

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Hello, Empowered Principals. Welcome to episode 453.

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.

Hey there, Empowered Principals. You know what time of year it is. We're going into the fall. And that means the fall dip is coming. Look, you're not going to prevent the fall dip from happening. That's not what flipping the fall dip is all about. I invite you to join us in Flip the Fall Dip 2026. We are hosting the Fall Dip throughout the month of September. So, September 16th, 22nd, and 29th, we are hosting the Fall Dip Series.

Listen up school leaders, there's no school that stays in complete flow 100% of the time. There's no school culture that doesn't have its ups and downs. And there's no one leader out there who is preventing the fall dip and the energy in other people from shifting. It's about navigating it. Leading through it and staying in alignment with your own leadership identity and integrity. Join us for the Fall Dip this coming September 16th. We'll see you there.

Well, hello, my Empowered Principals. Happy Tuesday. Welcome to the podcast. I'm going to invite you all to buckle up. We've got a juicy topic today. And I'm on fire. I'm ready to go. We're going in deep, but I really encourage you to listen to this concept, to contemplate it deeply, and to make an intentional decision at the end of this podcast. To sit with yourself and feel this podcast and make an intentional, conscious decision about your next steps for the upcoming year.

So I woke up this morning and I had the biggest aha. Now, as I'm recording this, for those of you who are into, I don't know, energies outside of the human experience, things that are bigger than us. I'm currently recording

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

this during the Lion's Gate, the portal that started on August 8th of 2026, so 8/8, 2 + 6 is 8, 8/8/8. And it goes through August 12th of 2026. Today is August 11th, as I'm recording this.

So, you're hearing it just a few weeks later. But I have felt tremendous shifts in myself, tremendous shifts in the way I'm thinking, the way I'm feeling, my identity has expanded in the last few days. And when this happens to me, I have profound deep thinking. And I feel like I'm downloading information, downloading codes, downloading content, concepts, ideas to share with all of you that take our leadership to such a deeper level.

And this was one of those mornings. As I was getting ready this morning, I was actually going to go and take a walk. I'm down at the beach in Santa Cruz, was going to go take a walk, and then run my errands early in the morning. I love to run errands early in the morning, before all the peoples and all the traffic. I just get in, get out, and then I come home and I can do what I love, which is coaching, creating, and contemplating life. However, this content downloaded into my brain as I was looking in the mirror. So, my entire morning schedule changed.

Of course, this time of year in particular, I'm always thinking about school and school leadership and how to empower school leaders to embrace change, to embrace empowerment, to embrace our fears, and to be able to move ourselves forward. So I was thinking about this time of the school year, all the PD that's going on, all the guest speakers, all the energy of a new school year, the to-do list, the onboarding, the training, all the hype, the hope, the dreams, the promises.

Everything feels fresh and new. This actually is such a great time of year. It feels so good. It feels good every year, most years. Some people are like, don't drag me back to school. But because we say don't drag me back to school, I don't want summer to end. How did summer go so fast? And now

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

we're back in the routines and the throes of a new school year, we create hype. We create positivity and energy and we bring in the motivational speakers and we try to make PD as happy as possible.

And then, my brain fast forwarded to about a month from now, middle of September. I want you to stay with me here. Fast forward to the middle of September. I'm recording this mid-August. You're going to hear this, I'm going to drop it at the beginning of September because I want you thinking about this before the fall dip, which happens around mid-September into early October. People start reaching out for coaching because they're exhausted, they're overwhelmed, they're frustrated, they're confused, they're deflated, they're discouraged, they're disappointed.

One month from now and this school year, this brand new energy, all this hype, all this vibe becomes just another school year. Another year of struggles, another year of obstacles, another year of discipline issues, another year of staff resistance, another year of parent frustrations and painful meetings. Another year of overworking, of overextending yourself, overexerting yourself, over scheduling yourself.

Another year of mediocre outcomes. And I was like, wow, ouch. That even hurts my soul to think that hundreds of thousands of school leaders all around the globe are in the hype of a new school year and one month from now, they're going to be in the despair of the same, of the mediocracy, of the rinse and repeat. So I kept digging.

Why do we as school leaders repeat this pattern? Why? Honestly, I think the hype feels good. It's exciting. It's hopeful. It's the boost energetically that we need to get all of the school year kickoff things completed. It's the energy that we want to be in for the start of the year because it feels good. We like the high vibe. We don't want to focus on what doesn't feel good, right away off the bat, because it doesn't set a good tone for the year.

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

So, what we do is we try to amp up the vibe. We create initiatives. We host curriculum PD. We bring in motivational speakers. We offer tablets to all the students. We promise all the things. We're going to take things off the plate this year. We're going to hyper focus on one thing and not try to be great at everything. We make all these promises. We say all these things. We give teachers donuts and coffee and maybe we buy them some supplies for their classroom that we didn't buy last year because we want them to feel good. We want them to be happy they're here. We want to create a positive culture, right?

So we will hire more support staff as the budget allows. We'll do all these things, right? And these things are good. Aren't you saying, yes, those are good. We should be doing those things, right? Yeah. Actually, they can be good if they're implemented with intention and with purpose, but they're not inherently good. They are not inherently the answer. They're actually neutral. They can be good, and they can be nothing. They can be not helpful. They can be a detriment, actually, a distraction. They can be the thing that we tell ourselves, well, we're doing the right things, we're doing the work, but really, we're just putting on facades and band-aids and plugging holes and whack-a-moling.

And that's why there is almost always a fall dip because there's this rocket takeoff energy that boosts us into the year. We ramp up, we hype up, and what happens? Then there's the rest of the school year. There's the crash. There's the fall dip, and then there's a dip every season. We kind of like ramp up in the school year, and then we have a fall dip. And then we catch our breath at Thanksgiving and the holidays and we kind of ramp back up in January and then we crash February, March.

Big crash in March usually because we're worried about what we haven't covered and the test is coming and all that we have left to do and we're tired and we just want the year to end. We want the test to be over. And then we get through the test and then we have this another ramp up and

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

then, you know, we kind of like float on fumes until we cross the finish line at the end. We know the pattern. So why do we repeat this pattern even when we can with accuracy predict the outcome and the experience year after year?

Here's what I believe. Here's what I downloaded. I believe it comes down to awareness resistance. It is our resistance as humans. All of us do this to becoming more aware. It is wanting to feel good about the things that don't feel good. So we try to make them feel good. We ra ra siss boom ba, we hype things up. We deflect. We focus on what is working. We distract ourselves with feel good things. We avoid the things that don't feel good. We stick our heads in the sand. And we gravitate to what feels familiar, what feels predictable, what feels safe, what feels expected.

We know what to expect this time of year, and we actually desire the familiar. We desire the hype because it's what we know. It's what we're used to. It's what we expect. We look forward to that predictability because it's comforting. It's almost nostalgic. It's known. It's safe. When you think about all of the years that you have experienced the energy of a brand new year, you've been experiencing that since you were five.

The hype of your very first year going to kindergarten and getting the supplies and going to, you know, kindergarten roundup back in my day, the whole brand new experience of going to school and the hype, getting going clothing shopping or supply shopping and your mom's all excited because you're going to school. Or she's crying because you're going to school, she doesn't want to see her baby going. But there's a nostalgia there.

And then what happens? Around the time school ends in June, back to school supplies are in the in the targets and the Walmarts and the Costco's of the world. And we're like, what? School just ended. Now there's back to school. Yes, we love it. We like the back to school shopping. We like the getting the new clothes and the new shoes and the new backpacks. It's fun.

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

It's nostalgia. We like it. And now we're teachers and we loved that feeling. We actually perpetuate it because it's familiar, because it feels good. It's cozy, it's fun, it's a delightful feeling.

The beginning of the school year is all about a routine, a habit, a pattern of behavior. We are on autopilot. We don't question that because it feels good. It feels familiar. Or, and this was me as a teacher to be honest, like after a few years in, you're like, yeah, yeah, yeah, here's the deal. I know, go to the PD, we get the keynote speaker that ra ra's us. Feel good, be joy, be happy, be authentic, be yourself. Have a wonderful year when we cheer ourselves on and we're like, yep. And we like it. We reconnect with our friends. We're now veteran teachers and we're, we know the drill. We know what to get done. I remember that. It still felt good. I liked the familiar.

If somebody had come in and shaken it all up and started talking about feelings and started talking about, like, let's expose ourselves and let's create awareness, I would have been like, what the heck is going on? No, this is not how the school year starts. Wrong. We don't question it. We want it to be familiar. We want it to be the routine, so we can go on autopilot. So what we do because it feels familiar and it feels good, we focus on all the hype and all the excitement in order to not think about the inevitable just yet, by the way.

We know the dip is coming, but we don't want to think about that. We want to be happy because we have a lot of stuff to do. We've got to get our classrooms ready. We've got to get the campus ready. We've got to get teachers onboarded, systems in place, site plans in place. We've got to get the class list, the master schedule. We got stuff to do. We can't be thinking about the work, the inevitable that's coming, okay?

This is also why, on a personal note, we don't look at our bank accounts, or we don't step onto the scale. It's why we pretend nothing's wrong in our marriage or in our relationships. It's why we allow that friend to mistreat us

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

once in a while and just kind of blow it off and go back to the good times. It's why we don't have that conversation with our own children if we're suspecting something, but we want everything to be okay.

It's why we don't have the conversation with our boss. We just want to pretend it's not necessary. It's why we don't have those conversations with teachers and kids and parents. Awareness resistance is the fight we have within ourselves, or collectively, actually, that has us actively avoiding being aware of the facts, aware of the outcomes we've created, aware of the path that we're currently on.

So I think of awareness resistance is, I don't want to know how much I weigh, because that exposure to that fact, the number on that scale, would be so painful based on what I make it mean about me, based on what other people will make it mean, based on the work I have to do to fix it, to change it, the fact that I think it's wrong to weigh that much, the fact that other people have been telling me that I'm getting fat or that I've gotten bigger or my clothes size has had to go up, but I don't want to look on the scale because what would that mean about me?

What is that about my identity that I don't want to know? I don't want to step on the scale because of the pain of the truth, the pain of the exposure, the vulnerability that comes with it.

Awareness resistance can also be collective. I do think we have it in our schools. We collectively don't want to create awareness because we don't want to not feel good. We don't want to be in pain. We don't want to face the number because of what we make it mean, because of what we fear others make it mean about us. We fear about our identity, our capacity, our capability. We fear the effort required. We think it's going to be so much work to lose the ten pounds or the 20 pounds or the five pounds. Doesn't even matter the number. Oh god, how painful will it be to know that I weigh five pounds more than I want to think that I weigh.

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

How painful would it be to look and see that the patterns of our behaviors at school are flatlining results or are not helping children become more emotionally resilient, emotionally capable, or academically capable, that we have been throwing money at things or resources at things or people, you know, hiring more staff or hiring more curriculum or, you know, paying for more curriculum or buying more materials and when that doesn't work, we don't want to see that that doesn't work because it's painful. So let's just focus on the hype of this time of year because it feels good, at least for a moment. Let's not think about a month from now.

Why don't we want to know something? Wouldn't we want to know the steer cycle behind what's going on here? And the steer cycle for those of you who might be new to this podcast, the steer cycle is a tool that I teach. It's about, it's an awareness tool, speaking of awareness resistance. It's about looking at our thoughts and our belief systems, looking at our feelings, our emotions, paying attention to them, leveraging them, understanding them, using them to guide us. It's about the energy we're in, the energetic state we're fueling our actions with, the decisions and actions we're making and the outcomes we're creating.

It's looking at that cycle. Wouldn't we want to know what's holding us back from achieving our goals? Intellectually, we do want to know. People will come and say to me, just tell me what to do. Tell me what I'm doing wrong and I'll fix it. Intellectually, we want to know how to lose the ten pounds, how to save more money, how to get teachers on board, how to create positive culture, how to help students in their literacy rates in their mathematical abilities, in their comprehension of social dynamics, of the interaction of the history of our country. We can go to all the places. Intellectually, we want to. We can say on the surface, yes, I want to know. Tell me. But emotionally, emotionally, we don't want to know.

And this is at every level within our school districts, every level of education. Doesn't matter the position you hold. It's a human experience.

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

So we will say to one another, yes, let's expose this. Let's find out. Let's be vulnerable. Let's know what's going on here so we can fix it. Let's just fix it. But emotionally, we're like, this sounds terrifying. I would rather crawl in a hole for the rest of my life than expose this, then look at this, then create awareness around it. This feels like life or death. I'm going back into the cave because I could be exposed to the sunlight, the sun burning my skin, to getting mosquito bites and bee stings, to being eaten by a lion.

Absolutely not. I know I'm starving. I know I'm hungry. The solution is go out and hunt, but that is so freaking scary. I could die. No, thank you. That is what our brain is thinking. That's what the amygdala is thinking. Right? The primitive part of our brain is like, heck no. I will override that prefrontal cortex every single time because I'm not going to get eaten by a lion, not today.

So we don't really want awareness because it is vulnerable. It exposes us. I just can envision like cavemen and women going out, barely wearing anything, not having any sunscreen, not even having hats, running around in a little coverup. I don't know what they wore. You know, sheepskin or something with no shoes and being exposed to the sun, exposed to the heat, exposed to the elements, exposed to all the bugs and the creatures and the snakes and the spiders and the oh my. And then lions and tigers and bears on top of it.

But the call, the need to eat is so compelling because you're going to die in the cave of starvation or you're going to die, potentially, you're exposed to the awareness of having to learn how to hunt and learning the tricks of the trade and bringing food in. So you're either going to potentially die or you're going to for sure die.

And that's what awareness resistance does. When we're in resistance, we're in the cave. We don't want to go out for fear of potentially being attacked or getting sunburned or getting swarmed by bees. So we just

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

decide it's safer in here. Those elements aren't in here, but in that decision, in our unwillingness to be exposed to, to be aware of all that's out in the world and going on the adventures, we stay in here, and we literally rot away. We stagnate, we rot away, we starve to death. And look, I get it.

Emotionally, vulnerability is the biggest fear we ever have. It exposes us. It's the scariest thing for a human to experience. It's the fear of being seen as weak, incompetent, incapable, unsuccessful. Think of the cavemen and women that went out. If they didn't come back, they were incapable. They were unsuccessful. Their fellow cavemates thought they were incompetent. They were seen as weak if they got eaten. Yeah, they were weak. They were the weaker of the two. Lion versus man. You might be seen as a failure in public.

Failure to your community, to your families, to your staff, students. You might be seen as a fraud or an imposter. There will be public embarrassment, public shame, public humiliation. We fear that more than life itself, oftentimes. But it's like, okay, I'm just going to, at least in here, I'm starving inside the cave, but nobody has to witness it. Nobody has to see it. Just me and maybe my closest people. But I don't have to be exposed. My fears, my incompetencies, my incapacities, my lack of success, I don't have to put it on display. I can just come in here and have a private death. Right?

So we know how exposure makes us feel. We worry how people will interpret that exposure. We worry what we will think about ourselves and what others will think of us, what we're going to make it mean about us now, us and our future, what we made it mean about our past. We're not sure we can handle it. We make it very personal. We make the test scores personal. We make feedback very personal. We make it mean we're insufficient, we're wrong, we're not good enough. We make it mean that the other person thinks poorly of us.

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

We think that we cannot change our identity, that it's permanent, that everyone will see our flaws, our mistakes, and they will forever hold it against us. Our brain loves to believe that experiences are permanent, emotions are permanent, situations are permanent. We don't see them as temporary. We don't see them as fleeting, but they are. But when you're in it, it feels like forever, right?

Now look, these emotions, failure, disappointment, discouragement, exposure, embarrassment, shame, humiliation, those emotions, they are unbearable in private. Notice, if you're in the cave, you're still feeling all the feelings. You're just doing it in private. That's hard enough. It's hard to look in the mirror and say, I failed. I misspoke. I misstepped. I got it wrong. I am wrong in this. This is not how I want to be. I messed up. It is so painful to look in the mirror and say that. It's hard to do it with ourselves, let alone acknowledging it ourselves and then going out and saying, hey, you know what staff? I got this wrong.

Or, you know what? I didn't say that in a way that feels good for me or for you. And I'm sorry about that. Let me repair this. Let me get this right. I'm here to get it right. I think Brene Brown says that. You know, I'm not here to be right. I'm here to get it right as long as it takes. That is painful. It's hard to face those emotions alone in the cave hiding in private, trying to mask who you are, wearing a facade, faking it till we make it, pretending everything's okay. That's hard enough. But then to amplify that emotional experience by feeling the feelings and exposing them in front of others, ouch. No wonder we lean into awareness resistance.

And because we are empathetic and compassionate human beings, we all know the painful exposure, how it feels, the experience of it. We as leaders will mask it, we'll dilute it, we'll turn down the volume or avoid it altogether and ramp up the feel good feels.

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

So we fall back on the familiar because it provides relief from the exposure. It's like being in the sun all day, no shade, no water, no reprieve, and then six hours later, somebody comes along with an ice chest of cold waters and an umbrella and some sunscreen and probably some aloe vera because you're burnt. It's relief. So we fall back onto it because it provides us that relief and we'll go back into awareness resistance, oftentimes very subconsciously. We're not even aware we're slipping in and out of awareness.

Now, look, humans weren't designed for 100% awareness 100% of the time. We go in and out of awareness. But it's not wanting to know. It's knowing but not wanting to know. It's not wanting to be aware. I don't want to look at my bank account. I already know I've got bills I can't pay or I already know that I'm in debt or I already know that I've overspent this month. I already know I have credit cards to deal with. I already know it, but I don't want to look at it. I don't want to feel it. I don't want to see it. I don't want to be aware.

And I don't want to have to come up with a solution. The solution feels more painful than the hiding from it. There is a benefit to awareness resistance. You don't have to fix anything if you're not aware of it. You don't have to do anything. You don't have to feel anything. If you don't look at your bank account, you don't have to feel those feelings. If you don't look at the scale, you don't have to feel those feelings.

This is why in school we don't really talk about feelings. It's why we don't teach about emotions and emotional regulation and emotional resilience and emotional bandwidth and emotional expansion. Because doing so makes us uncomfortable. And it's also why we spend our entire school year in dysregulation, nervous system dysregulation, mental dysregulation, physical dysregulation, emotional dysregulation.

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

The leaders are doing it, parents and teachers are doing it, support staff's doing it, students are doing it because we don't want to be aware of the emotional component to the teaching, learning, and leading experience. It is why we don't make progress. It's why we don't move forward. This is why the school year, in a month from now, and in a few weeks as you're listening to this from now, is going to be on rinse and repeat.

So, now that we're talking about awareness resistance and we have awareness around awareness resistance, what do we do? Well, we make a decision. We either lean into the awareness or we retract from the awareness and lean back into resistance. We put up the shield or we take it down. We go out of the cave or we stay in. We make a decision. So as you're listening to this and contemplating what I'm saying and what I'm offering here, there is a decision to be made. We all have the decision in our personal lives, in our professional lives.

We can act in spite of all the fears and the chatter in our brain. We can act on the awareness journey regardless of those fears. They're coming along with us by the way. And we want to be courageous by focusing on the truth of awareness, the outcomes of awareness, and the benefits of awareness. Or we can put our head back in the sand, go back into the cave, and we can lean back into resistance. Put on the shield, put on the facade, put on the protection gear, wrap yourself in bubble wrap, and rinse and repeat. That's an option.

And I know it's an option because we've been doing it for decades, if not centuries in school. Let's not talk about racism. Let's not talk about systemic oppression. Let's not talk about things that are uncomfortable. Let's not talk about sex trafficking in our schools. Let's not talk about emotional, mental, physical abuse. Let's not talk about the unhappy things. Let's not talk about the fact that black and brown kids are not learning in the same way, at the same time. Let's look at the disparity and stay focused on it. Why are our scores flatlining? We have the resources, or we don't.

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

Looking at the truth, looking at the facts, and having the skill set and the capacity to not make it mean that we are incapable. The truth is that we're only incapable when we don't look at the facts. That's what makes us incapable. When we look at the facts and we expose them and we don't make it mean that we're not capable, we don't make it mean something's wrong with us, we make it mean there's a situation we'd like to enhance or improve. Now we're looking at expanding our awareness and expanding our capacity to feel, expanding our capacity to be exposed and move forward anyway, go out of the cave.

Let's go seek food because I want to live. I want to explore. I want to expand my life. I want to have experiences. I want to evolve. I want to live my life while I'm alive as a human. The truth is that it is much more courageous and empowered to lean into awareness. The truth is that it is less harmful to lean into awareness than our brain anticipates. Our brain is going to tell us, no way. It's very, very scary. But it's actually less harmful than we think it will be.

The truth is that we are equipped to handle awareness. We have everything we need inside of us to handle the awareness and the emotions that come with it. And the truth is that the emotions we experience with awareness are temporary. The pain, the embarrassment, the shame, the guilt, the frustration, the disappointment, the discouragement, the defeat, those are all temporary. But on the other side of that awareness are the empowered emotions that we want to feel.

So the outcomes of awareness must outweigh the fears. And the outcomes of awareness are freedom, success, satisfaction, influence, impact, making a difference. The benefits of that, when you are creating the outcomes of freedom, independence, empowerment, success, satisfaction, influence, impact, the benefits are an expansion of empowerment, of yourself and of your students and your staff. It's living a life and a career that is a legacy.

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

It's being a role model for the empowerment of your staff and your students, aligning to the intentions of education, the intent to empower.

So, this school year for you can be one of rinse and repeat, one of new year, same results, or it can be a year of awareness, a year of vulnerability, yes, a year of navigating emotions, yes, but also a year of expansion and growth, a year of emotional evolution, a year of strength and skill building, a year of actual progress. And yes, I'm with you. I'm just as scared as the next human on the planet. It is scary to drop our resistance to awareness, to drop the shield, to go out of the cave. That is scary. I'm admitting that right here.

But it's equally as scary to resist awareness, to stay in the cave, to starve to death, to not evolve, to not grow, to not live, to not even try. Dropping the resistance, going out of the cave, dropping the resistance, being exposed, being vulnerable, it ends with growth, progress, goal achievement, next level experiences, journeys, empowerment, adventures, misadventures. It leads to a full life of leadership. It leads to a full life of experiences in your career.

And what resistance doesn't tell you up front, when it offers like, here's some protection, here's some safety, just rinse and repeat, do the same things, focus on what feels safe, what feels good, you know, what feels familiar. What resistance does not tell you, this is the fine print, is that awareness will never go away. It will never give up. It will keep inviting you in. It will keep knocking on your door. It will keep calling you until you answer, because awareness is always the solution. It's always going to try to reach you, to remind you, to get a hold of you. It will never stop trying.

So you can be in resistance for a lifetime if you want. I've seen people do it. They hold on to their beliefs about themselves and others. There are beliefs that people have about the color of people's skin. There are beliefs people have about women. There are beliefs people have about our

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

country versus another country. There are beliefs people have about how the government should be run, how schools should be run, how families should engage or not engage, how feelings should be expressed.

There are people who will spend a lifetime holding on to their resistance, holding on to the familiar, the safe, the comfortable, to never exploring. They spend a lifetime trying to escape the feelings. They try to hide their perceived imperfections. They don't want other people to know. They don't want to be exposed. They project onto other people. They never lean into awareness. You can spend an entire lifetime doing it. I've seen people do it. I've had people in my family do it. I've had friends who've done it for their entire lives.

And I'm sure you work with people who have no desire for awareness. But awareness will not stop trying because awareness is the relief. Resistance is the temporary protection. Just because you put sunscreen on once, just because you stay in the cave once, doesn't mean you're forever protected. The lion could actually come inside and find you there. You don't know. But awareness is going to keep knocking because it's the very thing we need to know in order to have what we want, in order to create what we want. It's the solution to our problems. It's the path that moves us forward.

So here's some encouragement. You are in control of the level of awareness exposure that you have, that you create for yourself. You get to decide how much to take on, how much awareness to take on and when to pause that awareness, go back in the cave, take a breath, take a minute, take a rest, process the feelings, and then go back out. You navigate that.

You are in the driver's seat of how much exposure, how much you want to explore your awareness and your expansion and when you need to come back in for a rest. No one stays out forever. We all come in for a rest. That's normal. But you are in the driver's seat of that. No one can expose you to

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

awareness you don't want to be exposed to. You're in charge of that. So you decide.

And schools that make the most progress have leaders who say yes to awareness, leaders who have the courage to take their head out of the sand. They step out of the cave. They look beyond what's predictable, what's safe, what they think is safe, by the way. But they're people who will lean into the understanding that going out of the cave and being aware and creating awareness and understanding of the world outside of us and the facts and what we need to do and the skills we need to learn, that exposing those flaws, like I don't know how to hunt for food, but in order to know how to hunt for food, I have to not know first because I have to go out and expose myself and not know in order to know.

Exposing your flaws, they're not announcing to the world that you're insufficient. Leaning into the awareness is exposing you to solutions. So you can see it as I'm announcing to the world as I come out of the cave that I don't know what I'm doing. And then now everybody knows I don't know. Okay, but that's the only way to know. It's the path. It's the path to the solutions. Exposing yourself, dropping the resistance is actually exposing what you are capable of. It's exposing your strength, your courage, your resilience.

It's dropping the limitations that are in your mind. Sitting in the cave, oh my god, I'm so scared. I'm so afraid. I don't want anybody to know I'm incapable. All of that chatter, going out into the world helps you drop those limitations in your mind. Because what you're doing is resisting success, resisting answers, resisting strengths, solutions, resisting experiences.

Awareness doesn't necessarily become less scary. It's not less scary to step out of the cave. To the brain, it will always see awareness as a threat, as an exposure which is unsafe and vulnerable, which is why it literally feels like life or death. But what awareness does is it becomes something

Ep #453: Awareness Resistance: Why School Leaders Avoid What They Need to See

you understand, something you're able to identify and recognize its patterns. It's something you learn how to navigate and how to handle.

And in that exposure to the experience of bringing yourself into awareness, that becomes the new familiar, the new normal, the new identity, the new way of being, the new comfort zone. Oh, I'm familiar with this. I'm feeling exposed. I'm feeling vulnerable. I know what to do. I know how to hunt. I know how to protect myself from the sun. I know what to do when I get lost. I know that that berry is toxic and this berry is good to eat because I'm aware.

The Empowered Principal Collaborative makes awareness less scary, less painful, less limiting. We bring levity to the awareness, lightness to being exposed to the light, to coming out of the cave. We do it together, hand in hand. In strength, in numbers, we come out and in our vulnerability, in our collective vulnerability, we see the light, we see the levity, we see the humor at our own human tendencies.

So, Empowered Principals, you have a decision to make right here, right now. You can lean into awareness or you can stay in resistance. I invite you to come out of the cave and join us in the Empowered Principal Collaborative for the entire year. Be with us. We'll go in the cave, we'll come out. We'll be out together exploring, we'll come in and process. We'll go back out, we'll come in. We're going to figure this out together, one step at a time, one exposure at a time, one level of awareness at a time. Have an empowered school year. I invite you in to dropping the awareness resistance. Have a beautiful week. Take care. Bye.

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.