focus on

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what they're doing to slow down and say hey, let me take time to recommend this book or this product or this platform or this speaker or this program, whatever it is they're asked for. What do they do with that information? Then what happens?

So where does the personal responsibility and ownership come into play? Where does a principal take radical ownership of their empowerment? Is it ever appropriate to ask questions and get this feedback? Or is there a time and a place where we want to ask us to answer the question?

Is it appropriate to accept what other people say and just go with the flow? Or do we decide for ourselves what books we're going to read based on our own desires? What next steps we need to take, what programs we should invest in, what speaker we should hire, what professional development to prepare, what staff culture needs from us. I want you to consider the concept of radical empowerment.

Where before you ask other people for hundreds of input, hundreds of data points of input. If you ask somebody, what book should I read this summer? You're going to get hundreds of responses. It doesn't mean you should read all 300 books. Now you have more information to think about. You have a bigger decision to make.

Versus what do I want to read this summer? What's the one next thing I want to learn about? Do I want to just read for absolute pleasure? Do I need a mind candy kind of a book, or do I need some growth book? Do I want to take a program over the summer? Do I feel like compelled to learn and grow my skills, or do I want to go to the beach and just decompress? What do I want? What do I need? What does my school? Answer the question.

I feel like with social media and access to internet, it's so easy to just divert the question out to the people and let our brain off the hook to not have to answer the question. But at the end of the day, it actually becomes harder

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to make the decision because we've asked for all of this input. What do we do with all that input?

There are social media groups out there with tens of thousands of people in them. You're going to get hundreds and hundreds of responses. What do you do with all that data? How do you know you're making the right decision? How do you know that they know your school well enough to even make a recommendation for you.

To feel truly empowered, we need to take radical ownership. That is the very definition of empowerment. To embody personal power, personal knowledge, personal understanding, to tap into our own wisdom, our own strength, our own knowingness. To follow our internal compass, our guide, to really dig in. That is the work.

When people say people do the work, the inner work, that's what they're talking about. They're talking about exploring, having a conversation with their own internal compass. What do I value? What feels in alignment for me? What feels like integrity for me? How do I identify as a school leader?

Who am I? What do I think of myself? Do I love who I am? Do I love what I'm learning? Do I feel I'm growing? What do I think my staff needs from me? What does my school culture need to evolve and expand? What do my students need? What would the community love?

In my opinion, your opinion matters. You matter. Your thoughts matter. Your feelings matter. It all matters. You cannot be in empowerment as a school leader without taking ownership of that empowerment. You can't take responsibility for some of your life and let the other stuff go. You've got to take responsibility for all of it. This is why the Summer of Fun Challenge is so much fun, but it's also work. It requires you to take responsibility for all of it.

To say hey, job, I love you, and I'm going to take time off. I'm going to take ownership and take control back of my time, my planning, my calendar, fill

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my own bucket. I'm going to take radical responsibility, radical ownership, radical empowerment of my life and my career.

The way that you create balance, the way you develop a three month plan and stick to it, the way you build relationships, the way you learn how to communicate, the way you learn to become a visionary school leader with massive influence and impact and a legacy is to step into radical empowerment.

Radical empowerment is when you take full ownership of your experience as a leader. It's being emotionally mature and understanding how to manage your own emotions and hold space for other people's emotions. It's being able to separate your thoughts and feelings from another person's expression of their thoughts and feelings.

You have to be able to know that when a person is expressing emotion that you do not have the same experience. It's separate. Your thoughts and feelings are separate from theirs, but we get entangled. We forget that. We have to be reminded. We have to create awareness around that and separate it. It's dropping the need for validation from others.

Look, we grow up as little kids seeking validation from our parents and our caretakers and our religious leaders and our political leaders, our grandparents, our aunties, our uncles, our friend's parents, all the adults, the teachers in our life. We look for validation. As the adults, we tell kids, yes, it is your job to seek our external validation. When we want to grant you validation, we reward you and we celebrate you. If you don't earn our validation, we punish you. We give you consequences until you continue to seek that out.

Our job as adults is to drop and uncouple the need for validation from others, to learn how to validate ourselves, to understand that there are people who will validate us, but there are people who won't. We have to process the emotion that comes with that. This is really hard stuff. It's about owning our mistakes and acknowledging them, doing what it takes to repair

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and make it right. The pain of owning a mistake, acknowledging it, speaking up and saying hey, this is my mistake. I am sorry. I didn't realize, mean to.

You know that feeling, that remorseful feeling, you feel it's so painful when you've made a mistake. We have to process those feelings. We have to acknowledge our mistakes, but also not beat ourselves up. There is a very delicate walk that has to occur. We own it. We feel it. We process it. We make it right. We take the action. We're courageous in our action, but we also don't make it our identity. We don't make it mean something is wrong with us or broken inside of us.

Processing the feelings that come up when you know you have overlooked something or misspoke or miscommunicated or failed to hit the target or you've handled something in a way you're not proud of. Those are really hard feelings. It's being able to allow yourself the space and permission to feel those terrible feelings all the way through and balance them with self-love and compassion and kindness for yourself.

We're not trying to abdicate or create excuses when we make mistakes, but we do want to give ourselves the human permission to be human and give ourselves the grace and space of being human. That's what it's about.

So there's this walk, this fine little dance that we do with radical ownership is about owning our part, our 50%, staying in our lane while also not taking on the ownership of others, not getting in their lanes and telling them who to be and how to act and how to think and how to feel and what job they should do and how they should do their job and what they shouldn't do and what they shouldn't think and what they shouldn't say.

It's being able to hold other people accountable for the results that they have created for themselves while also having compassion for them having created those results. It's like a teacher that you are going to let go and then you feel bad that you let them go, but they created that result for themselves.

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So as leaders, we tend to overextend our responsibility because we assume that we have the power over other people's lives. That we damage their careers if we fire them, if we don't bring them back. We feel responsible for what they're thinking, how they're feeling, how they behave. We take responsibility for their results. You cannot take responsibility for another person's results. You didn't create those results. It's not your STEER cycle.

It's not your set of beliefs and thoughts and feelings and emotional energy and decisions and actions. You didn't do any of that. So how could you have created it? But yet we take ownership of the results and the outcomes that other people have created and we try to fix it and change it and make them feel a certain way. There's no way. You can't do that.

So here's an example. When you decided this past spring to let someone go and not extend an offer to them to return this coming year, you did not do this to them. They created this result for themselves. A person who gets fired created that experience for themselves. Their thoughts about themselves, their ability to teach, thoughts about their students and families and colleagues, thoughts about the district, the curriculum, all of their thoughts impact their emotional state of being, their emotional energy, the fuel that they use to make decisions and actions.

That is what impacts their approach to teaching and being an employee. The result of that might have been being released from their position. That outcome is a product of them not wanting the job. Because staff members who do want the job that they currently have, they value it. They show up for it. They work for it. They want it. They show up as though they actually want the job. They produce results.

People who are not aligned to the position are going to subconsciously sabotage themselves. They show up late. They aren't prepared. They call in sick. They have excuses. They blame other people. They drop the ball. They miss deadlines. They're not engaged in the job. They don't want it.

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Of course, I base this on the premise that if you're letting a person go because they aren't meeting the standards of the position they're serving, that you are doing that out of integrity. So if you're listening to this podcast, I'm pretty sure you're under the assumption that you're a highly ethical school leader who strives to be an exemplary employer.

So a person can be fired by an employer that didn't support them or give them the resources, training, and skill development they needed or simply just didn't like them. That happens. But for the empowered principal out there who's aligned to the decision, who lets somebody go and feels clean about the rationale behind the decision may still take on the emotional experience of the employee.

This shows up in a couple of different ways. One, the principal ruminates on what else they could have done or said to support this person. This is where radical empowerment comes into play. If there was something more you could have done, you can own that and learn from it and move forward.

But if you review all that you did to provide training and support and onboarding for the year, if you did all of that, please allow yourself to feel aligned and complete with the responsibilities and allow them to feel the discomfort of not having fulfilled their responsibilities. Two lanes. Okay?

In EPC, I will teach you how to take radical ownership so you can experience radical empowerment. This is the balance between being in boss energy and being in loving, compassionate energy. It's learning the delicacy of where and when to apply different energies throughout the day and throughout the school year, depending on the outcome you're trying to achieve.

This is the balance. It's the balance between taking ownership for yourself and having radical self-compassion and grace. It's knowing when to dive into curiosity instead of conflict when someone says something that ruffles your feathers. It's feeling confident even though you don't have all the

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answers or know all of the things. It's genuinely caring about the individuals on your campus.

But as I said before, not taking responsibility for their STEAR cycles, which is just their thoughts and emotions and actions, their behaviors. Their beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. Those are not in your control. It's having the compassion for others without allowing them to take advantage of you. It's the courage to speak up and also to know when speaking up isn't appropriate or will cause harm.

It's being convicted to your work, but allowing yourself to rest, recover, and play because you trust that everything you're doing is working and is on track and will unfold in the time it needs to unfold. It's having an evolved sense of self-efficacy and identifying as a leader who makes an impact, but not using your positional authority as power over others, but using that positional authority through the lens of seeing other people in their own empowerment.

Your staff doesn't need you to fix them or save them or change them. They have just as much potential to be exceptional as we leaders do. We want to feel empowered and to take full ownership. We want them to feel empowered, to take full ownership, to think on their own, to problem solve on their own, to try new things, to feel a sense of agency and control over their careers.

We're not a higher power just because we're a leader. We don't have control over other people's careers or emotional reactions. That's not our sphere of control. That's not our lane. Our goal as empowered principals is to see the power that's in everyone, in staff, in students, in colleagues, in families.

So if there was ever a time for you to join EPC, now is the time. I have up-leveled this content. I'm going to be teaching and coaching. I'm offering bonus workshops throughout the year. You're going to have access to all of

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my online content, including past masterclasses and webinars and all of the mastery series workbooks I've created.

I'm working on The Empowered Principal® community through the SKOOL platform, S-K-O-O-L where all of the content is going to be available for the participants in EPC. It's basically like a library with the solutions and guidance on every topic I have ever coached on related to school leadership and to a balanced life.

So in just one rotation around the sun, you are going to transform your experience of school leadership and the experience of your staff and students. You will receive 12 months of weekly coaching, bonus workshops, a monthly 30 minute one-on-one session, and access to all of the empowered principal programming for only \$1,997. The best part is that you can pay in full and be done with it, or you can sign up for 10 monthly payments of \$199.70.

EPC is revolutionary and beyond its price and value. I'm so proud of this program. I'm proud of the container, and I am proud to be a coach for school leaders. You have all you need to step into radical empowerment. I can't wait to see you in EPC. I'll talk to you guys next week. Have an amazing week. Take good care. Bye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *The Empowered Principal® Podcast*. If you enjoyed this episode and want to learn more, please visit angelakellycoaching.com where you can sign up for weekly updates and learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.