

## Ep #372: Acknowledging Pain



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Angela Kelly**

## Ep #372: Acknowledging Pain

Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 372.

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.

Well, hello, my Empowered Principals. Happy Tuesday. I hope you're doing well. I have a very different type of podcast for you today. This is something I have never done before. I have a public Facebook group for empowered principals. It's a group where anybody who is in education, who's an aspiring leader, who is currently a leader, whether you're site leader, district leader, assistant principal, principal, director, coordinator, superintendent, whatever, you can be in this group. Anybody can find it. It's a public group and it's a Facebook group.

And in that group, I go in regularly and create comments and support people and offer Facebook Live videos. And recently, a new Principal had just found the Facebook group and she was struggling in so much suffering and pain. And I read her post or her comment and my heart ached because I remember what it feels like to be new. I remember what it feels like to be so overwhelmed, so deflated, so defeated, where you feel so behind that you don't know how you're going to get out of it. You feel like people hate you, and they're actively trying to hurt you or come at you sideways or be ugly. And it's a very lonely, it's very isolating, it's a very painful experience.

And hey, you don't have to be new for this experience to happen. This happened to me multiple times over the course of my seven years in school leadership. In the beginning, for sure, it happened. But any time that a teacher or staff member was unhappy with something that they felt was impacted because of me, if they thought it was my fault, or they thought it was my decision or they just didn't like me for whatever reason, because

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I'm short. Or I laugh funny or I'm super bubbly or who knows? I just annoyed them. I wasn't their person. And there were people who found ways to be extremely hurtful and talk behind my back and say terrible things and tell the superintendent untruths. It was a very painful time.

I was thinking about this person and I just jumped on a Facebook live and I recorded from my soul, from my heart speaking to this person and to anybody who is suffering emotionally, who's in pain, and how to handle that pain.

You are cut out for school leadership. Your brain is going to tell you that you're not because the emotional and the mental toll can feel overwhelming. It can feel like you can't handle it. I've been there. I totally get it.

And so today I thought I would share that Facebook live. It got hundreds of views within the group and I'm just offering it to you in case you or somebody you know is in pain and they're suffering and they're feeling like they're not cut out to be a leader. That isn't true. You are cut out to be a leader. And how do we know you're a leader? You're in the position.

So whether you're a first year or you're a veteran, the amount of time you've been in leadership doesn't matter. When you're in pain, pain is pain. The circumstances don't matter. What matters is when you're in pain, it feels like it's never going to leave, it's never going to end, and you don't know how to get out.

And this Facebook Live, it's pretty raw, it's pretty vulnerable, and it's here for you to acknowledge and validate these feelings. They didn't come out of nowhere. They're here for a reason.

So tune in, listen to this Facebook Live. If you're on Facebook and you're interested, you can always join the public group. And when you become a

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member of EPC, we have a private group where I upload all of my resources, all of the trainings, all of the webinars, everything that I teach, everything that I train, all of the resources, the workbooks, the guides that I have developed, they're all in EPC, but this group is for the public.

So come on over, check us out. I hope this Facebook Live audio is helpful to anyone out there who is suffering. And if you want more support, please feel free to reach out and call. At the very least, we'll do a free consult call. I'll talk you through it. And if EPC isn't in your immediate future, but you'd like to join us later, that's great too.

So I wish you well, I wish you happiness, and I wish you peace and empowerment. Enjoy the show.

I want to take a moment and welcome our new Empowered Principles in the group.

A lot of people have been coming in looking for some reprieve, looking for some relief. And this message is definitely for you. If you are struggling this year, if you feel like you're in survival mode, if you're barely hanging on, if you feel like you're not going to make it, if you feel like you're being crushed or that you think that you can't handle this, or you're not cut out to be a school leader, or this is just too much, I want this message to be directed directly for you.

So the first thing I wanna say is that I can relate. I was there in your shoes in this job. I was a single mom opening a brand new school, my very first two years in school leadership. I had construction nightmares happening on my campus. I had a teacher who applied to the administrative position and did not get it. She was very bitter and hurt and upset, understandably. I had people who did not like me. I had been a kindergarten teacher. They didn't feel that I was competent in upper grades. I had people who tried, actively

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tried, to get people to dislike me, to kind of group up against me. So I feel that burn.

I had parents screaming in my face, raging at me, refusing to leave the campus, refusing to leave the office, people threatening to go to the newspaper, people threatening to go to the superintendent. It was rough. And if you're in, oh gosh, it makes me want to cry just thinking about it.

So first of all, I just want to say I relate to you. I know how painful that is when you're having one heck of a tough year. So first of all, I'm so glad you joined the Empowered Principal group. This is a free group. It's open to the public. I try to ensure that it's aspiring school leaders, new school leaders, that it's school leader related. I try not to let people solicit in here. Our team cuts that off. As soon as we see somebody marketing or salesy or trying to promote themselves, we delete that stuff because this is a safe space. It's a sacred space for you. You get to say how you feel in this group. You get to be honest about it. And I want you to know that if you feel you need support in this group, all you have to do is just post how you're feeling.

Do a brain drain, just get it all out onto this page. I will respond to every single person who hosts in this group. I keep an active watch on, on this. This it's my group. Like you are my people and you are attracted into this group because you want to feel better. You want to feel empowered and you might feel desperate right now.

So when you're in this zone and it feels like everything is overwhelming you and it's crushing you and you feel like you cannot breathe, the first thing you need to do is you need to validate those feelings. You need to acknowledge them. Empowerment isn't about pretending to be empowered. Empowerment isn't about faking it till you make it. It's the worst advice I've ever received because faking it till you make it, that is what creates imposter syndrome. That is what weakens your confidence when you're faking it.

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When you're feeling your body's in fight or flight, neurologically, your body is screaming at you to get out. This isn't safe. It doesn't feel good. Nothing about this is working. I can't handle this. But ultimately, your body and your mind and your heart and your gut is telling you to get out, to flee. It's not safe.

Or if you're like me, fight. And by fight, what I mean is you want to get in there and fix all the problems and prove yourself. And you want to, you want to explain yourself and justify and argue and defend and not really retaliate, but you want to try and prove yourself to like force people to see that you mean well, you have good intentions, that you're trying to do a good job. That's a form of fight or flight.

When you, when you feel hurt, when people have wrongly accused you, when you tried to help and somebody turned it into how you were incompetent and didn't know how to do your job and you failed and they're pointing fingers and they're blaming you and they're accusing you, criticizing you, judging you, it is crushing to the soul. And there is a period of time on this journey. Ooh, I'm really feeling the feels for you guys today. Wow. Ooh.

So the first thing you can do is just acknowledge how you feel. Say it out loud. I'm hurt. I'm sad. I'm frustrated. I am angry.

I am pissed. I am devastated. I am overwhelmed. I'm exhausted. Say it out loud. Claim it. The feelings aren't going away if you pretend that they're not there. If you pretend to go in and fake it, and that's what false positivity is, or toxic positivity, when people say, like, positivity is toxic, they're talking about fake, faking it, faking positivity.

Especially on the weekends, guys. Here it is Sunday, you probably have the Sunday scaries and they're probably bringing up some legit shit. I had to say it, it rhymed. But some, you know, it's legitimate feelings here. And

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it's coming to the surface and it feels horrible because what's happening is you feel like you shouldn't feel that way. I shouldn't feel so this, I shouldn't feel this, I should feel this.

So first of all, you add it to the flames by judging yourself, criticizing yourself, telling yourself you should feel different than you do, when instead the solution, the antidote, is to acknowledge the feelings. I feel this, I'm enraged, I am furious. Sometimes I have to look up emotion lists to kind of like nail how I'm feeling. There's the anger, there's all the spectrum of anger, there's all the spectrum of sadness, there's the spectrum of depression, there's the spectrum of apathy, there's the spectrum of hurt, grieving. There's so many feelings out that we feel as humans. And seeing if you can label them, identifying them, is step one. Just acknowledge that they're there.

And then you've got to validate them. There is nothing wrong with feeling the way you feel. When it seems like there are tens if not dozens of people upset at you judging you criticizing you it feels like you're being ostracized. It feels like you're being disconnected and when we feel disconnected as humans when we're wired for connection, it's very scary. It's like being ostracized out of public and being isolated and alone. It's a horrible feeling.

So I'm sorry if you feel that way. And I know school leadership is very isolating. It hurts because you are oftentimes the only administrator on that campus. You're the only one. It feels like all of them against one of you. So I just want to acknowledge that for you.

And I'm sorry if you're hurting and you feel that way, but I'm here to help. So, a couple of simple, simple things you can do is just to say it out loud. How do you feel? What's the label? If you can label it, and if you can't label it, what's the sound? Where do you feel it in your body? Just scream it out, or punch a pillow, or go cry in bed. Do something that releases that emotion for you. Crying's one of the best things that ever happened to humans

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because it is the release of emotion. It is the release of that energy buildup in your body. And eventually when you're done with the tears, your body's done, you're going to feel like a, just going to be a moment of calm and some, just a temporary peace.

And in that moment, when you've acknowledged and you validated your feelings, you just said, it's okay to feel this way, feel it, sit with it, breathe through it. Just take some deep breaths, ground yourself. I like to like, I either like to crawl into bed or I like to sit like on my floor, on my carpet, firm, just firmly sitting, whatever's comfortable for your back and your backside and all of that. Whatever feels good, okay?

Then take a couple of deep breaths and there's kind of this now what? I've had these feelings. Yes, I've validated them. I've felt them. I've processed them. I've let them kind of just rapture in my body. Like they just kind of take over and you just let them all out. Okay. And then you have a moment of like, what next?

This is the time when, this is what I do. I know this sounds kind of weird, but it works. You ask the feeling what it's there for. Why am I feeling this way? And is there any wisdom? Is there any insight? Is there any knowledge? Is there information? Is there an awareness that I need to develop? What is the emotion here for? I have not met an emotion that I haven't learned from.

So when I'm angry, oftentimes when I write it all down, here's why I'm angry, I would write it down, down, down. And then I'll say, anger, what are you here for?

What wisdom, what awareness do I need to gain here? There's something here for me. There's a nugget I need to learn or a skill I need to have or some insight or some information or knowledge. Is there anything you've



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got for me? Why did you show up at my door? I invited in for coffee. Let's talk. Anger, what have you got for me?

Oftentimes, for me, anger tends to be there's some kind of injustice happening, or I've been wrongly accused. That's a form of injustice, right? Like there's an injustice out there externally I'm upset about, or there's an injustice I feel like has occurred, like, to me. And sometimes I'm just angry because I need to take action. Anger is a lot of energy and oftentimes it can be channeled into an action.

Now, if you're angry with yourself, if you're feeling like you are upset with yourself, you mishandled something or you didn't know something, you weren't aware of something, or you misspoke or you misstepped, some kind of perceived mistake or failure, you can feel that and validate that. And then what can I learn? You can't get it right until you get it wrong. That's the duality. That's the dissonance required for you to know what to do.

So just know that when you misstep or misspeak or make a mistake, there's an error, you were just not aware of something and something happened and it upset people. You can learn from that and take it away and then apply it forward and take ownership of it. You can repair it or apologize or whatever it is you need to do, but know that there's no one on the planet that got it right. Always the first time they had to get it wrong in order to even know what right was. So there's that.

If you're feeling super overwhelmed, that's normal. Every leader feels overwhelmed. And that's a matter of like, we are thinking in kind of this ambiguous way. If you're super overwhelmed, if it's just too much to do in non-adjunct time, and everyone's coming at you 100 miles an hour, and you're playing whack-a-mole, and you don't know how to, it just, it feels like you can't handle it all.

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That, I have a very specific program for. Come on into EPC, join right away, you'll get time mastery, balance mastery, planning mastery. That's all technique and skill that I've learned over my years in school leadership. That can be taught. That's a skill. But if you're feeling it right now, again, acknowledge it, validate it, and you can be overwhelmed. And then when you get to the part where you're like, and now what? Okay. Then that's when you brain-dare your to-do list, that's when you start prioritizing, that's when you have to start breaking it down.

And if that feels hard, the hardest things about planning is prioritization, delegation, right? And then saying no, like being constraining, basically. Being able to know what to say yes to and what to say no to, and making decisions through the lens of those priorities and what you value as a school leader. Okay?

Now, if you're feeling hurt, if you're feeling like people are mad at you or people's behaviors out of control, a lot of newer principals will feel overwhelmed by other people's emotions. People can be nasty, they can be mean, they can be sharp with their words, they can be nasty in their actions. And there is a gap from being a teacher and feeling included and belonging and significant and like you're in a group, you're in that group to feeling this isolation.

There's a gap from learning how to handle being the leader, being isolated on your own, being the authority figure, but also having the capacity to navigate your own emotional experience and your own experience as a school leader while also holding space for everybody else's emotions. And let me tell you people are spraying their emotions all over all over. Kids are spraying emotion. There's emotional dysregulation in children and emotional dysregulation in adults.

And if that is a problem for you, again, come on into EPC. But my quick little tidbit for you to help you right now is if people are being nasty to you,

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again, state how you feel. Just acknowledge it. You don't have to go above it. You don't have to be walk on water perfect. Just acknowledge it. You're human. Validate it. It feels terrible that people be so nasty and ugly. And when they're coming at you sideways, it's okay to have human emotions.

Again, we're not faking perfection here. We're not faking aloofness. We're not faking that we're bulletproof emotionally. No one's bulletproof emotionally. We all have tenderness, tender spots because we're human, because we care. We're in the business of people. We're in the business of human development. That's what education is. And we are on a human development journey as a leader and as an adult.

Every person on your campus is on a journey of human development, personal development, academic development, physical development, social-emotional development. It's all a journey, okay? Give yourself a little grace here. And I teach a program within EPC, which is the Empowered Principal Collaborative. It's a group coaching program for school leaders. It's called emotional regulation mastery. It's how to understand and leverage your emotional capacity to be emotionally mature, emotionally responsible.

And by emotionally responsible, what I mean is emotionally responsive. You're responding versus reacting. There is a difference. Most people react. They feel the emotion and they react. They say something, they do something in reaction to that initial emotion versus I'm feeling a feeling, I'm going to feel, I'm going to acknowledge it, I'm going to validate it. And I'm pausing any decisions and actions in the meantime. And then once I've cleared that energy, emotional energy, now I'm in a space to decide with intention how I'm going to respond.

So I know Sunday can be tough. Last week I talked about the Sunday scaries. If you're still feeling the Sunday scaries, try validating how you actually feel. And you can definitely focus on what's working, what feels

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good, what are you looking forward to. But if that doesn't work, if you can't tip into feeling good and you can't bridge that gap, you've got to go in and stop faking it. Stop pretending you're okay. Stop pretending that you're not bothered by it.

That's what I used to do. I used to act strong. I used to act resilient. I used to pretend that I was okay. I wasn't. I feel for you. I'm here for you. I love you. I love the work you're doing. I know the job, it's so hard.

And I want you to share this with any school administrator who is struggling, who feels like the school's against them or the world is against them or the odds are stacked against you. We can help. One, little by little, we can break away and break through and create a shift and we can bridge the gap so that you can get into feeling much more empowered, much calmer, much more grounded, much more peaceful.

So I love you so much. Take good care. If you want to talk to me personally, just DM me and we'll set up a call. I'm here for you. I don't want you to suffer any more than necessary. Okay? Breathe deep, acknowledge your emotions, validate them, feel them. And take a couple more deep breaths and then ask yourself, what can I learn from this? What is there available to me?

And then you can get into what's working. What am I excited about? Is there anything that can give me some energy? Love you. Take good care of yourselves. Bye.

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