

Ep #359: The Feel Good Goal



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 359.

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. Welcome to this week's podcast. So happy to be here with you today. And for those of you who are new, welcome. We are thrilled to have you here. This is one of my favorite places to be with all of you. Besides EPC, of course, besides my one-on-one clients, this is also one of my favorites, because we get to have real conversations about how it feels to be a school leader, and that's what this is all about. And today's episode is going to be all about how it feels to be a school leader and how you want it to feel as a school leader.

I was talking with a client this week, and she was telling me how amazing her teacher pre- and post-conference meetings were going. So she's been doing teacher evaluations and observation. She's having the pre-meetings. She's having the post-meetings. And she said, you know, through our last two years of coaching, the power of coaching has no bounds. She said, I've realized that the goal is to feel good, and you've taught me that. The goal is to feel good, to feel good about myself, to feel sufficient in who I am as a leader, to feel good about my school and my campus.

And she said, I was thinking about this in terms of teacher observations. In the past, I have focused on what they are doing, the actions they are taking. I would ask them questions. How are you doing? What are you doing that's working? What do you think you did that was effective? What do you think you need to do next?

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And I'm listening to her share this, and it's all about doing. We think about doing, we think about what we've done, we think about what we're going to do next.

We get up in the morning, we have a to-do list, we're thinking about it as we're doing morning routine, we think about it while we're driving, we think about what we're going to do when we get there, and then we start doing, and then we get interrupted from the doing, and then we get frustrated that we're interrupted, and then we get back on track and we're doing the things, and then at the end of the day, we think about what we didn't do, and we make a list of what still needs to be done, and then we drive home and we think about that to-do list, and then we go home and we do.

We make dinner, we hang out with our friends, family, help the kids with the homework, get the baths, get the routines, they go to bed, and then we're thinking about the doing for the next day.

We are obsessed with doing. It's all about the action. We're thinking about the doing. And that thought process, that mindset, that approach to school leadership, it comes with a certain kind of energy. Trying to create change, work, grinding, hustling, forcing, manipulating.

And when I mean manipulated, I don't mean with ill intent. I mean trying to handle something, manage it, control it, maneuver it, manipulate like it, make it malleable and try to shape it and form it into the outcome word we desire. There's a lot of forcefulness or trying to control intention behind this type of doing.

I think of it as Olivia Pope energy. It's handled, it's done, no problem, I've got this, which is not a bad energy. I loved this character, by the way. So for those of you who are younger than me, this was a show called Scandal with Kerry Washington as the actor.

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She portrayed a very powerful, strong, boss, badass woman named Olivia Pope. And I loved this character. I watched this series not once, but twice all the way through. Her confidence, her courage, her boldness, her energy, her style. Oh my God, her style.

I have a funny story to tell you. I actually dressed up as Olivia Pope for Halloween while I was a principal at school. And I have to tell you this, even better yet, I'll never forget this day. I dressed up as Olivia Pope. I had the perfect dress, perfect outfit. I dressed up and everyone's like, who are you? And when I told the adults, they were like, oh my gosh. Yes, absolutely.

It was a Monday. We used to do Leopard Launch, which was the entire school would gather outside and we would celebrate the kids.

We would do our school song, our school spirit or chant. We would do all of our little routine for the week. We had announced Leopard Spot winners. We would give announcements for the week, just a big celebration of the entire school and the parents would all stand around awake. We did it first thing in the morning.

It was a Monday morning. I'm in my Olivia Pope. I'm getting the comments. Thank you so much. The kids did their little we called it the monster bash where we did dances to music. It was so fun after that. I held a principal's coffee. I walk into the multi. This is a total side note guys But it's fun story I walk into the multi and I'm feeling like a boss like just the clothing you wear sometimes can make you feel Like a different energy a different person I'm walking in, I'm hosting this principal's coffee, and I'm a few years in, so I'm not brand new.

This is probably my fourth, fifth, sixth year sometime. And I had a parent who was not having it with me. They were a hater. It was pretty ugly, but it was that day that that person verbally attacked me in the multipurpose room with hundreds of parents watching on Halloween day in my Olivia

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Pope outfit. I was so glad that I chose that outfit because there was something in me that stood strong, that I felt my nervous system reacting.

I could feel the visceral reaction. My heart was pounding. My blood was boiling. Like my face was probably flushed. I could feel it in my throat. I could feel all the feels, but I had this sense of calmness and strength and courage that I just, I needed, I needed in that moment, I was able to handle myself externally and to see that I was okay, that I was going to be okay, that I could handle that moment.

It was a very Olivia Pope moment. So I use Olivia Pope energy because one, I think women can relate to it. Two, another term for this kind of energy is called masculine energy. It has nothing to do with being male or female. It has to do with the type of energy. It's just a label. It's can be in males or in females.

And I will say that there are many leaders in masculine energy because the energy is confident, courage, bold, courageous, it's kind of like you're fierce, you go for it, you're direct, you try to create an outcome with sheer force, with sheer hard work and grit and grind. So we're sold as women or men that the ideal approach to leadership is this.

This boss energy, this badass energy, this fixer, it's done kind of Olivia Pope energy. Get it done. Right? And look, I want to say outright, like, this is not bad energy. There's not good energy or bad energy. There's not a right way or a wrong way to approach school leadership. And I think of it as like in the movies, characters, they tend to have like one character trait.

So in the case of Olivia Pope, we see this character being courageous and brave and bold and making these big decisions and taking big risks and getting in danger and, you know, almost not sure how she's going to get out of it, but she always gets out of it. She's like the MacGyver of women. And but what we don't see is that she always wakes up ready to go looking

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sharp in her perfect outfit perfect hair looking amazing feeling good the next day taking on the next big battle like there isn't a ton of representation for the humanness of the experience right being so exhausted mentally physically emotionally getting the beat down like they show moments of that but because it's a show it's a movie or a it's a series.

There's always the main character triumphs, they overcome, and we want that when we're watching it, that's a part of the joy of the show, right? But what we don't see is where it doesn't work out in the end, or where the exhaustion wins out, or something happens and it knocks her to her knees, and she's just down and out for a week, or she's having a weekend where she's in bed depressed, we don't see that.

We see her getting magically recharged and is up for the next day. So we get into leadership and think, Oh, we should be able to come in with this big leadership energy and solve things like a boss and have everyone follow our plan and do what they need us to do and that it doesn't impact us.

To the point that we're physically mentally emotionally exhausted or wiped out. We're kind of sold this machine approach or robotic approach to leadership, right? And that's where I feel masculine energy. When people speak of masculine energy, that's what it is. It's just a term that's applied to the type of fuel driving our actions. It's a mindset, an approach that we believe is the right way or the best way.

And here's the thing about it. I have leveraged masculine energy most of my life. As a little girl, I was pretty feminine, but I was the firstborn and I was raised to be masculine in getting accolades and accomplishments, learning to play the violin, being in choir, being in orchestra, being in band, getting good grades. I was the drum major my senior year in marching band. Going to college, I learned how to leverage masculine energy in a way that really worked for me. I was like, oh, this feels powerful, this feels strong, I'm successful, I'm creating results.

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So masculine energy is an absolutely necessary part of school leadership, and it works a lot of the time. It also can result, if we aren't conscious or aware, it can create results without fulfillment. We think that we should always be strong, be resilient, big, bold energy, and we associate this kind of energy with title, status, power, influence. Like I'm the leader, I have a title. It's my responsibility. That's what leaders do. That's how we should be. It's who we should be. It's how we should act.

But the only problem with this approach is when it doesn't feel good. When you're playing the part or being the part, but you're not feeling the part. It doesn't feel good. It doesn't feel aligned for you. You come in and you're doing, doing, doing, whether that's driven by perfection or whether it's driven by comparison, or whether it's driven by fear of what other people's opinions, or what your boss might say, or fear of getting fired, or fear of getting, you know, haters, fear of getting negative feedback, or public scrutiny. When it's that kind of masculine energy, you're pretending.

It's not really who you are. You're pretending to be that, and it doesn't feel aligned. It doesn't feel good. It's not invigorating. It's depleting. It's exhausting. It's like getting a beat down, and then getting up and coming back in the ring and getting beat up over and over again by yourself or others, right?

When masculine energy is not working for you, it makes you feel inadequate and exhausted and insufficient. There is a place for doing because we cannot create outcomes without doing. We can't sit here and meditate all day and visualize a happy school and sit in our comfy chair for eight hours and it magically happens. We can't just be, exist, without doing. But there's an energy that fuels the doing. So it's about how you're feeling when you're doing what you're doing and who you're being when you're doing what you're doing.

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So there's the forceful, must do, have to, urgent, fearful, controlling, perfectionism, energy of doing things. And then there is a clarity, centered, purposeful, intentional, calm, desire, enjoyment, prioritized, confident, assured, done is better than perfect energy, where you are centered and calm and clear and confident and trusting that the action you're taking is enough because it feels good, it feels aligned, it feels sufficient. You're not rushing through your to-do list to prove to yourself that you're sufficient. You're walking insufficiency, fueling yourself doing the things.

So you can choose to be forceful and have this intense controlling octane of fuel, which is the masculine. I've got to control title, power, status, and yet the urge to control, to win, to have it all. It's an all or none thinking if you're only using that fuel. Or you can choose a more calm and clear and centered and assured trusting octane of fuel, which is the feminine, the trusting, the faith, the patience, the internal strength.

If you think about it, people who are spending all of their energy trying to control externally, trying to control other people, trying to control outcomes, trying to control what the community thinks, what their boss thinks, what their teachers are doing, what their students are doing and they can't handle if it doesn't go exactly the way they want it to because of the way it makes them look or feel, those are very fragile leaders.

It 's like, I'm trying to keep all the plates spinning and as long as I keep all the plates spinning and I have control over these people and control over that person and control over what this person thinks and I'm doing, and I'm doing, doing, doing, and I'm looking the part, as long as all the plates keep spinning, I'm good.

But you're running around, spinning all the plates, making sure nothing falls, because if one plate falls, you shatter. Your identity shatters, your emotional state shatters, your confidence shatters, versus when there's an

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internal strength where there is alignment and self-trust, self-control, self-maturity, self-ability to reflect.

It's an internal strength, an internal ability and capacity to manage your thoughts, to feel your feelings without exposing them and reacting to them and projecting them onto other people. Feminine energy is about internal strength, and then the masculine energy is taking that internal strength out into the external part of you.

So the key to balancing this feminine and masculine energy, this forcing, controlling, doing, I call it doing energy and being energy. When you're being versus what you're doing, the key to this balance is by what feels good for you. I call these feel-good goals. The way to reach a goal is, is this feeling good? Is it not feeling good? Does this approach feel good? Does it feel aligned or does it not? I take action, this is my goal. I take masculine action, massive action, I do through the lens of being, who I am, through the lens of feminine energy.

So I look at what I want to accomplish and the tasks and the actions I need to take and do, but through the lens of certainty, calm, trust, faith, clarity, alignment. And when I do that, the actions are fueled with a different kind of octane, with sufficiency, with safety, with certainty, with trust, with clarity, with constraint, because I don't have to get 200 things done to feel sufficient.

I can do the three things that are my priority and feel sufficient. Knowing there's more to do, but not needing to do it right now for fear that my reputation will get broken and shattered or my feelings will get shattered or somebody's opinion of me will get shattered.

So the feel-good approach is about focusing on what feels good, using it as a compass, makes it so simple. So full circle, back to the conversation I had with my client with her teacher observations, she shifted the way she

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asked the questions. She didn't need another program. She didn't need another evaluation system. She simply shifted the questions from what are you doing to how are you feeling? What felt good about the lesson? Where did you feel you were in flow? What part of the lesson felt amazing for you? What are you most proud of? What do you think your kids were feeling? When were they feeling good? I noticed this. Your kids were really feeling good at this part of it. They really did a nice job here. What felt good?

When you ask a teacher how they're feeling and you make the goal to feel good is the path. That means you're on track. If it feels good, you're on track. If it's feeling a little crunchy, if it's not feeling really good, that isn't a problem. That's just an indication that we want to look at that aspect of our teaching and ask ourselves what would make it feel good?

If that part, if the transition between a whole group to individual work or a whole group to partner work or whatever the transition is, if that transition felt a little crunchy, we just look at the transition part of the lesson. We don't need to revamp the whole lesson or change who we are as a human being or as a teacher. What about that transition didn't work? Was it how you handed out papers? Was it how they selected partners? Was it how they walked back to their desk? Was it they forgot to get their pencils? What little specific thing felt a little crunchy there? And what would feel good? Oh, okay, let me add that in, or let me just shift that a little bit.

Asking people how they feel versus what they did puts them inside of their bodies instead of in their mind thinking outside of their body. And here's what's so fascinating about this work. When you ask people what felt good, they actually already know.

And what you're doing when you ask the question is you're empowering teachers to go internal, to think for themselves. What did feel good to me? I have to check in with myself. Versus teachers who, oh my gosh, they're gonna ask me what I did and I'm gonna have to come in with defense plan,

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a protection plan to show them, here's my strategy, here's what didn't work, here's what I didn't do, here's what I'm gonna do. It's not about what they're doing as much as it is about the fuel driving the doing, who they're being while they're doing it, the energy they're fueling their decisions and actions by.

So the feel-good approach, the goal is to feel good, to feel good as a leader, and for teachers to feel good as a teacher, so that students can feel good as students. And then it becomes very clear. It rises up to the surface and their insights change. It shifts because they're not focusing on the doing as much as they're focusing on the feeling. This feels good. This doesn't. Let's keep this. Let's shift that. It makes being an instructional leader so much more simple, because you aren't trying to be the expert, the guru.

You don't have to bang your head about what should their goal be, and how should they fix it, and what should I suggest. You're asking them what feels good to you and what doesn't. That's your goal. The little crunchy part there that you need to change, that's the goal, pure and simple.

Now, where the work comes in for you is allowing yourself to focus on what feels good and what doesn't feel good, and making what doesn't feel good feel good. That's what we talk about in EPC. So you can go out right now, and you can start asking what feels good to teachers. You can apply that right now. But where it's going to get a little crunchy for you is when it comes back to you.

And if your capacity to lead this change in the way that you engage in instructional leadership, moving from doing to being and feeling, Your capacity to lead this change or this shift is going to work only to the capacity at which you're doing it internally for yourself. That's what EPC supports you in.

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It's gonna feel very counterintuitive. Your brain is going to be like, what are you doing? We're not working hard enough. We're not spending enough time on this. We're not getting our to-do list done. You are so failing in all of the ways. Danger, danger. That is where we shift our energy, our leadership energy, our focus, and our priority from masculine down to the feminine versus feminine to the masculine.

So it's not about doing enough to become somebody, it's about becoming that person now, being the person now, feeling it now, and then you do. It's a flip. And it's kind of a mind blip because it's not how we're trained to think. It's not how we're trained to do. It's not the approach that we were told works.

So you can forcefully create results in your life. People do it all the time. But is that the way you want the experience of school leadership to feel? I have found that in my experience, the feel-good goals, they're so much better. They feel so much better.

They work better. It's like you've tapped into a success formula that doesn't even make sense. Because it feels easier, it feels better. It feels like you're in flow and just so much good is happening. And you're not overexerting, overworking, overscheduling.

Give it a try, the feel good goal, and join EPC when we open the doors in 2025, I can't wait to meet you. Happy, happy Tuesday, have a great week and we'll talk to you next 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.