

## Ep #55: 6 Powerful Principles from a Kindergarten Classroom



### **Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Kristi Angevine**

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## Ep #55: 6 Powerful Principles from a Kindergarten Classroom

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose* podcast. This is your host, Kristi Angevine. I'm here with Episode #55.

Today's episode centers on the six principles from a kindergarten classroom that you can apply in your own life today. Now, if you're anything like me, you might worry that these are going to be really cutesy sayings worthy of a bumper sticker and not an approach to your life, into your habits. If that's you, worry not. These guiding principles are truly quite powerful.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits that give more than they take. You'll get practical strategies for mindset shifts that will help you finally understand the root causes of why you think, feel, and act as you do. And now, here's your host, Physician, and Master Certified Life Coach, Kristi Angevine.

Hello, hello, everyone. If you're here in real-time when this podcast episode is first released, yesterday, February 14, 2023, the podcast turned one. I've not yet done a formal year-end reflection. And heck, I might not actually do one. I might just do it loosely here and there. I actually kind of haven't decided.

But when I have done some intermittent reflection back on all that I have learned, all that I've grown, and what I've had to commit to thinking and feeling and doing when it comes to creating and releasing this podcast, I have to share I am so grateful. I'm so proud of myself. It has required a lot of exploration and a lot of mind management.

There has been a lot of drama that has gone on behind the scenes, in my mind, in the creation here. I've overcome quite a bit of self-doubt and quite a bit of insecurity. And I'm really grateful for all that it's required me to do in order to do this podcast and to have it be one year old.

So, one of the things is that it has required me to believe, on purpose, in the absence of any confirmatory evidence, that the podcast is useful, valuable, and can alter the trajectory of someone's life. And I share that

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with you simply because I want to point out that it is work worth doing to work on believing things you want to believe on purpose.

On this note, I just want to share with you a really lovely podcast review that came in just recently. This one is from AnnieMaeL96. Hello, Annie Mae; thank you so much for this. She says, "This podcast is absolutely for men AND women. This show has helped my husband and I in so many ways. It has helped our relationship with each other but most importantly our relationship with ourselves! I have transformed into the most **\*\*joyful\*\*** and optimal version of myself with the help of the information from this show. Just wow, thank YOU, Kristi."

Thank you so much for listening. And thank you for taking the time to leave a review. Sometimes I feel a little bit like those people on the NPR radio fundraiser drives, where they repeatedly ask you to give your contribution so they can stop the drive when they've reached a certain amount of money. And I feel like this when I notice myself repeatedly asking for your help to leave the podcast review. But I'm actually really glad to do it.

Because when the podcast gets reviews, it helps the podcast be more discoverable. And with reviews, you actually help this podcast get into the ears of others who want this kind of information. So, to help celebrate the fact that the podcast is now a year old, I have a goal of getting the podcast reviews from around 200 to around 400.

I'm asking for you to help me by leaving the podcast a review on iTunes. Very simple; you scroll down, click 'leave a rating and a review,' leave a review, and press enter. And then, to make it worth your while, I'm doing a drawing, and the drawing is for a Day Designer planner.

So, the way you enter the drawing is you go leave a review, and then you let me know. You let me know by going to [HabitsOnPurpose.com/review](https://HabitsOnPurpose.com/review) And if you leave a review during the month of February, you'll be entered into the drawing, and you'll have my everlasting gratitude.

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The second announcement that I want to share before we dive into today's topic is if, when you're listening to the concepts here, you find yourself wanting to go deeper with them. You want help applying them into your real life. And you want an individual coaching experience to explore perhaps what's in the way of the intentional habits that you really want.

We can connect for a private coaching consultation and talk about if the coaching I do privately is a beautiful match for what you're looking for. To do that, you go to [HabitsOnPurpose.com/consult](https://HabitsOnPurpose.com/consult).

Now, speaking of podcast creation, sometimes I find myself wondering and overthinking about what the next episode should center on. During one of these spells, I was talking to my six-year-old son, and you may have heard me mention before that he loves giving me input and advice. So, when I ask him questions, he loves to sort of give me his perspective.

I very much encourage this dynamic, so much so that he will ask me, "Do you want any advice?" During one of these times, when I was struggling to figure out what I was gonna do for the podcast, I told him what I was struggling with. And I asked him what he thought might be a good thing to share for the next podcast episode.

He first offered that I should teach people sign language because, he said, that's what he would like to learn about. And we talked about how I know nothing about sign language. And even if I did, well, it's a podcast, and currently, it is without a video. It is without closed captioning. So, that would make it a little bit challenging.

It did give me, however, the idea to do some episodes about the complexity of communication and how our habits can influence our approach to communication. But the next idea he offered was that I should teach what his kindergarten class rules are.

He shared them with me, and instantly, I knew that this was a brilliant winner of an idea. So, we're going to take the wisdom that's in a

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kindergarten philosophy and flesh it out in more adult terms so you can apply it to your own habits.

The six principles, as related to me by my kiddo, are as follows: Number one, be safe. Number two, be persistent. Number three, be kind to yourself and to others. Number four, listen and think. Number five, follow directions. And the bonus, number six, is take brain breaks. And as he told me one time, "Take brain breaks when all the glitter in your brain is swirling around and mixed up."

Now, if you're anything like me, a part of you might think that these are really cutesy, trite things that you might find on a t-shirt, a bumper sticker, a really cheesy Hallmark card, or a corporate motivational poster that you might see in an elevator. But some of the most profound insights really are utterly basic. And this list of six is so fantastic, in part because of its simplicity.

It can be applied to any goal, any intentional habit you want to create, to any aspect of your life, even though you aren't still in elementary school. And by the end of this episode, you're going to see how these kindergarten principles can be a meaningful paradigm shift for your entire life.

So, let's dive in and start with number one. Be safe. For the kindergarteners, this refers mainly to physical safety. And we, as adults, we can be physically safe by doing things like paying attention to our physical surroundings. Slowing down and not rushing when we drive, walk, cut vegetables, shower, and work out.

We can also be safe when we anticipate and prepare for dangerous circumstances. And this can be as straightforward as knowing how to change a flat tire in your car or on your mountain bike. Telling people where you're going when you're going to be somewhere remote. Having an extra battery charger or a first aid kit with you.

It could also be if you have a marginalized identity of any type, that you know the circumstances in which you might not have a high degree of

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confidence in your own physical safety, and you anticipate and prepare for those.

Now, although it's not more important, perhaps more interesting than physical safety is mental and emotional safety. So, what does it mean to feel mentally and emotionally or psychologically safe? What I'm talking about here is not referring to being free from an abusive intimate relationship or an abusive work relationship. What I'm talking about here, in this context, is the internal sense of security and ease.

This encompasses not only a sense that you're free from harm but also the internal sense that you belong, and you matter. Your presence and your point of view are valuable. You know that you're competent and you're resourceful. That is internal safety.

So, why is internal psychological safety important? When you have this sense of internal safety, think about what you can do. You can speak up with ease even if your comments are dissenting. You can trust yourself and not overthink. You can say no when you want to say no, and yes when you want to say yes.

When you have a sense of internal safety. You don't drown in social anxiety, ruminating, catastrophizing, people-pleasing, and pretending to have a good time. You don't feel the weight of insecurity or self-consciousness. Internal safety is a home base from which you can do your best work. And when you have a sense of internal safety, you also are better able to recognize when you don't feel the sense of safety and then get curious about why.

Internal safety makes it easier to meet yourself where you are. Like I talked about in last week's episode, Episode 54. To be safe with physical safety is an action, i.e., you take safe actions, and you do things to be free from harm.

When it comes to psychological safety, it can also be an action in that you create safety for yourself by the ways that you think and the things that you

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do. And this is really important to understand. Each of us creates our own sense of internal safety by the way that we think.

Let me say that again, each of us creates our own sense of internal safety, internal belonging, and the internal sense that we matter by the way that we think. Now, indeed, this means that you can feel free from harm, and you can feel safe, even if you aren't.

For example, if you're snowshoeing in this beautiful winter wonderland, and no one knows where you are. Your phone battery's low. You don't have any extra water. You have no extra gear. You feel at peace and at one with nature and the world and its beauty right before you twist your ankle. You may feel psychologically safe, even though you are on the brink of hypothermia with this injury.

Conversely, you can feel unsafe psychologically, like you don't belong, and you don't have anything to offer when you're at, say, your department meeting, even though other people would welcome your perspective. Now, I share this with you so that you just understand that the key here is that you have choice about creating internal safety when you want to.

So, to be safe, as a life principle for you, my lovely listeners, means recognizing the circumstances when you don't feel safe and getting curious about why. This means acknowledging situations, interactions, and activities in which you do not feel safe.

It could be certain work meetings. Interacting with a certain person or being in the operating room on certain kinds of cases with certain support staff. You might not feel psychologically safe on a playdate or at a potluck. Once you know the unique situations where internal safety is not your default go-to, you get to find out why.

What is it about that circumstance? What is it you're thinking or worrying about that makes you feel less than secure? It can be really helpful to catalog circumstances in which you do feel safe and secure. And then also,

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go find out why. Find out what you're thinking in those situations, those circumstances, that does create safety for you.

Now, number two, be persistent. When it comes to any goal, any work worth doing, any habit that you want to create, persistence is truly essential. Yo-Yo diets big, dreamy plans without consistent practical actions; they are free from persistence. The definition of persistence is to continue firmly on a course of action, despite difficulty. Or, to endure over a prolonged period of time.

Now, some of my listeners are masters of persistence at their own expense. Pushing through long hours without recuperation. Risking exhaustion, and pushing beyond limits that are good for self-care. And that's not the kind of persistence I'm referring to here.

Also, please don't confuse persistent with consistent. To be consistent implies regular unchanging action over time. While persistent has to do with continuing to take action, even when there are challenges, and to do it with a sense of determination.

So, think of a goal or a habit that you have. When you persistently take tiny, doable actions, you gradually make meaningful progress that overall will accumulate and create a meaningful result. Say you want a regular strength program in your life.

When you commit to working out, lifting, and doing strength training two to three times a week, and you persist through times when you feel ambivalent... The 'I don't want to do it today's. The 'this really isn't doing much for me, so why bother?'... When you persist, at the end of the year you will have done 100 to 150 workouts.

Now, let's take something more cognitive. Say you want to rewire a new set of thoughts related to your identity. To persist means that you creatively problem-solve when you run into difficulty integrating these intentional ways of thinking.

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So, to create a new default habit, whether it's to use your screen less, to improve boundaries, to stop people pleasing, to have more self-trust; tiny realistic actions, even in the face of real-life everyday challenges, are the way you move the needle and create real change.

For us adults, this calls on anticipation of difficulties. Planning for what you need when you meet the inevitable challenge. And then, having your own back as you do some of the tedious and difficult work.

Persistence may even mean that when you fall into a pattern of telling yourself a painful story, you recognize that this is an opportunity to understand why that painful story is the one you go to. Why that interpretation is the one that comes up for you. And then, you figure out how to keep showing up in a way that is useful and helpful to you.

Which brings me to point number three. Number three is be kind to yourself and to others. Now, can we just pause for a moment and enjoy how awesome it is that this is a fundamental tenet in my kid's classroom. When he told me about this, he made sure that I knew that it wasn't just be kind, but it was be kind to yourself and be kind to others.

And, by the way, each of these ideas that he shared, they all have sign language, hand gestures that convey them, which is so adorable. I am trying to do them as I talk because I've seen them so much. So, you can just imagine how funny it is. Me, speaking into my mic with no one here in the recording studio, and my hands moving in these cute little ways.

But when it comes to being kind to yourself and to others, we can imagine how this would play out in a kindergarten classroom, right? In terms of being kind to others with things like not interrupting, not being mean, not throwing things, etc.

When I asked my child about being kind to yourself, he said that it means that when you're having a hard time, you're not mean to yourself. He said, "If you don't get something right the first time, you don't think, 'Ugh, I'm never gonna get it.'"

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So, for the adults, when it comes to our habits and to life in general, there's really zero downside to being kind to yourself and others. Many of you have no trouble being kind to others. Often, you're kind, but at your own expense. Or, you've absorbed the societal message that to be kind to yourself is actually selfish or unhelpful to others.

What I want to offer is that kindness to yourself does not mean you're automatically being selfish or mean to other people, and kindness to others does not have to come at your own expense. And when it does, it's worth questioning why you're choosing to do that.

So, to be kind is to be friendly, generous, warm, and considerate. Food for thought, if you're somebody who struggles with people pleasing, with being a yes person, or you are averse to conflict or disagreement. Consider for a moment that sometimes the kindest thing you can do for yourself and for others is just speak the truth.

So, what would change if you didn't conflate kindness with being overly accommodating, self-effacing, or people-pleasing? Often, when it comes to the way we talk to ourselves, and the way we think about ourselves, we may not be very warm, or friendly, much less considerate. Instead of a kind self-talk, a harsh default is so common.

And so often, my clients will share these inner refrains that sound like, “I suck. I'm not cut out for this. I'm an idiot. I should be further along. I should know more. Do better. Something must be wrong with me.” Some hellish circle of, “I'm not good as I am today; I should be better. And if I were, I wouldn't be struggling.”

This kind of harsh, unkind way may have worked up to a point, up to this moment in your life. But more often than not, it takes more than it gives. Reauthoring default thoughts to a kinder script is one of the most effective things you can ever do. And it does not actually risk complacency or being passive in some of the ways that the high achievers listening to this podcast might think that it does.

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So, my question for you is this: Where in your life can you be kinder to yourself? And what would that look like? What would change about how you approach your habits if you approach them from kindness? And a question that I really love is what would kindness do here?

All right, now on to number four, listen and think. So, for us adults, who are not kindergarteners, I want you to consider that to listen doesn't just mean to listen to others, but can mean to listen to yourself.

What aren't you perhaps listening to inside yourself? Do you ever have a nagging quiet voice telling you something that you push away? Are there emotions that you compartmentalize instead of allow because listening to them, allowing them, seems problematic? And with your thoughts, what would be different if you listened, but didn't buy into them hook, line and sinker, as if your thoughts were true?

What if you listened to your thoughts like you listen to a news channel or to a podcast, instead of just believing them automatically? Can you listen to your thoughts from a kind, witnessing, observer place instead of believing them?

When you listen to your mind, and you listen to your body, and then you take time to carefully reflect, to think about your thinking, to think about the messages you get from your body, you give yourself the gift of being intentional.

Alright, number five, follow directions. Now, for this one, the kiddos are supposed to be mindful of following directions of the authority figure, aka the teacher, in the classroom. When it comes to adults and goals and habit change, following directions isn't about doing what you're told by others. And it's not about not running with the scissors. Think of directions as your core values and your own inner compass.

Think of your personal directions as your real priorities. When you follow your core values, your real priorities, and your inner compass, and you keep these front-of-mind, you will filter your to-do list by what matters most.

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You can follow your own directions when it comes to following through on something you said you do for yourself, but maybe you find it kind of challenging. What internal directions can you give yourself to follow?

So, last of all, take brain breaks. Let's just be really simple with this. Without breaks, we are less effective. The way the heart functions is to have systole and diastole; that is, it pumps, and it relaxes. And when it opens and relaxes, it fills up with blood before the next contraction.

Diastole is the inherent rest that the heart has. Without the rest, it has a less effective contraction afterward. And yes, this is a very simplified analogy. But it works in the situation where we're talking about taking brain breaks and rest breaks.

An overwhelmed mind can be likened to a jar of dirt and pebbles and glitter that's shaken up. It's murky, it's mixed up, and you cannot see through it. But when you let that jar settle, and the clear water shows up, and you can discern the different layers, that is like when we let ourselves settle and recenter.

Just like going for a walk around the block. Taking a moment to listen to part of your favorite song. Standing up, and taking five deep breaths every hour. When you allow yourself to take a brain break, even for the shortest period of time, you can alter your physiology in a way that you can have access to clarity, calm, and presence.

Now, many of you might be thinking, like I have thought many a time, "I cannot take a break; I am way too busy. Taking a break is just going to delay work until later. And that's going to make things worse, which is gonna make me more overwhelmed." Or you might think, "If I can't take a full day off, or a full hour off, or a full week off to truly rest, three minutes is not going to cut it. So why bother?"

What I want to offer you, from this point of view, is when you think, "I cannot take a break, it will just make things worse. A break that is small is

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meaningless.” Any break you take, you will experience, and you will see through the lens of ‘this is going to make things worse.’

So, your break will basically be inadequate, because of the way you're thinking about it. And with confirmation bias at play, you are essentially collecting data that reinforces your original premise that the break is going to make things worse.

To actually get benefit from any brain break, it is so useful to have the thought in mind, “This really matters. Breaks are essential.” If it is a leap to get your mind there. If you can't get all the way there, that's totally normal. And I'm going to offer you this bridging thought, “It's possible that taking a brain break might be helpful.”

How do you feel when you think about that? Just notice if that gives you a little bit of openness. Where can you give yourself regular brain breaks? Ones that are genuinely restorative, even if they're tiny.

We've reached the end of our list. So, in summary, I have brought in my kiddo, my six-year-old, to remind you of all six. So, take it away! Be Safe. Be Persistent. Be Kind to Yourself and Others. Listen and Think. Follow Directions. Take Brain Breaks.

So, there you have it. Be safe, be persistent, be kind to yourself and others, listen and think, follow directions, and take brain breaks. This week, you can notice where you're already doing these things, and where you can do things differently.

And then, let me know what you discover. You can see me on Facebook, in the *Habits On Purpose* Facebook group. Or, if you're on the mailing list, you can just press reply to any email you get. And then, remember to help me celebrate the podcast turning one. And to help me meet my goal of doubling the reviews the podcast has.

Consider leaving me a review on iTunes. It can be as short as a phrase or a sentence. And then, let me thank you by entering you into a drawing for a Day Designer planner that you can keep for yourself, or you can give to

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someone else. Once you leave a review, don't forget to go to [HabitsOnPurpose.com/review](https://HabitsOnPurpose.com/review) so that I can enter you into the drawing.

Thanks so much for listening, and I'll see you next week.

If you want to learn more about how to better understand your patterns, stop feeling reactionary, and get back into the proverbial driver's seat with your habits, you'll want to join my email list, which you can find linked in the show notes. Or, if you go to [HabitsOnPurpose.com](https://HabitsOnPurpose.com), you'll find it right there.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit [HabitsOnPurpose.com](https://HabitsOnPurpose.com) Tune in next week for another episode.