

# Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Angela Kelly

## Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals

Hello Empowered Principals. Welcome to episode 382.

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. So good to be here with you today. Just sending you all the love. And I'm sending you all of the healing if you have not been feeling well. I'm recording this at the end of February and a lot of people have not been feeling well. It's been really going around. I don't know if it's the flu, the congestion, the cold, if it's COVID, who knows what's going on, but people are sick and I'm sorry if you're not feeling well.

But I'm going to give you a quick little love slap, for lack of a better word. I'm going to shake you out of love. I just got off of the EPC call today and one of my clients in EPC said, "So sorry, I'm just not feeling very good today, but I'm here. I'm just dragging through the week. I just can't shake this. It's been like two weeks. Does anybody else have this?" And a couple people were like, "Yeah, I've been there before." And she's like, "I just keep coming into work and I feel guilty because when I get home, I'm so tired. And then my husband's doing everything and I feel so bad."

And I said to her, "Wait a minute. What's going on here? Why are you not staying home?" And this ended up being a pretty profound conversation. It was very lighthearted on the surface, and I'll make this lighthearted for you too, but it is something to contemplate, particularly for women. I know men leaders, I love you.

I'm not saying you're excluded from this, but women are conditioned to believe that they should be A+ partners, A+ wives, A+ friends, A+ siblings, A+ daughters, A+ parents, and A+ housekeepers, A+ cooks, A+ errand

## **Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals**

runner, A+ shopper, A+ soccer mom driver to the field, A+ school leader, by the way. All of the things, right?

I picture it like a backpack. And we put in the brick of our relationship. And we want that. Like feels good to have this responsibility and this maturity to be contributing to this relationship. And then we've got our parents that we want to take care of and connect with and our siblings, and then our friends. And then later on, we have kids, and then we're teachers, and we have the students at our classroom and then our colleagues.

And then maybe the PTA and then maybe our, you know, any organizations outside that we might participate in where we volunteer or support or maybe you're in a running club or maybe you go to a gym or maybe you belong to a church. Whatever your external affiliations are where you're doing those things too, and then those bricks go in.

And then you have children. And now it's like, whoa, those bricks go in. And then on top of all of that, now you have the responsibility of leading an entire school. And then guess what? You're carrying all the bricks, you're doing your thing, you're feeling good about yourself. And you might be doing B+ work, but you're proud of yourself. You're keeping it up, right? And then you have a human experience. And you get sick.

Your body's like, "Hello. Guess what? We're human and we're tired. And because you never stop, because you go all day and you go all night and you go all weekend, and you don't take breaks, I need a break. And so I'm going to create a break and I'm going to not feel well. And you're going to need a lot of rest. You're going to be very tired and it's going to be very hard to concentrate and you're going to do your job at about 40% of what you normally do. And I want to see if you will listen to me. Will you take time out for me? Will you take care of me? Let's see what happens."

All right, let's see what happens. I'll speak from my own experience. I was a single mom and I was a teacher, and then I was a principal. And getting

## **Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals**

sick, in my mind, just wasn't an option. If I got sick, I took a bunch of vitamins and I tried to stave it off. And then it would hit. And you know the morning you wake up, you're like, "Oh no." Like, it's real. I tried to brush it away, pretend it wasn't happening, but you're down.

And the last thing your body wants to do, if you could ask your body, "What are we doing today?" It's like, "Sleeping. I am sleeping. I am staying in this bed. I am not getting out of my pajamas. Do not pass go. Call somebody for help. Have the partner, spouse take the kid to the daycare or to school. And I need silence for sleeping." That's what your body would say. But what do we say? "No, no, no. Sorry, it's only Wednesday. You're going to have to make it to Saturday. We can do it. It's only three days, right?"

We get up and we drag ourselves and the body's like, "What are you doing?" We go and we get through it and then we're like, "Oh my gosh, we actually made it. I didn't mean I didn't feel that bad. Like, I wasn't running a fever or anything. I basically just had a pounding headache all day and my throat was scratchy and I was, you know, had this runny nose and I could hardly breathe because my congestion was so bad. But you know what? I took a DayQuil. I made it." Okay?

And then five days go by. Cold's still there. But we're doing it. We got through. The weekend was kind of rough. We laid around a little bit. We felt so guilty because then our husband had to, you know, pick the kids up and I just was so exhausted. I went into the bed. And then, you know, he had to make dinner and I felt really bad because he works too. And, you know, I just, I feel really bad. I can't be just leaving this work for my colleagues to do. That would feel terrible. What would they think if I actually stayed home sick? Like I'm really not that sick. Like I'm not dying.

So do you see the story that goes down? Now, where is that coming from? Who taught us that? Where does this story that we should get up no matter what and do the thing? It comes from conditioning. It comes from pull

## **Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals**

yourself up by the bootstraps. When the going gets tough, the tough gets going.

You know, the sign of an empowered woman is she's out there doing her career and leading her household and, you know, getting up every day, raising those kids, bringing home the paycheck, being the best wife. She's going over taking care of her parents, checking in on her siblings. And, oh, she's also going to those PTA meetings? Like, what is happening right now?

So, if you break this down, what you're saying to yourself is, your physical health doesn't really matter. Your physical rest, the rest you're craving, it's not as important as other people's. It's not as important as your husband's, your kids', your your family, the school, your colleagues. Their wellbeing is more important than you. Now, you might agree with that because it's so profoundly conditioned in our mind.

So I'm going to ask you a question. If your best friend were sick, if your spouse were sick, if they came home and they said, "Honey, I'm so miserable. I feel terrible. Would it be okay if I went and rested?" What are you going to say? Of course. Oh my goodness. Can I get you some water? Do you need juice? Do you want some chicken soup? Let me take care of it. I would just step in without a doubt.

Notice the two different trains of thought. What are you thinking about you? What are you making it mean about them? When you're sick, it's a failure. Can't do that. But when they're sick, of course, they're human. You nurture them, you take care of them.

If your kids came home, would you say to them, "Sorry, you've got chores. No time for sickness in this house. Get the dishes done. Go take the dog for a walk. Sorry, we've got chores to do. There's a routine here. What are you thinking? We don't have time for that. You can go to bed after everything's done." We would never do that to our children. But yet we do it

## **Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals**

to ourselves. And then we're like, "But our colleagues, we're going to feel so guilty if they, you know, if they have to carry my burden."

How do you feel when your colleagues are out? Are you thinking they're a burden? Or are you like, "Yeah, sure, of course. If you're sick, stay home." Or is your brain like, "I know, they're just taking a mental health day. They're dumping all this work on me."

If you're thinking that, then of course you're going to think that they think that about you. So check in with yourself. When people call in sick, do you believe that they're really sick or do you believe they're just making life miserable for the rest of you who are at work? Check that out. That might be the reason you refuse to let yourself call in sick. You're like, "I'm not going to be that person."

The other thing I asked my client was, "How sick do you have to be before it's sick enough to call in? What constitutes a sick day?" She's like, "Well, definitely if I have a fever or if I test positive for COVID. Like, we have to stay home then." Okay. Basically, you have to be so down for the count, knocking on death's door, about ready to go to the ER, or you physically just cannot move anymore. Is that the level to which we finally allow ourselves some rest?

So ask yourself this: What does it take to give myself permission to be human, to be sick, to get the rest that my body is asking me to give it? Where's my permission slip? Who gives you that permission slip? Is it you? Is it your kids? Is it your boss? Is it your spouse? Only you know how you feel. And there is a discernment.

I get it. There are days where we wake up, we're a little bit tired and we're like, "Oh God, I would love to sleep in. This would feel so good. I wish it were Saturday." Or maybe we're a little tired or we have a little ache or pain or a little headache, but we know, we know how to discern when we're sick and when we're just a little tired. Or when we have a little snuffle, but we

## **Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals**

have the energy to face the day. And then we know when we're sick. You know when you're sick and you know when you're not.

And look, I'm not judging if you want to stay home because you're tired and that's the only symptom you have, you have full permission to do that. You're an adult, you are a human, and sometimes you need sleep. And the only way that you're going to be at your best is when you balance sleep, play, and work. You know how to discern for yourself whether you are sick, whether you are just not wanting to go to work today, but you have the capacity to. And days where you're like, "I'm so exhausted. I don't really feel sick sick, but I can tell my body is asking for permission to rest."

I invite you to give your body permission to rest. You can give yourself permission. You must give yourself permission. Who else will give it to you? So, my friends, the most empowered decision you can make is to check in with your body every single day.

How am I feeling physically, mentally, emotionally? Is there an aspect of my life, physically, mentally, or emotionally that needs some TLC? And if it does, give yourself permission to have it, to take care of it, to nurture it, just as you would a loved one.

Treat yourself the way you would treat your children. Can you imagine how it would change the way you spoke to yourself? How you nurtured yourself, how you held space for yourself, how you cared for yourself? If you treated yourself the way you treat your own children?

If you don't have your own children, the way you would treat any child, you know, a niece, a nephew, the children at school. Think about you. There's still a little child in there. You've just been on the planet a little bit longer. You still get sick. You still need care. You still need TLC. You still need rest days.

## **Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals**

And if it's so uncomfortable to do it, that is the homework assignment. The more resistance you feel to taking a day off, the more required the assignment is to take it off. Because what you will notice is that when you take it off, the world didn't crumble, you didn't fall apart, the school didn't fall apart. You didn't miss out on something so grand that you're not going to find out about it. Everything's going to be in its place.

And do you know what else? It empowers other people. Because part of the reason we don't want to miss out at being at school is because we're the principal and we believe we're the most important person there. But that's not true. Everyone plays a part. Different contribution but equal value. So everyone's contributing, everyone's providing value. And you being sick for a day will not make the ship sink.

And you need to experience that to believe it. So if you are in extreme resistance to taking a day off, I highly, highly encourage you to do it. And watch your brain. It's going to be so upset and be in such resistance, but your body's going to be thrilled. It's going to get all the sleep you need. And your emotions and mental state might be in a tizzy while you're at home, but you're going to go back, everything's fine. Even if your secretary's like, "Oh my gosh, while you were gone, this and this and this." You can be like, "Yeah, I get it. I know."

But you know what? You did it. And thank you. I really needed to rest up. I wasn't feeling well and I appreciate it. Thank you for standing up for me, for helping out. I'm really, really glad you're here. And then you can wink at yourself in the mirror knowing, I have permission to take the day off. And that's a beautiful thing for not just me, but for my family and for my school.

So, here's your assignment. The next time you need physical rest, mental rest, emotional rest, take the day and watch yourself. See what happens and how good it feels to know that you have the empowerment to take care of you. Treat yourself like you would a child. Nurture yourself, cuddle



## Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals

yourself up, love on yourself. And that is going to give you the energy to be the best version of you when you go back to school.

Take good care. Be well. Be safe. Feel good. Enjoy your life. Enjoy your school. Have an amazing week. I love you all and I'll talk with you next week. Take good care. Bye.

—

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 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](http://angelakellycoaching.com) where you can sign up for weekly updates and

## **Ep #382: Sick Day Guilt: A Permission Slip for Principals**

learn more about the tools that will help you become an emotionally fit school leader.