

Ep #381: The Need to Know



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

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Hello Empowered Principals. Welcome to episode 381.

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. Welcome to the podcast. Good to see you. Good to be here. I wish I could see you in person. I would love to give you a big hug and say hello. Thank you for being a principal. I love you all and I'm just so proud of all that you do. I know you're out there working your tails off for kids, for staff members, for yourself, and it's such an honor to be here with you each and every week. So, thank you for listening. I really do appreciate it.

It's like having a big family where I haven't met all of the people yet, and I can't wait to meet you. I really do hope that you will consider joining EPC. It's really the room where we are making visions come to life. I am so inspired by the people in the room. And you know what's fun? We talk about the real deal. We talk about how it really feels. We talk about lifting each other up. We walk shoulder to shoulder. I have a client in there who's always asking, "Can anybody else relate to this experience?" and everyone's like, "Yes!" It's so much fun because we talk about more than just school leadership. We talk about how it feels to be a partner, a wife, a mother, a parent, a friend, you know, dealing with loss in our personal lives and how do we grieve loved ones while also leading a school?

How do we be a really good parent while also leading 500 other elementary students, right? We talk about those kinds of things in addition to how we lead our schools, how do we empower ourselves and others? It's the most magical hour of my life. I love, love, love EPC so much, and I would love to meet you, and of course, you are invited in to EPC. This is now what? I'm recording here towards the middle of April. You're welcome to join in now. You're welcome to join in this summer. We're going to be doing a lot of

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planning and preparing and getting you ready, getting your identity all worked up, ready to go to be in the seat of the empowered principal when you go back to school in the fall, which will be here before you know it.

As I mentioned on last week's podcast, how quickly three months goes. So, here we are in the second quarter of the year. In a flash, you will be back to school, starting a new year. And I invite you to come in to EPC now so that we can get your plans underway. We can get the summer of fun for you all planned out, ready to go so you can have a wonderful summer, get the rest you need, get all that play in so you are planned, prepared, and you're playing, having fun. That's what I hope for you this coming summer.

All right. Today's episode is really coming off of the conversation I just had with one of my one-on-one clients. This client has been working with me since the very beginning. We've coached together for the last four or five years. She's very, very savvy. She's very empowered. She's very attuned to her mind, to her heart, to her feelings, and to her brain when her brain's trying to sabotage her. And this conversation was so rich, I wanted just to share with you a piece of it so that you could take this episode and contemplate what this conversation might mean for you and your experience in school leadership.

So, this principal has been in around five years now, and she's not brand new. I've been with her since she's been new. We are what I would call a very seasoned school leader. She knows her stuff, and she's getting very comfortable in her skin. She's stepping into the identity and really is able to manage her mind and her emotions in the school leadership position.

So, this client had to take off a couple of days because she was sick. And I have a whole separate podcast coming up about being sick and what that looks like as a school leader, because we don't give ourselves permission to be sick. But I'm going to speak with you otherwise and hopefully inspire you into giving yourself some permission to be out of the building, to rest when you are ill, to give yourself permission to go to conferences and be

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away, and give yourself the breaks that you need. But that is for another podcast.

In this case, the problem, and it doesn't mean you have to be out sick or you were away, it simply might be the situation where you missed out on something. You missed out on a meeting, you missed out on a conversation, you weren't invited to a conversation or a meeting, or you had to be in two places at once, so you missed out on one thing while the other thing was happening. Perhaps you were out sick, perhaps you were away from the building, but you can be literally in your building and not be accessible or accessing all things that are happening on your campus.

Now, we got into this conversation about the desire that we have, especially as school leaders. We have this desire to be in the know. We want to know what's going on. We want to know the details. We want to know the what, where, when, why, how, all of that. And we were exploring this concept. And I asked my client, I said, "What's happening within you when you feel you've missed out?" So, an event happens and you weren't there. What's the thought process? What are the feelings, the emotions that come up? What are the insecurities? What do you do in response to that? Basically asking her, what is the STEAR cycle, S T E A R, for those of you who are new to this podcast? I have a tool called the STEAR cycle. It helps you look at your thoughts, your emotions, and then your reaction or response to those thoughts and emotions, like the urge to act, the approach that you want to take when you're feeling a certain way or thinking a certain way. You can look at that in advance and say, "Oh, here's what I'm thinking. Here's how I'm feeling. This is the urge I have. When I want to react and I want to go into fight or flight, this is the urge I have. I want to react this way."

But because I have the STEAR cycle, I can push pause. And I can look at it for a minute and say, "Ooh, when I react this way, is this the outcome I'm intending? Is this what I want? Is this who I want to be? Is this how I want to show up? Is this how I want to react?" And is it going to give me the

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desired outcome I'm really looking for? Is this how I want to feel? And you can use the STEAR cycle as a tool to really help you navigate when feelings do come up or thoughts come up. You can use it to push pause and to look, and then to re-decide what might be the approach you decide to take out of responding versus reacting so that you can generate a more desired outcome, okay?

So I was asking my client, let's put this in a STEAR cycle. So, if you are a principal and let's say there's a meeting at the district office and some of the principals got invited, but you didn't. Notice what your brain is thinking. What are you making it mean? They got invited and I didn't. There's FOMO, right? There's this fear of not having been included, not being significant enough, not mattering enough, not feeling important, feeling like you were left out, you were rejected, a fear of like you're not in control, you're not in the in-group.

Maybe I wasn't competent enough or maybe they didn't think I could handle it. The brain goes off when it goes into FOMO, fear of missing out. It's thinking something's gone terribly wrong with me. I somehow did not get invited to the "party". I want to be included and I'm not. There's a lot of heavy feelings, negative emotions that come up when we believe that we were left out intentionally or we don't belong or we aren't significant or that other people don't see our significance and that they don't think we matter.

I just want to bring this up as awareness. If something is going on, whether it's on your campus or it's at the district level, and you weren't a part of it, notice if your brain goes into FOMO. And what the FOMO means. What are you actually fearing if you miss out? Is it just being in the gossip and drama? My friends and I call it "cheese, man". This like, "what's the cheese?" Just being in the details. And why we love that being in the know of that stuff? Because we're connecting, it feels good. Like when my girlfriends and I get together and we're "spilling the tea," you know, "sharing the cheese," whatever phrase you and your friends use, like getting into the

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gossip of it all. There is a feeling of, it's almost an addictive feeling. It's dopamine. It's love, connection, belonging, significance, importance.

You really crave those feelings. And when we have them, they feel so amazing that we chase them. We want more. Now we want to be involved in other things that make us feel that good. So notice if you're chasing the dopamine hit and if you're feeling an addiction to having to be in the know.

So there is the fear of being out because of what we make it mean, and then there is the addiction of what it feels like when we're in. So, what I have noticed is that when we're looking at the need to be in the know, there's two ways that this can go. And the way that I break it down into my mind is there is the immaturity in us.

As my client said, she goes, "I can see my teenager brain is showing up here." I love that so much. So you've got your "teenager brain," which is like, it has a level of immaturity still, and it's very much valuing its peers, their opinions, their thoughts, inclusivity, being included, being a part of the crowd, being popular, being in the know for the sake of significance, for the sake of belonging, for the sake of importance.

And with that comes in my coaching mind, what I see that as, it's a very all-or-none thinking. It's positional authority. You're, you have a superiority, right? You, you know something that other people don't know. You're in and they're out. There's pride, there's like this exclusivity that feels good when you're in it, but feels bad when you're not. Do you see it? It's an all-or-none, in or out, yes or no, knowing or not knowing. It's very binary in its concept. So, and there is just, there's a level of immaturity in that way of thinking because we tend to think it's all good or all bad, right?

When you look at little kids, they're either happy or they're upset, right? They don't, they don't live in a land of just contentment, right? They tend to be very, I'm loving my life right now as a toddler, or I'm having a tantrum as a toddler, and I'm feeling rested as a toddler, or I'm tired as a toddler, right?

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Their lives seem much more binary. Perhaps it's the complexity of the brain development and such.

But what I see is when we're in school leadership, if we haven't addressed that teenager experience where that immaturity comes into play as an adult, and we're still feeling the need to be in the group and be in the know so that we can feel important and significant and powerful and knowledgeable and have, you know, status with our peers, status with the administrative team, and status with the teacher team, like teachers aren't invited but admin are. Just notice if that's happening.

If it's happening, nothing's gone wrong because most of us haven't even thought about this at this depth, which is why I'm bringing it up today. And most of us didn't even realize back when we were teenagers to reconcile and to heal some of those past pains when we got rejected, when we were left out, when we didn't feel like we belonged, we didn't make the team.

We saw girls gossiping and we thought it was about us, or maybe it was about you, and there's some wounds that haven't healed. They come along with you. Like your mind, your body doesn't stop forgetting those things until they're acknowledged and they're validated and they're processed, and then they can heal. Which is why I spend so much time talking with people about acknowledging your feelings, validating your feelings, and processing them so that they have space to heal.

This applies here. So, FOMO can be coming from a past wound. Notice that. You could probably recall right now as you're listening to this, a time in your childhood or teen years where, or maybe even college, where this happened, where FOMO was a thing and it happened and the level of maturity you had at the time was very hurt, like the maximum you could handle this, the best that you could do to handle it was to try and get into the group or to feel very heartbroken and be very in rejection, very in sadness, very in grief about not being included. Notice that.

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Then, that's what I would call like the "less than empowered version of you". And it's decisions that are being made from a place of control or a place of insecurity or a place of FOMO. But it's a zero-sum game. Like, "I have to be in and that means somebody has to be out. And for me to feel good, someone has to feel bad. And for me to be in the know means somebody has to be not in the know. For me to be included means somebody has to be excluded." Do you see that? Okay.

Moving on to the empowered version of this. So there's the need to know from a place of maturity, from a place of empowerment. And the need to know isn't coming from, let's say a more ego based, a more positional based, a more power based. It's coming from the actual need to know. So in this case, my client had been out for a few days, and when she came back, she said, "I had the biggest aha moment."

And this really is a moment of transformation for each and every one of you. There will be a moment when you realize that "I don't need every detail of every meeting, of every conversation. I simply need to know the outcomes that impact me, the knowledge to make decisions for myself and my team that are the most empowered and informed decision I can make at the time." You don't need to know the nitty-gritty details of every little thing and how it came down and who was there and what they said and who said what and what arguments were had. You just need to know, give me the lowdown, what are the important things I need to know? What are the outcomes? What are the decisions? How does it impact me? Take in that information, and then that's when you can move forward and do what you need to do with the information you need, right?

So, even when you miss out on meetings, it doesn't mean you miss out on the message, that you miss out on the outcome, that you miss out on what you actually needed to know. You can get briefed on that. This is how you actually realize, oh, this is how people scale. Can you imagine being a superintendent and thinking you need to be in every conversation and every meeting, at every site, at every district meeting, at every site meeting,

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and you need to know all of the drama, all of the little bits that you want to be involved in every little thing?

This is how people burn out. This is how they get overwhelmed. You cannot scale your impact as a leader if you're trying to be in the "ocean of detail". There is a maturity. There is a giving up of being in those little details and talking about the conversations and the details of those conversations and all the things that people said and did and the drama and the "cheese, man" and the "gossiping" and whatever, "spilling all the tea", right?

The maturity of being in the know is actually knowing what you need to know so that you can get your job done to scale, so that you can create impact to scale and influence positive influence to scale. It's not about, "I know because I'm the one and I'm superior and you don't get to know." It's, "I need to know because I'm leading people and I need to make these decisions, and I want to know so that I don't hurt anybody by not having the right information or all of the information." I can use my need to know because I want to make a positive influence, a positive impact. There is a maturity and a responsibility and an obligation that comes with being in the know, really being in the know.

Think about CEOs who run companies. They definitely need to be in the know, but not with everything, and there is a letting go of that. And yes, that does mean, you know, when you're a teacher and you are in the know with your grade level or your department, you have to let go of some of that being in the know when you step into, let's say, being an instructional coach. And then being an instructional coach, you're in the know with maybe the teachers and the other instructional coaches. And then when you step into maybe an assistant principal, you have to let a part of being in some of that know, you have to let that go.

And then there's a maturity that comes into being the site leader, and then again, the district leader. With each evolution of your career, there is a maturity that you step into because there is a responsibility with knowing information and being invited into certain meetings.

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There's a reason not everybody goes to the HR meetings or the behavior, the discipline meetings. When you have to have maybe, you know, what do they call them? You know, you actually have to have this like type of conference where, I can't think of the name right now, I'm sorry. Like a manifestation determination meeting. When you're going into a behavior conversation where, does this child qualify to be, you know, disciplined in a way that's Gen Ed or Special Ed? What is the determination here going into those meetings?

And there is a level of knowledge that needs to be known in those meetings. And with that comes great responsibility. So, those meetings get limited. Not everybody gets to show up. Not everybody gets to show up to your HR meeting if you're having a conversation with your superintendent and there's some HR stuff going on, not everybody's privy to that. Why? Because with that information, there's security and there's safety and there's sensitivity involved in the information. And it comes with maturity and it comes with responsibility and an obligation to honor what's being said at that meeting. And being involved doesn't become about you and whether you're good enough or whether you fit in or whether people want you there or not.

It comes with, "Do I belong there because I understand what it means to belong and it means to go to that meeting?" because of the information I need and I'm using that information to make informed decisions for those that I lead versus feeling mad or upset or hurt or jealous or envious or insignificant because you didn't get invited to a district meeting where there were other people there. And having the maturity to see the perspective of, perhaps I wasn't invited not because of I have a personality flaw, rather the information being discussed most likely pertained to those individuals. And I don't need to know all of that if it doesn't actually pertain to me or my site or the people that I lead. It's okay that people go and have meetings.

And if I need to get briefed on what happened while I'm away, I will. People will give you information. If you need it, you'll hear it. If your superintendent

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wants you to know, you will know. And if you miss something that was important, it'll filter to you. Trust that.

Intermingling your personal needs, your like friendship needs or your desire to belong because, you know, in the eighth grade you got kicked out of the clique or people were mean to you and not healing that and then bringing that into your work environment, one, because you're not aware of it. Two, because you are seeking to feel good, to feel belonging again, notice that. Run a STEAR cycle. Why am I feeling this way? What are the thoughts? What is my urge to react to this? Why am I wanting to be in the know? Do I need to be in the know? And then what would the empowered version of being in the know, the mature version, the responsible version? What would that look like?

Really in-depth awareness, in-depth alignment. But I wanted to share this because I do think it impacts people on the daily. They feel really hurt. They feel really bad if they didn't get invited to something or they missed out on something.

So just notice when your brain is reacting to the need to know from a place of immaturity and maybe some past situations and healing that needs to be done, or from a place of maturity where you need to be in the know because you need to be in the know because it's the thing you need to do in order to lead your people. And it's coming from a place not of all or nothing, I'm in, I'm out. It's for us, for them, for the greater good. That's the mature, empowered version of being in the need to know. All right, my friends, I hope this has been helpful. Have a wonderful week and I'll talk to you next week. Take good care. Bye.

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Hey you guys, calling all first-year site and district leaders. As you know, I hosted a free master course for those aspiring to land a job in school leadership. This was a four-day course that covers what you need to prepare yourself before, during, and after the interview process. So for

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those of you who are interested, you can find the YouTube links below in the show notes. The Aspiring School Leader series is completely free.

Now, for those of you who landed that job, I have a brand-new program. Let's make your first impression in school leadership your best impression. Let's lead your school with confidence in year one and nail your first year as a school leader. You've got what it takes to make an impressive first impression, so come on in.

I've got a brand-new program called Essentials for New School Leaders. It is three months of professional and personal development to give you the strategies, the mindset, and the skill set to lead your school to the next level of success.

There is a gap between the time you get hired and the time you start your contract. Let's get ahead of the curve, three months in advance, you'll be ready to go on day one of your brand-new contract. Join Essentials for New School Leaders. For more information, click the link in the show notes.

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