

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 367.

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 New Year. Happy 2025. Can you believe it? 2025. It's going to be an epic year. I can feel it in my bones. I am so freaking excited about 2025, and I've got some exciting personal news to share with you that I've been dying to tell you all, but I wanted to wait to make sure it was actually going to happen. So I'm recording this right before Thanksgiving, so I am being premature in my announcement, But by the time you hear this, it will all have taken place. Are you ready for it? Here we go.

As you're listening to this podcast, in January of 2025, I have just relocated to Nashville, Tennessee. I can't believe I'm saying this out loud. So as I'm saying this, it feels weird because I'm not leaving for two more weeks. But by the time you hear this, I will have already relocated to Nashville, Tennessee. And there is such a big story behind this, one that's very personal, it's very intimate, it's still a little bit raw, had a lot of family changes and situations come up over the last few years, and I am now single, and I have decided that I want to be closer to my son. My son, Alex, I have one son, his name is Alex, he's 25 years old. He relocated from LA to Nashville in 2023, so he's been there for a year and a half now, and he loves it there.

I don't know that it's his forever home, but it's a for now place. It's a wonderful place. I have visited many times. He has friends there. He's got a job there. He wanted a change of pace. He wanted to experience something outside of California before he settled down. California was all

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table

he knew. He was actually born in Minnesota, but when he was three months old, we moved back to California. We had a two-year stint in Minnesota between living in California.

Anyway, he was born in Minnesota, but we moved out here when he was three months old. So he's a California boy through and through. And we love it out here. I love California, but I also love exploring and trying new places and being in different parts of the world with different kinds of people with different experiences, different landscapes, cuisines, weather, I don't know, mindsets. And I just think it's going to be a fun adventure.

So I'm definitely committing to one year in Nashville. And for all of my coaching friends who live near the East Coast, I can't wait to get together with all of you, my friends and family. I have friends and family on the East Coast. I have friends and family in the Midwest. So I'm just thrilled for this new chapter of my life, for the adventures that are to come, the memories I'm going to create. And here's what's so fascinating, and can I just tell you something? I will share more about my personal story as I am healing and moving forward, but one of the things I want to offer to you is I don't feel I could have gone through what I went through without coaching. I don't know how I would have gone through it.

I'm sure I would have gone through it, but the ability to have a coach to talk through the intensity of emotions and thoughts and the dysregulation in my nervous system at chronic levels, it was for months upon months upon months to be able to navigate that and to regulate myself and to still wake up in the morning, find joy in the day, to rewrite the script of the things that unfolded in my life and to make them a plot twist and to make them not mean anything about me or anything about anybody else, but to embrace that plot twist and see it as an opportunity, see it as the path I was always meant to take, and to show up with so much gratitude even in the midst of grief and pain and loss and suffering. I cannot imagine.

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table

Sorry guys, I'm getting a little emotional here. I'm just going to share that raw with you, but I cannot imagine life without a coach, life without someone to process incredibly painful feelings and to come out on the other side, stronger, wiser, more conditioned, my capacity to handle emotion, my capacity to get up and live my life, no matter what comes my way. I am, I feel like a superhero coming through this. I am so proud of myself. I am so grateful for my coach. I am so honored and I'm so humbled by the love that has poured out from family and friends. As I enter into this new phase of my life, and I just want to share it with all of you because I know there are thousands of you listening to this podcast every single week. You know my voice, you know my story, I am as transparent as I can be.

And I am so honored to share this with you because it really is a spectacular, exciting change in my life. And I will tell you what's even greater than all of that. Anytime I go through a major upgrade, up-level transformation in my life, it transforms and expands my capacity to coach. What's happening in EPC this year is phenomenal. I have just upleveled in a way that's extraordinary. And the people that are in the Empowered Principle Collaborative EPC, they are extraordinary. They are getting results. I had somebody just the other day say to me, Angela, I am so grateful that I found you when I did. I wish I had found you five years ago, but I'm grateful that I'm here now. I'm not going anywhere. We're just getting started. People are so grateful to have a group where they can come in and be coached. There's also one-on-one sessions for the EPC clients so they can work with me one-on-one and in the group. That's a bonus that I added. And it's magic. It's pure magic.

So I am so grateful to have had coaching throughout my life. I will never not have a coach. And I'm so grateful to be a coach because I see the relief it provides people, the transformations that it brings to people. There's goals and accomplishments and yes we accomplish goals we achieve great things but it's about how it feels it's about getting through the hard times

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table

with grace and with skill and being able to navigate the toughest of situations and to condition yourself to be able to handle them and to regulate your nervous system and to come out on top to be so much stronger than you ever thought you could be. It's brilliant.

And the beautiful part about this is that the way that you feel about yourself, the confidence you gain, the pride you have in how you handle yourself, being the most emotionally mature person in that room at all times, being able to handle yourself, being able to communicate respectfully and concisely and articulate exactly what it is that you need and that you want and to be able to let yourself have those emotional meltdowns and get that energy out. It's just so remarkable and if there's any wish I could give to the world, if I could hand out presents, I would give everyone the gift of coaching. There's nothing else like it in the world.

For those of you who are listening and you've never tried coaching, this is your opportunity to jump into EPC. I open the doors mid-year, so throughout the month of January you can jump in mid-year. You start in January, you're going to get a full 12 months when you sign up. You get access to all of my content, all of my coaching, all of my past trainings, past workshops, the workbooks I've created, the resources that I've created for school leaders. You get everything. It's only \$19.97, under \$2,000 for the entire year, for the entire membership, for weekly coaching, for one-on-one coaching, for all of the resources. And I just feel like it's such a value. If I were to price it on the market, I think it would be ten times its value. But I want it to be accessible to everybody. I want everyone who feels compelled to have a coach to come on into EPC and just experience the magic of coaching.

And I promise you, we're going to do a session with the clients of EPC, because I know I'm the coach, of course, but you can take it from them. They are creating transformations, and I can't wait for you to hear what they have to say about the magic that has been created in their own lives, their

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table

own empowerment, them stepping into a version of themselves that they are so proud of and that they feel capable of regulating in any circumstance. It's spectacular. Okay, so that's what's going on with me.

As you hear this, I'm in Nashville with my son. We're living the dream, having so much fun. EPC is popping. The doors are open. Come on in. I am going to be giving 10x to the empowered principal world this year. So watch out. I'm bringing it this year. So this is the perfect time to get in. Okay? I want to shift gears. Actually, not even shifting gears. This is right in alignment with what I'm talking about. I was coaching a client the other day and the conversation started off with her not feeling great about a comment that a teacher leader made.

There was some teacher leaders going to a conference and these teacher leaders were expected to go to the conference and learn all the things and then come back and teach all the people and change the world. The teachers made a comment to the principal saying like, I'm nervous about this. I think we have some teachers on our staff that they're not pulling their weight or they're not going to do this thing that we have to come back and teach. And I want you to think about this for a second. As leaders, we know the pressure of being a leader and feeling like we have to be expected to convince, coerce, inspire people into action. We have to figure out how to do that.

So we try to convince them and we try to, you know, sell them hard on why they should change and create buy-in. And that feels difficult to do because when we're coming at it with the energy of I need to convince this person, I need to manipulate them, I need to control their thoughts and feelings and actions. It doesn't land for people. Nobody wants to be controlled or convinced or to be sold to something that they don't believe in, okay?

We love to buy into things that we believe. We love to buy things we want. We love to buy things that we believe are the best thing for us, for the kids.

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table

We love that part. We don't love it when somebody is selling us something where we don't think is the right thing, okay? So, I want you to think about the pressure that school leaders are under to create actual leadership where people are following their lead, like they are stepping into the vision that you've created and developed for your school. They are sold into that mission. They are on the same team when everybody's flowing. That it's a masterpiece. It's a work of art. It's a skill set that's developed over the course of time within yourself as a leader.

So when your teacher leaders are nervous because they're going off to a conference and then they're being expected to lead the teachers, they know the teachers well. They know who tends to lean into resistance and who tends to jump on board and do the things. There's a lot of pressure on them. So they're nervous because they're feeling that intensity of leadership, what it feels like to need to be a leader and to now be expected to have people follow their lead. So as I was coaching with this client, we started shifting the conversation from focusing on changing people to focusing on systems that are working versus systems that are not. So instead of seeing the humans on campus as being faulty, as being the ones needed to be changed. We look at systems.

What's working systematically? What's a little crunchy? What needs to be adjusted? What do we think will make this part that's not working so great feel better for kids, feel better for us, feel better for the school? We look at systems versus people. People aren't the fault. People are people. People are human. Humans have flaws, but they're not faulty. They don't need to be changed and fixed or reprogrammed, programmed, right? We want to look at the systems in place, okay?

So, when you're thinking about leadership and you're working with people, the human brain will say things like this, well, teachers should do it this way, or we should be getting on board, or we should be doing this, or we should be doing that. Kids should be getting into class, wanting to come to school,

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table

sitting down perfectly, listening to teacher, doing their homework, should, should, should, should, should. Any time a teacher or a student doesn't follow the shoulds, I call this a mental manual. We have this mental handbook of how children should behave, how teachers should behave, how paraprofessionals should behave, how office staff should behave, how our counselors, nurses, bus drivers, lunch duty, yard duty. We have a manual for how everybody should do things and how we should do things. And then when people don't do the shoulds, there's a gap between what they're doing and what they should be doing or shouldn't.

Kids shouldn't be disrespectful. Kids shouldn't get out of their seats. Kids shouldn't, whatever, touch each other. We have all of these shoulds and shouldn'ts. Now, I'm not saying, no, don't have rules. I'm not saying we don't want to have a set of standards and practices and boundaries and consequences for non-appropriate behavior. What I'm saying is when there is a teacher that we're labeling as resistant or that somebody is not behaving in the way that we would like them to, our brain is like, well, they should do this. They shouldn't do that. Okay. I'm going to speak to this in terms of students, because I think it's easiest to wrap your head around it.

When you have a child in a classroom and they are not behaving in the way the teacher wants them to behave, they're not in alignment with the rest of the class. Let's say we have one student who's dysregulated, maybe to an extreme measure, maybe they're never sitting down or they're wandering around or they're touching things that they shouldn't be touching, right? And they're not behaving in a way they should. We can sit down as teachers and principals and parents and say, look, here's what should be happening, but they're not doing that.

Instead of putting all the shoulds on the table and all the shouldn'ts on the table and then discussing what's not happening, basically like here's what should be happening and here's what shouldn't be happening but here's

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table

what is happening, I invite you to take all of the shoulds and wipe them off the table. Here's why.

When you think that a teacher or a student should be doing something but they're not, how do you feel? You're very frustrated. You get upset. It's frustrating, you might be angry, you might be discouraged, you might be disappointed, but you're going to feel a negative emotion. And now you are dysregulated. When you think this should be happening, this shouldn't be happening, you're going to feel very frustrated, angry, upset, something along those lines. But if you take all the shoulds off the table and you're like, what is happening? Not what should be happening or what shouldn't be happening, but what is happening? So when you have a student or a staff member and you're thinking to yourself, they should be doing this or they shouldn't be doing this, we wipe all of those shoulds off the table and all of those shouldn'ts and we just say, what is? What is happening?

Well, what's happening is the student is getting up out of the desk and walking around the classroom when the teacher is teaching or the students are supposed to be working. So student A is sitting, student B is sitting, student C is sitting, student D, E, F, G, sitting. Student Z is walking around. Oh, okay. When they shouldn't or they should, when those are gone, we're just talking about what is, now you've neutralized it. Student is getting up out of chair. Then the question becomes why? We remove all of our frustration when we take away the shoulds and shouldn'ts and we look at what's happening, why it's happening, what we speculate might be happening, and here's what you're doing.

You're getting your emotional regulation system neutralized so that you can problem-solve by looking at the specific details of what the student's doing, why they might be doing it. We're studying the student's steer cycle. For every behavior, there is a reason. We might not understand the reason, we might not like the reason, we might not know the reason, but there is a reason in a student's mind. When they get up and they wander about class,

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table

they have a thought, they have an emotional energy in their body that compels them to get up and move around. Instead of saying you should do this and you shouldn't do that. Why? Because I said so or because that's the way it should be or because the other kids are because the teacher's frustrated, right? You see where this is going.

The kid has no interest because they're listening to their own internal compass and their body is telling them to move about the cabin. They're moving about. They feel compelled to do it. There's an energy in that body that says, move right now. I can't sit here. I don't want to do this work, or I feel completely restless right now, or I don't understand what the person's saying, or I don't speak this language, or I don't know how to write this down. We don't know, but we want to study it, not from a place of should or shouldn't, but from a place of what is.

And what I have found to be true is that if we stop and notice teachers that are resistant, we should say, well, they shouldn't be resistant. No, but why are they resistant? Why might they be resistant? What do we speculate? We can't know unless we ask them directly, but it changes how you feel. You shift from being frustrated, mad, and upset, and what am I going to do about this, and how am I going to fix this teacher who's so resistant, into why might they be resistant? Well, resistance is usually in armor, and I can do a whole podcast on resistance being in armor, but if we take off the shoulds and shouldn'ts, all of a sudden you have a teacher who, well, they are receiving feedback and not applying it, or they are asking for input, but then they're rejecting it.

You know how people will say, like, I need help with this, and then you give them five ideas, and they're like, yeah, but that, oh, I tried that, but yes, but, yes, but, yes, but, you might have that. Why might somebody be doing that? Then you're into problem-solving mode. The solutions are in the specifics. Our brain wants to go into ambiguity. They should be doing this, but they're not. But we don't, well, why? Let's speculate, let's wonder, let's

Ep #367: Take Shoulds off the Table

ponder, let's contemplate this. Take the shoulds off the table, focus on what is, and ask why, contemplate that, and dig deep into the specifics. you will find yourself much less in frustration and much more into curiosity, which brings you to solutions.

Take the shoulds off the table. Happy New Year. I love you all so much. If you live near Nashville, let me know. Let's meet up. I would love to meet you in person. Have an amazing 2025. Come on into EPC while the doors are open. You will not regret it one minute. It's a blast, we have so much fun, and you feel better about yourself, about your staff, your students, and your school. Come on in. Happy 2025. I'll talk to y'all next week. Take care. Bye!

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