

This Year Didn't Go as Planned—Now What?: Episode 294

Elena: If you're ending the year with some disappointment or regret, if things didn't go quite the way you imagined. This episode is for you. Hello friends, and welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm your host Elena Aguilar, and in each podcast episode, you will learn how you can lead conversations that build connection and spark change.

So today we're talking about the years that didn't go the way we hoped, the ones that feel messy. Unresolved or just a little off because those years happen and you might be at the end of one of them right now, and they don't mean that you have failed. So let's get into it. There's a moment I will never forget.

It was late May, and I had just wrapped up a coaching conversation with a leader that I'd been supporting all year. I'm gonna call her Sam. She sat back in her chair, she looked out the window and she said, I feel like I've been holding this team together with duct tape. And I nodded because I knew exactly what she meant.

The year had started strong with great energy and clear goals and strong relationships, but by January things got hard. A teacher had resigned in the middle of the year. Two others were out on leave, and the team had struggled to stay cohesive by the spring. Meetings were sporadic and trust was frayed, and Sam felt like she was failing.

But here's what we uncovered in that conversation and what I wanna share with you today. Which is there is learning growth and impact to be found and celebrated in even the most challenging years. Sam had been showing up with courage all year. She had listened, she'd adjusted, she'd owned her missteps.

She kept people afloat even when they were tired and grieving. And that matters. So if you are in a place right now where you feel like you're ending the year on a shaky note, I want you to take a breath and then I wanna offer you a few questions to guide you back to center. So here's a reflection practice for you for this week.

Set aside 10 minutes and ask yourself these three questions. What's here now? Not what should be here, not what was on the plan back in August. Just what's

real, what's true, what's happening in your team and in you At this moment in time. Let yourself sit with this question and see what bubbles up.

Personally, I like the practice of going on a walk in nature where I can mull over questions like this. One second. What's mine to tend to Now, this is a powerful question and it's not always easy to answer. So when I say tend to, I mean what needs your care? Attention or your courage, and that might be a strained relationship that needs a conversation.

A team member you haven't checked in on a pattern like avoiding conflict or rushing through meetings that you want to shift. It could even be something internal, like your own disappointment, your own silence. Your own burnout, whatever it is, just name it. Not to blame yourself, but to take one honest step toward repair or reconnection.

And the third question I wanna invite you to reflect on is what's one step I can take this week when things haven't gone the way we hoped? It's easy to get stuck in, regret or self-doubt. We can spiral. We can shut down. We can tell ourselves that it's too late to make a difference, but one small step, just one can shift everything.

This could be a brief check, check-in with a team member. It could be an apology or just a simple moment of acknowledgement in your next meeting. The point is not to fix everything. It's to remind yourself that you still have agency. The world isn't happening to you. You have power, and that momentum you create.

It's real and it builds. When I talk to Sam again a few weeks later, she told me she had done something simple. In their last meeting, she stood in front of her team and said, I know this year didn't go as planned. And I know there were times when I wasn't the leader I wanted to be, but I have learned so much and much of what I've learned is because of what you have shared.

And I wanna thank you for your honesty and your patience and your commitment. That's it. It wasn't a huge grand gesture. It wasn't a big repair plan. It was just truth and heart and presence, and folks on her team nodded and a few stayed afterward to say thank you, and sometimes that is all it takes. Now if you want help leading this kind of repair or reflection conversation, we have a number of protocols in our team's learning library that can guide you.

We've got end of year resets and reconnection strategies. You don't have to figure this out alone. So here's your challenge for this week. Carve out time for

reflection. And ask yourself these three questions. What's here now? What's mine to tend to, and what's one small courageous step that I can take?

You don't need to end the year perfectly, you just need to end it honestly. If you want to keep learning with me and transform the way your team gathers so that you can build a culture where everyone, including yourself thrives, then check out the show notes to learn more about our Team's Learning Library and PLC.

You'll also find a link to our upcoming free community webinars, and thank you for being here with me today. If you appreciated this episode and you're listening via podcast, then please share it with someone who might benefit from it, and or you could hop over to Apple Podcasts and leave us a five-star rating and review so that other folks can find it.

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