

Ep #374: A Teen's Guide to Self-Love and Authenticity with Kristi Simons



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello empowered principals. Welcome to episode 374.

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.

Hello, my empowered principals. Happy Tuesday. Welcome to the podcast.

And I am so excited. I have a special guest for you today. We haven't done an interview yet in 2025. So Kristi here is my first guest on the podcast for the 2025 school year. Her name is Kristi Simons. Is it Simmons or Simons?

Kristi: Simons.

Angela: Simons. Ooh, good catch. Kristi Simons. And she and I met through podcasting and coaching. She coaches teens and works with families with teens. And of course, education, school, coaching, kids, families, we're here for all of it. So we met, we connected, we just, you know, had an instant connection. And I really wanted her to come on to the podcast and talk with you all about the things that she does and her approach and working with teens.

And I know a lot of you, people that I work with, clients have teens that you're working with. I have middle school principals, high school principals, and not to mention if you are a principal and you have your own children who are teens and you're double dipping into the teen development years, this is gonna be a juicy podcast for you. So Kristi, welcome to the podcast.

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Kristi: Angela, thank you so much for having me. I feel honored also that I'm the first conversation of 2025. This is super exciting for me. Thank you for having me.

Angela: I'm so glad that we connected. And we really hit it off. I love her work. I love your content. So can you just introduce yourself, tell them who you are, what you do, your passions, your coaching, and really I wanna dive into your work with teens.

Kristi: Yeah, absolutely. I love answering this question or just this part of being on other people's podcast because whenever they ask me to share about my story, I feel like I learn something new about myself every time as well. And just being able to go back in time and really see the progression, the progress, because that's been the true highlight of this path for me that I am following now is just progress over perfection. And that's really the state of mind that I hope that teens can really start to adopt one day as well.

So to tell you a little bit more about myself, I'm actually a former teacher. I taught in the classroom for well over a decade. It was actually my children, so having my firstborn in 2020, that really shook me, shifted me and broke me into a bunch of pieces. And at that time, I can actually remember hearing like this strong whisper telling me that, you know, something inside of me, like there was something in me that knew I needed to change, that I wanted to start creating change, but I wasn't even sure how.

And a lot of this came back to becoming a mom for the first time and recognizing how much love I felt in that moment, like when they put that baby in my arms and like I felt like I had never felt a love like this before and then I feel like I started to connect these dots like I had never felt that love for myself and it was almost as if the more I tried to connect with him and love him like I was starting to realize that like that was something that I

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never gave to myself and it brought me back to my teen years and all of the things.

So moving forward through a second pregnancy I ended up having a series of mental health breakdowns, partially too because I suffered from addiction before having my children as well. And so, yeah, like I said, there were just a lot of moving parts during that time and I felt so disconnected from myself. And in hindsight, it's actually really beautiful that my children were the ones to finally wake me up to that disconnect.

And yeah, so I hired my own coach. Again, when I talk about these whispers and following these breadcrumbs, like there was just this inner knowing within me that I was gonna need like outside support to really help me through this.

And to me at the time, the investment brought up so much, but I'm so grateful that I did because it literally, it changed my life. Having somebody in my corner who could see and believe in me and start to just like guide me back home to myself, it's been an incredible journey. I'm still with my coach three years later.

And so through all of this, we have the pandemic. And so I was on maternity leaves and then kind of still teaching, but not in the classroom. It was virtual. So yeah, again, a lot of moving parts and there was just a lot of a lot going on at the time.

And I think this was actually in hindsight, again, such a positive thing for me, such a positive change because it allowed me to take a step back and really evaluate if this was still something that I wanted to do for myself. And the more that I was spending time immersed in this coaching experience, the more that I was recognizing that so much of what I was learning, like I

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wished I learned as a teenager. I wish that somebody was teaching this in the school systems.

And it's not to say that teachers don't do an incredible job, but I didn't know what I knew back then. Or sorry, I didn't know now back then what I know anyways you get me sure and so come full circle I left my full-time teaching position it's been close to two years now I've been working full-time with families full-time with teens specifically is who I work with I usually connect with the parents but it's the teens that I end up working with.

And I teach them all about emotional intelligence, essential life skills, and really at the root of it all, it's to have that deeper connection to themselves. Because what I hear come out of parents' mouths a lot is like how they really would love for their teen to feel more motivated, more confident, more motivated.

And to me, like the more I look back on my journey and thinking even like about my own motivation, motivation for me comes from that source within, of like deeply trusting yourself. It's not that you can't look outside of yourself to co-create and to ask for help and to connect with other people, right? Like we're meant to connect and we're meant to merge, but there's also this really big part of us that desires to be autonomous.

And that's the part that I really have been nurturing in myself over the last few years. And that's the part that I helped them to come back home to as well and really building their confidence. So that's a little bit about me. I could go on forever, but I'm going to stop there.

Angela: I love it. I love the story. I can relate to the feeling of the very first time that you held your son. I have one son who is now 25 and I remember that day as though it were yesterday. And the feeling is so significant.

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There is no other experience like it, at least for me. And I love that you connected it back to the love that you felt for him was a love that you hadn't given to yourself. And that was inspiring just for me right now. So thank you for saying it in that way. And I think we all are on a journey of true self-connection and self-love.

And finding that, whether we're a teenager or an adult, no matter what age you are listening out there, there is opportunity to connect with yourself and love yourself even more to the point you love yourself as though you would love your own child. Oh, that's so beautiful, Kristi.

Kristi: If everybody were to lean even just a little bit more into that, because at first, even for me, it felt intimidating. And it was also extremely emotionally uncomfortable even just to say that out loud, like why don't I love myself? And then to start hearing all of those thoughts and those limiting beliefs and all the stuff that comes up and we can get into that later. But I just imagine a world where people start to lean back into this and when they start to come to that place where they do feel more at home within themselves and they do feel that self-love, like that ripple effect would just be, like it would change, it would change everything.

Angela: Yeah. The question coming up for me right now is, why do you believe that teens struggle with self-love and connection, self-acceptance basically. Self-acceptance, self-love, and I feel like the teen years developmentally, they are an extremely challenging time in terms of their connection with themselves versus their connection with their peers and their identity in the world. Who are they in the world? Who are they at school?

Kristi: Who are they going to become? They're always asked, what are you going to go to college for? What are you going to do when you grow up? So what is your take on that? So for my podcast, one of my central questions

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that I ask every guest who comes on is if you could speak to your teen self, what would they need to hear? And so this is usually what I come back to. I feel like this is at the core of everything that I do. Like if I could speak to my teen self, what would she need to hear? And then I build on that.

And I know that back then I was placing a lot of my power outside of myself. So, you know, looking to the judgments, the opinions, the comparisons, all of those things. And I'm seeing this to be very true for my clients as well today. That's not to say that their experience is the same. They are living in a completely different world, so I always like to acknowledge that.

However, in my coaching and what I do, I also center everything around how do you want to feel. Because for me we are energetic beings, everything comes back to our emotions and the feelings that we are desiring. So again, external stuff aside, they are feeling disconnected from themselves and because they are feeling disconnected and they don't know how to put those pieces and parts back together, kind of like I didn't know how to do it before I hired my coach and she taught me what I didn't know yet, until they can figure out how to start connecting with themselves again, they are going to continue to look outside of themselves for validation, for approval seeking, whatever the case may be, to fill some of those, the word that's coming up for me right now is like those voids.

And in my sessions, what I'm hearing so often with my clients is that they want to connect with other people, but they're afraid that like they're not enough, that their ideas are going to be the word cringy always comes up or that they're going to look stupid or that people aren't going to like them, that they're not going to be seen, heard, understood or accepted. And it's fascinating to me because I feel like they are so advanced compared to like what I felt like where I was at as a teenager.

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And if they could just move past those limiting beliefs and those mental blocks. So I'll bring it back here. I actually once had somebody tell me that like those thoughts getting trapped in that worry cycle can feel like an undertow. And once you like grab onto that, it just kind of pulls you down.

And so if they don't know to lean back into love, if they don't know how to connect with that source, that power that I speak of that they have within, just by way of connecting with, and these are four key areas that I teach in my coaching, it's mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual energy.

And so going through all of this and really creating, you know, habits around how we want to feel because that's going to in turn start to shift our beliefs and then we start to create a new reality. But again, it's something that takes consistency. It takes consistent progress, not perfection.

But it's really just about connecting with yourselves. And I know from past experience, that was something that I was really afraid to do until I started doing it. So there's meant to be like that discomfort there, but if it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you. So yeah, that's just some of the stuff that I'm seeing really come up with them.

Angela: Yeah. Yeah. What's so interesting is how much our work aligns because I'm doing the exact same work with adults and they happen to be school leaders and parents a lot of times. But I noticed that there is a resistance or almost kind of what's the word I'm looking for, like they kind of scoff at the thought of like self-love and self-care and self-acceptance. It almost, there's such resistance to it.

And I'm wondering if you see that in your teens as well. Because school leaders, can you imagine if you work with middle or high school students and they have a life coach or even a percentage of them had these tools. Or even better, what I think is if this became a mainstream practice,

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exercises like just I don't want to say curriculum, that feels a little too formal for me, but like a way of being part of the vision of the school, if this were a part of the conversation around the, like, dropping the resistance to self-love, self-care, self-understanding, self-deepening, self-acceptance. What do you think is, like, when there's resistance to that, kind of like, oh, I couldn't do that or that's not cool. Like what comes up in the teen mind when you see the resistance come up to like self-acceptance and self-love?

Kristi: I love this question. My mind is firing off in so many different directions.

Angela: I'm sure there's no one answer, right?

Kristi: Holy moly. I'm trying to reel it in because there's a lot here. Resistance is just a really big topic. You could really break this down. The first thing that was coming to me is just that obviously resistance is normal. I still feel resistance in my own life towards the things that I have to do, but I have this awareness now and I have this toolkit. Having the wisdom, having the tools that work best for me, because this is never a one-size-fits-all. It's really about discovering what works best for you.

And I do, as a life coach, I also just feel like I'm kind of just, again, they're holding the beliefs, asking the right questions so they can come back home to the answers that they already have inside of them. But it's the inner critic. The inner critic was the other thing that's coming up for me.

I was working with a client, it was 2 weeks ago, and I just remember them saying, oh my gosh, I didn't actually realize that there was another voice. Because I teach my clients to learn to think about what they think about, because that was never something I did when I was a teen. I just believed

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all of my thoughts. I thought all of them to be true. And so this was true for this client too.

I remember I had her write down a list of, okay, so what would your inner critic say? What are some of those things that do come up? Let's allow them to be seen, heard, and understood in this moment without judgment. She was able to list off a bunch of stuff. Then when I asked her what her inner voice would say, so that place that comes from love, it was completely blocked. There was nothing that she was able to put on that side of her list.

And from like an energetic perspective, because I'm very good at reading people's energy, like I could tell that her walls were completely up. And that to me is the resistance. We are so resistant to leaning into what an inner voice coming from love would say because we've been giving our power to our inner critic. So we've really been essentially building that muscle, right? That has become a comfort for us. Our brain also has a negativity bias.

So it's always going to try to keep us safe, even if it reverts us back to something that is in fact, you know, not helping us to thrive or succeed in our lives. So in order to start creating change, like it's going to feel uncomfortable, that's where the resistance will come in. That's where you'll hear those thoughts that say, like, who do you think you are to start making these changes or why would you think for my clients?

It's hard to hear them say that they don't feel like they're enough, that they don't feel like anybody will care. And to me, that's just, again, them feeling, well, unworthy would be one of them for sure, unlovable. And yeah, so what I have found really helps with this for myself personally and for the clients that do come to work with me is really incorporating mindfulness into this.

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And I think that this is an area that would, and I feel like we are, I mean, at least here in Canada, I've noticed that there are more mindfulness practices like happening in the schools but that's just like we're just like touching the surface right like we really need to get them the information as well but yeah when I can actually have my clients like connect with themselves like settle back into their bodies get out of like the thinking space of just being so up in our heads.

We really need to connect with how our body is feeling. Oftentimes when the resistance shows up, you'll notice different sensations. Maybe I get tightness in my neck, sometimes in my chest. My emotions will obviously change. I may feel some anxiety, overwhelm, whatever the case may be, and then I hear those thoughts start to spiral, those thought loops of who do you think you are, like you're not worthy of this, you're not good enough, yada, you know, those ones that come up.

And so for me, it's always about just getting grounded. I have to reconnect. I have to ground myself and get those thoughts to just come away and just connect back with my heart. And that to me, I have found has been so helpful because once I'm in that space, that's when I'm able to, like I've regulated my nervous system. If we want to speak to like a scientific perspective, you're regulating your nervous system.

So you're allowing, like I was talking about my client, you're allowing those walls to come down. And then the other voice, the voice of creativity, the voice of love, the voice of abundance, bravery, whatever, you name it, that voice is able to come through and then you get your right next step. For me, oftentimes for resistance, it's really about moving that energy. Sometimes this looks like going for a walk, taking a few deep breaths. Like there's so many simple tools available to us each and every day. And yeah, it's just about figuring out what works best for us. And then also just

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understanding, I feel like how, you know, the mind, body, soul, all of it is connected.

Angela: I love how you help kids separate out the two voices because I think all of us have a voice of love and I consider it like a voice of truth. Like universal truth. Like you are worthy, you are enough. There's just like this love and truth that speaks to us.

And it's a deep knowing, but on the surface of that is this inner critic. And what's so interesting is we all have one. We all have the inner critic and we didn't have it at birth. I think about this, right? Like babies are born, you know, straight from source and they get, like, I think about they learn how to walk and talk and play and they're pure joy. They're either in joy or they're in pain and they're telling you something, right?

It's one or the other. It's very all or none and they're not criticizing themselves for needing milk or needing to sleep or needing a diaper change or learning how to walk and falling and all of those things. So that inner critic, it somehow comes from the experience that we have as humans on the planet and every single person has one. And just the awareness as a teen to know there's a voice of truth and then there's this voice of criticism and not enoughness and that's coming from fear, right? There's love and truth and then there's fear over here and that's protection.

That's the brain's way of protecting us, but just that one awareness could change an entire student, child's life. Just that awareness.

Kristi: To your point, I also feel like when we talk about fear, I'm feeling like, for me personally in my life, and this is my own personal experience, but when I'm feeling like deep fear, it's actually a fear of feeling its opposite, which is like deep love. It's like how much more can I expand my capacity to love when I used to lean so heavily into fear? So my fear tries to pull me

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back and really it's just a fear of like propelling myself forward into more love.

Like I even notice on a day-to-day basis for myself, right? I'll have one of those thoughts come in that tells me like, you should try taking action on this. Like this would be such an amazing opportunity. And for a second I'll be like, oh, I love that. And then the thought, who do you think you are? And then it comes in. And yeah, it's just like being aware of that and understanding that, as you said, and I think that's the connection that I made too.

When I had my son, I was just like, oh my gosh. He doesn't view himself this way. And at one point I was a baby too and I was just as, I don't usually use the word perfect but it feels right in this moment, like he's just so perfect right now. Never wanting him to experience I guess the human experience. And then I realized that's not logical either. We are all here to experience the highs and lows, the waves of life, so to speak.

And I feel like this is just a really opportune time to highlight that through this work that I do with them, we're always talking about how the inner critic and that inner truth, I love that, I might start using that, how the inner critic and the inner truth can really also merge together and start to co-create. Because for my clients, what I'm seeing is that they will also get down on themselves for having that inner critic and wanting it now that we know it's there. Like, why can't we just completely get rid of it? And that's just not how it works.

And so what I love to do with them, especially in terms of like mindfulness practices, so for that one client that I spoke of, and she's given me permission to highlight her story if I need to, anywhere that I'm talking about it. But yeah, what I did for her when she was blocked on that list and she

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wasn't able to fill in on the other side. I also work with Reiki, so I do energy healing and meditations for my clients.

So just a simple meditation, it was 10 minutes. I just allowed her to settle in her body, take a few deep breaths. We do like a body scan just so again it relaxes everything, really takes them out of their head and back into their truth. And I just guided her. I guided her through the things that had come through the session, again, giving and bringing awareness to that inner critic.

And I had her see herself, like visualize herself in her mind as the version of herself, her truth that she knows that she is, but then also meeting her inner critic there and just giving her a big hug, like just giving her a big hug because you're right. It's just so much external stuff that has come at us. It's nobody's fault. Everybody, I truly believe to my core, is well-intentioned. It's just we don't know what we don't know, right?

And so we do. We absorb all of this information and then we start to think that there's something wrong with us, when in fact there's nothing wrong with us. We are born perfect and worthy. And so in that visualization, I had her hug and just really bring acceptance to understanding that this was just a part of her that's trying to keep her safe, but that she could put herself in the creator role.

And then I had her ask herself, like, what is something that you would tell your inner critic that you believe are your actual truths? And when she came out of that meditation, she had three to add to her list, which I think is just, like, to me, that's such a huge win. And I remember one of them was that like, nobody's perfect. Like life's not meant to be perfect and it's okay to like love and accept herself. That she was a very empathetic person and that was one of her strengths and one of her gifts. And I don't know if I'm going to be able to remember what the last one was. It might come to me

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as we're speaking, but yeah, it was just, and again, from going from only being able to hear that one voice from then making the distinction and now she has three and that will anchor itself in.

Like now those have become new beliefs and it doesn't mean that it's going to override, but we just, we need to start nurturing that side more so that it can remind the inner critic that we are creating from this place now.

Angela: Yes, oh, that is so, so beautiful. And I do agree with you. I guess I think we babies, brand new babies are just a source straight from perfection. And, but it is the human experience to have the duality of life. And I think the duality of life is how we continue to know the truth. There has to be some kind of opposition, right? There has to be some kind of, what's the word I'm looking for? Like a reflection or a balance of how do you, like if it's always perfect and sunny out, you know, you never know, you know, what it's like to have this cozy, warm, wintry day or the rainy days, or, you know, to enjoy that day.

I lived in California for 30 years and it's almost always sunny and you almost take it for granted because there's not a lot of dichotomy or there's not a lot of difference. And so when you have a rainy day, you're like, wait, what? You're either annoyed by it or you're like, I forgot how much I love a beautiful rainy day. Well, here in Nashville, I'm getting all seasons all at the same time. So it's fun to think about.

But there is that duality in the human experience, which I remember wanting to bubble wrap my son and protect him from the world. I remember when he was little thinking, I don't ever want to see him go through his first heartbreak, his first love heartbreak. Right. And then it happened and it was excruciating as a mother. And I thought he's living, he's alive. This is a part of the human experience.

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And luckily, having the tools to hold space for him and be with him in that moment and not try to coach him out of it, but to coach my own feelings about how I felt with him and then allowing him to have his own feelings for as long as that took and for him to process that situation and that breakup, it really made me realize, no, I want him to have the capacity to handle any emotion that comes his way, to handle any experience that comes their way. And the gift of just having access to these tools can give kids so much more. We talk about in schools, we talk about grit, we talk about resilience, we talk about stamina.

And I'm going to say something that it may ruffle some feathers, but I believe when you said earlier that in Canada, they're talking about mindfulness, but it's kind of on the surface. I think this is true of all educators because we haven't been having these conversations as part of the norm, as part of just the repertoire of education and human development, we as the adults are on the surface, and we can only teach to the capacity at which we're willing to go below that surface of mindfulness and to, as teachers, as staff members, as administrators, talk about our own inner critic with ourselves, right? We don't need to put it on blast in front of our colleagues, but to have the awareness and to have these conversations as adults with ourselves and with those we trust, but to be mindful ourselves of our own reactions of our own emotional regulation.

Because the number one thing that I coach on all week long around the calendar is principals and district leaders. And, you know, sometimes I work with state officials, but primarily its district and site administrators, and they spend their day with, how do I handle emotional regulation for myself, and how do I hold space, and how do I navigate the emotional experiences and the emotional expressions of other adults? I very rarely coach on kids. Like a situation with a kid, it's more about their experience with the adults, whether that's the adults on campus or the adults as family members, parents coming in and they're highly dysregulated, or maybe it's your boss

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or your supervisors who have their own emotional experience, their own human developmental experience. We're all on this journey.

And being able to hold that space as a teacher for all of your kids and all of those parents and your grade level team or your department team and your colleagues, and then you go home and you have your family and you're trying to hold space emotionally for your own children and your partner, your spouse, your friends, your family, that it can feel like a lot to hold on to.

Kristi: Yeah. I feel like it is like navigating it. Navigating it is definitely not a linear path. And I love when you talked about holding space because it's so true. There is this depth beneath the surface. I feel like we kind of touch on the waves if we're using the water as our metaphor here. But you have the waves on the surface, right? So maybe in the classroom, we see those waves and we're like, perfect opportunity to throw in a mindfulness practice. Is this gonna benefit them? 1000% it's going to, but like, what is the reason? Like what's underneath it all? Like, why, you know, why are we doing this? Like, they really need to have a connection and an understanding to that.

It's like what's beneath the surface? What are we actually connecting with when we do these practices? And I feel like that may be the piece that's missing. And you're right. What I've noticed with myself over the last five, almost six years of doing this work is that even in order for me to hold space for other people and for me to be an active listener, I have to create space within myself. So in order to hold space for other people, you need to create that space within yourself. Otherwise, they're just getting the surface level you and the surface level me can often also be irritated and feeling a little bit overwhelmed.

This obviously happens with my toddlers and so I'm very conscious of that now and there are still a lot of moments where I have to, you know, go back

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and repair because like I said this is not a linear journey. Even for me somebody who is doing this work like I still have my moments where I know that there's just more space needed. My cup is empty, so to speak, so I have to fill that back up. I need to know how or which ways it works best for me to actually connect with myself, whether that be through journaling, like I said, going for a walk. It's all of our energies. It's paying attention to the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. Mental is our own limiting beliefs and our thoughts, our narratives that come up. And again, if we're dysregulated, it means that we're in our mind.

So if you're trying to hold space for somebody, but you're feeling dysregulated, you've got thoughts swirling. If you've ever had a conversation with somebody and afterwards, you're like, oh my gosh, I have no idea what that person just said to me. I have no idea.

This happens with... My husband won't listen to this, so that's okay. He already knows this is true though, but this will always happen for us. He'll tell me something and then like 20 minutes later, I'll ask him, okay, so what are you guys doing at work tomorrow? And he's like, I just told you. And I'm like, oh no, because I wasn't fully there. I was not fully present. And so it's just being aware of it. It's always giving ourselves compassion too, as we do this work, because we are literally retraining ourselves. We're trying to break old patterns that we've been following for so long.

And I love that you brought up the holding space. And I do believe that holding space starts with yourself. So the mental energy, then the physical energy. This comes back to how we are actually fueling ourselves, the amount of sleep, like the way we talk to ourselves, like our bodies, like what we're putting into our bodies. And again, I never come at this from a place of like, there's certain foods that you should or should not eat. It's all about what feels good to you and not shaming yourself in that area of your life either.

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Your physical environment, ever since I immersed myself in a community of women who are all holding this belief for one another that we can move our lives in this direction versus falling back to where we do not want to be anymore, that has made a significant impact on me because there are still other little containers of space in my life where those aren't the conversations that are being had. And those tend to deplete me at this point. So it's nice to have that space where I can come back to that language of self-love, confidence, and empowerment that I'm searching for.

There's also emotional energy. So this is understanding your emotions. It's emotional intelligence, teaching them about like the emotional guidance scale, just about gratitude, about hopefulness, about love, about abundance, about how their lives are actually limitless as long as they continue up that spiral. And again, it's always okay to spiral back down into those feelings of overwhelming anxiety, whatever it is, sadness, fear. And it's just that's where the resilience piece comes in is knowing that you can get back up and keep going whenever you're ready and whatever small next step you're meant to take.

And then there's spiritual energy. If spiritual doesn't resonate, you can just call it self-energy. It's really that deeper connection to yourself. Are you actually putting things on your calendar that are going to help you co-create the way that you want to feel?

So for me, I actually have a whole energetic with my planning process, but I do as a former teacher. It's that concept of reverse engineering rather than having the expectation. The expectation for me is how do I want to feel today? And then I will just jot down some of the things that come to mind. Maybe for me it is going for a walk. Maybe for me it's actually taking like 30 minutes to paint or draw because I love doing that. I always love doing that as a teen.

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And what are we here for if we can't still enjoy some of the things that we used to do when we were younger? Like to me, I'm just like, what the heck is the point? And I find when I do put those things on my calendar, even if it just is 30 minutes to sit down and color or draw for a little bit, it will 10X my capacity to be able to show up for the other things in my life that I need to show up for simply because I listened to myself.

And this is how I'm seeing that the confidence is being built, because you're just compiling this evidence that you do trust and choose yourself. And then it opens up more creative flow rather than keeping you stuck in that mindset of lack and scarcity and fear.

Angela: That's so, so beautiful. I love that you use the water as an analogy because there's the surface and we have feelings on the surface. And the goal isn't perfection. The goal, I think about school leaders who are like, or teachers who are like, one more thing, now I've got to be mindful, now I've got to add mindfulness and I'm going to add this to the plate. I don't think it's about adding to the plate. I actually think it's about awareness. I don't think the goal is perfection. We all know that we strive for that, but the actual goal is awareness.

So awareness when you win and acknowledging and validating the success or the win or what is working in your life and focusing on that, it's awareness. But then the emotion when you're feeling positive, that's awareness. That's an opportunity for awareness of what's working and what you love and what's happy.

And then when you're not feeling if you're feeling on the I think of, you know, like emotional bandwidth is like, you know, positive, negative, on the negative spectrum. That's awareness. It's like, oh, I'm not feeling great or this doesn't feel good. Why? It's the awareness. The emotion is the tool that we use to leverage what's working versus what's not working for us.

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And it's the awareness of why we're feeling the way we're feeling to generate that because underneath that initial feeling is the momentum, it's waves, it's below the surface, the undercurrent that's going on underneath the surface of the water is where how deep are we willing to go to find out what we're feeling and why we're feeling it?

I think those are the two most brilliant questions. It's what am I feeling and why am I feeling it? Because you have to stop and you have to pause and you have to ask yourself like, wait, why do I feel this way? And then your thoughts are going to, I call it a brain drain where it just like all comes out, right?

So I have a question. You mentioned something about kids if they can stay in the spiral up. And I just was coaching a client on this. So I think it's going to be very relevant for teens and families and adults.

When somebody is coaching with you and they are creating this awareness and they can see the difference between the inner critic and the voice of truth and love, and they're starting to feel differently, and they're starting to think differently, and they're connecting to themselves, do they have moments where they're like, now I feel more isolated? I feel more weird. Nobody's talking like the way I'm talking, or nobody's thinking like the way I'm thinking, or my coach and I can be real with my coach, but then I go back with my friends and they're all talking about whatever, gossiping or boys or whatever kids talk about these days, TikTok and all of that, but how do you coach them through as they're evolving themselves and expanding their awareness, how do they still feel connected to their peers who maybe don't have access to the coaching tools or the awareness strategies?

Kristi: I love that. Oh, I love this because this is actually like you just brought up one of, I would say, the main challenges is once they start to have more awareness for how they want to feel, they're definitely going to

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be more aware, even more so of what's going on around them and their environment. And so this is where, and again, I always bring it back to my life too. It's been like a game changer for me to have a container of space where these conversations are still being had. So I have that space where I feel seen, heard and understood.

I can express myself openly, authentically, and I still encourage them to do this in their own lives. And I can also understand how, like when they're in their school community And if there's nobody else that's really understanding them on a deeper level, this is why I'm talking like it's so good to have like those safe spaces or that group of people or that one person even. It really just takes one person in their corner that sees and believes in them. So that's important to highlight as well. But yeah, it's just continuing to have conversations with them, continuing to encourage them to not dim their light just because they're afraid of the projections of others, and also just helping them to build a set of tools, something that will help them to move through those times in their lives.

I wish I could say that there's a right answer and we can just fix it all. And the truth is that they're going to come up against these blocks, these mountains in their lives that are going to challenge them, right? It's like, do I in this situation continue to just trust and choose myself or do I dim my own light to follow others? And they're also still growing and exploring. And a lot of this for them is still like their brains are still developing.

So a lot of this is new. So I think it's just allowing them to just be very like open minded to everything and just allowing their experience to be what it's going to be. But if as long as they have a safe space that they can come back to, where they can talk to somebody about what's going on, I feel like that's like the number one place to start right now for them, is just having that person that they feel that they can trust.

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Angela: Yes, I coach on this with my principals who they get into, they start one-on-one coaching with me and now I offer group coaching and they're in the group coaching program. So in that container, it's just, it's like a bubble of safety and we can talk about expansiveness and our feelings and really kind of push the envelope to the edges of how deep we're willing to go with these conversations about how good life can get. And we really can play in that space and feel very safe and it feels very confidential and you feel trusting because it's like-minded people.

So I do believe that like having those containers are really important. And that's like the ideal. Like you wanna be surrounded by people who are like-minded. But when you're first starting this, and I'll just share my own personal experience for any teen who's listening out there to this, happens to be listening to this podcast or a school leader or educator.

In the beginning, there is what my first coach ever that I had, Dr. Martha Beck, she called it the ring of fire, where there is a moment when you have awareness, there is a moment that you feel in the reconnection to yourself. You do feel a disconnect from those who are also disconnected from themselves because you've reconnected with yourself.

So you're reconnecting and you're learning and you're creating this awareness. And when you're in it, you're like, I want to tell the world, I want everybody to know this. And then people are like, what? Because they're disconnected, they can't, they're not on the same frequency as you. They don't understand it. They can't comprehend it. And then they're like, oh, is she weird or different? And then it kind of reclose you back to like, wait, am I being the weird person or am I being the off person?

There is a moment of this decision that you make, but I want to say something to teams. Like if you're working with Kristi and you are, and you feel this like truth and love and lightness that comes with working with her.

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And then you go with your friends and you're not feeling that it's okay to feel that discomfort. Number one, number two, it's normal. You're going to feel that discomfort. Three, it's temporary.

And this is what I want to share with you, that you will kind of feel a chapter or a moment where all you can think about is this because it feels so good. And you go and you're out in the world with other people and you might feel like, oh, they're talking about things that aren't as meaningful to me anymore. I don't relate to or connect to anymore. But eventually what happens is you get yourself to a space where one, you start to gravitate and you attract more like-minded friends and circles. And that might happen for you if you're middle school to high school or high school to college. So you will start to attract more people.

But the other thing that happens is your ability to engage with people who don't understand you, your tolerance for that goes up because you won't need them to acknowledge you and to validate you and to listen to what you need to say because you've done that for yourself. So you can actually go out and enjoy your circle of friends and love them just for who they are and appreciate them and be with them, while you still have this expansion and awareness within you, that will happen.

And it will, because you're so young, through the course of time, it's going to feel like you're the one being isolated. But what's really happening is you're the one that's reconnecting. And then you see them in a light where you can actually just love them for who they are and embrace them. And if you truly aren't aligned anymore as friends, that friendship will run its course and you'll meet new friends.

But I do think this, I am on social media, obviously to connect to people. And what I've seen is there is a trend. There is a wave of coaching coming down into from maybe the thirties and forties where people at midlife were

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like, I need a coach. Now to like 30s where I see parents embracing coaching for the sake of being the best version of themselves as parents for their children. And now you're starting to hear teenagers talking about it.

I am personal friends with coaches who are barely over the drinking limit age, right? They're in their early to mid-20s and they're out there. I have a friend, I should actually have her on the podcast. She is a friendship coach and she teaches people how to make friends like post school and college. So I just want you to know that, yes, there are people out there who are in, they're just a little bit older than you and they're doing this work. You can follow them on your Instagram, your social medias, your TikToks, wherever you guys are on listening and following, there are people out there that can just remind you that you're not alone.

It's so much about shifting the language, like shifting the language, but kept coming up for me. And yes, like again, acknowledging that there

Kristi: There are going to be moments of discomfort. There still are for me in my life, especially now that I, like, I know that this is a direction that feels so aligned to me. My resistance tends to come up even more so than before. And what I wanted to say about that too was just in terms of like, you said the teacher, whoever would be listening and maybe thinking like, oh my gosh, another thing to add to my plate, right?

Before I could see and believe it for myself, like I really needed somebody to see it and believe it for me before I could see it and believe it for myself. And that's who my coach was to me and still is for me. And so like to those people, if they're having those thoughts, like I believe in you, I believe that you can move past those stories and those limiting beliefs, because to me, it's not even about putting another thing on my plate at this point.

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It may have felt that way in the beginning. Now, I feel like I'm being served a buffet on a daily basis. The more I fill myself up, the more simple things feel. Again, it's just, it's starting something new. It's starting fresh. It's leaning in a different direction than we're used to leaning to. So yeah, there's going to be discomfort. And again, you're going to try to be pulled back into that safety zone, that comfort zone where you've always been doing what you've been doing. And if you feel like that's working for you, then you can continue to do that. That's your free choice and your free will.

But I'm just here to always remind you that the belief is there because somebody held it for me. So I will not stop shining that light now because if my coach would have stopped shining her light, I wouldn't be where I am today. Well, maybe I would have found another coach, but she has been the reason for so much of the transformation in me. And so I'm always reminding myself of that. Like I would be doing others a disservice by not showing up and having these conversations and at least letting them know that when they're ready, I believe in you and you can make some of these changes in your life too. It just starts with small habits and then just building on those habits over time.

Like this doesn't have to look like tomorrow you wake up and your life looks completely different. It's just, what's one, like, how do I want to feel today? And what's one thing I can do to lean into that versus its opposite?

Angela: Yes, so good. So yeah, educators out there, I just want you to know that coaching is just teaching. And I think about, you know, I could not have, none of us go through life without a teacher. I don't know of a person who's gone through life without some sort of mentor, teacher, or actual coach, whether that's a fitness trainer or a spiritual, you know, counselor or mentor, parents, your, maybe your auntie or uncle, your grandparents had influence. There's somebody out there in the world who was coaching,

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mentoring, teaching that, and you as educators, all of us parents, we're all teachers.

Coaching is just teaching, teaching as coaching. It's funny that people are like, well, what's a life coach? What do they do? We help you create awareness around, I call them like the blind spots, right? We all, like when you're driving a car, there are blind spots, which is why we have the mirrors and coaching provides the mirrors and the reflection into ourselves and to what's happening around us from different perspective and angles, just like teaching.

So it's nothing to be afraid of. It's actually, I think it's one of the most reassuring relationships that I have with my coach and I will never not have a coach. I'll tell you that right now. I will never not have a coach. Yeah.

So Kristi, this conversation has been so enlightening and I want school leaders to know how to access your information and content so that they can pass it on to parents who might be interested in finding their teen coach. Because I think you'd connect with parents and teens, correct? Yeah. So how can the listeners connect with you, get your resource and information so that they can be passing your services along to families?

Kristi: I love this. Thank you. First, so much for having me. I knew that, well, when we first met, that first conversation that we had was enlightening as well and just felt so connected. And whenever I have these conversations and I truly feel energized at the end. Again, this is like a part of me showing up to fill my cup. So I just appreciate you for helping me to do that today and holding the space.

So Confident Teen Podcast is where I love to hang out. My podcast is my baby. So yeah, you can find it anywhere you listen to podcasts. And I also am fairly active, I would say, on Instagram so you can find me

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@ConfidentTeenTeacher. And what else did I want to add? My website is <https://kristisimonscoaching.com>. So that's K-R-I-S-T-I-S-I-M-O-N-S. And yeah, everything that you need to know about my services, about me, all of that information is there, like bookings for speaking and all the things.

And lastly, I would just like to add, and this is something I'm wondering if you could just throw maybe into the show notes, but I do have a freebie right now. If parents are interested, I created what I'm calling The Truth List, cracking the teen code and I created this because I was noticing a through line with all of the teens that I was working with or have been working with and even back to like my days in the classroom that teens are just so connected.

Like I can literally see and visualize in my mind that like they're all holding like the same golden thread and the golden thread is like all of like their deepest desires and then also you know like the entanglement of all of those limiting beliefs and stories that they tell of themselves that prevent them from really connecting with that and so The Truth List is to show parents like when your teen is telling you like I don't know nothing's wrong or you literally just get silence.

These are some of the things that they are thinking in terms of like the blocks that they have showing up for them. And then again, those desires that are coming up for them are. For me, it's just, it always blows my mind because you would think it would be those material things that they want a new bike, a new video game, whatever the case may be.

And honestly, it comes back to connection. It comes back to acceptance. It comes back to just being able to feel like they're free to use their voice, free to express themselves, free to be creative. So yeah, you can get that. I'll give you the link for that and we'll put that in the show.

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Angela: Yeah. We'll put all of that contact information in the show notes. No problem. And I think that these are the conversations that are going to really spark a resurgence in education. I think COVID actually did us a huge favor because it shook us up.

It shook an institution up to the point of no return, where we can't unsee, we can't unfeel, we can't unknow that there is room for growth and room for awareness in the field of education. And doing things the way we did them a century ago might be time to bring up some awareness. And one of the things I think we do really well in education is we avoid talking about feelings. We avoid talking about emotion because of our discomfort with it as adults, and because of what we're afraid will happen if we open Pandora's box when we talk about emotions.

But what will actually happen is the process of awareness, validation of our feelings, and then the regulation of them, which cannot occur if we haven't acknowledged the feelings or validated them and process them.

So this is just the beginning of beautiful conversations that can be had with your team, with your staff, and with yourself. So, Kristi, thank you for your wisdom, your insights today. This was beautiful. I couldn't love this conversation more and I really appreciate you taking the time to be on the podcast today.

Kristi: Yes, thank you so much for having me. I appreciate you too.

Angela: You're so welcome. All right, folks, that's a wrap. Kristi Simons will put all of her information in the show notes, and I wish you a very empowered week. Take good care. Talk to you soon, bye.

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