



Leadership Emails

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Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

May 19 - June 9, 2022

Kevin's Leadership Emails are powerful explorations into personal development, both inside and outside of the practice.

Enjoy reviewing all this transformational, thought-provoking content.

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Open Your Parachute

This week has been a tale of two mindsets: those who have open minds to all possibilities, and those who do not...which I have always found fascinating! Without reading anymore of this message, which category would you place yourself in?

The famous astronaut, Buzz Aldrin, said, *“Your mind is like a parachute: if it isn't open, it doesn't work.”* Well, when you put it that way, it is hard to argue!

Back to the tale of two mindsets. There has been a clear chasm in recent conversations where the best are always inquisitive as they seek out the “edge” they can find to continue to advance their efforts in influencing patients to get healthy. They leave their egos at the door, which they have to because they are that good, and maintain the importance of focusing on the most important component of their professional equation, which is the optimal health of each and every patient.

Helping a patient make the decision to commit to their personalized plan to achieve optimal health is their driving force and mission. It is well-defined and crystal clear. The path is not always straightforward, yet they press on with the belief they will figure out how to get over whatever obstacle stands in their way. It is a choice to be a team full of Champions!

The other tale is woven with a heavily-weighted air of negativity and arrogance. Every suggestion is met with Resistance (they could benefit from some Steven Pressfield wisdom) and angst. In their eyes, they have it all figured out, are already doing it all, and know best. The verbal exchanges are tense and filled with an unpleasant vibe and energy. With no surprise, this tale I tell comes with the obvious storyline of the team being unhappy with a considerable amount of self-inflicted drama.

One might begin to think I loathe being part of the conversations I described in the second tale, yet I do not. In fact, I have developed an immense amount of empathy for those who are stuck in a world of negativity. Please know, I have my own level of tolerance when it comes to these situations as I refuse to “feed the beast” by simply ignoring the situation and letting it linger. Allow me to explain my positioning as it could be insightful information for you to ponder in your personal and professional relationships.

I am comfortable being in situations where there is significant pushback from naysayers because I know they are pushing back for genuine reasons they may not even be aware of as they tend to be deep-seated issues that unconsciously come out in the form of negativity.

Without realizing it, people who are in a mindset of Resistance are trying to bring others down to their level so they can feel better and not feel as if they are alone in their unhappiness.

These people want to sound smart, feel important, and be valued. Unfortunately, their approach of bringing others down to lift themselves up ends in failure. In fact, I believe the more they bring others down, the worse they feel. It is exponentially counterproductive. Sadly, when someone shows up who genuinely wants to add value to their life, they are so

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mired in their own problems they cannot see the helping hand waiting to pour some positivity into their life.

I have been speaking often on the topic of creating a level of empathy for others, not knowing what they are dealing with or knowing where they came from. It is similar to people who have strong work ethics not understanding how others do not. I was blessed to have influential examples of why it is important to have a strong work ethic, whereas others did not. So, maybe I can be the catalyst for someone to change their commitment to their work, or maybe, even their commitment to themselves!

When you change your way of thinking about others it can bring some relief to not have to take on their energy. This shift in your view of others will elevate your influence and increase the amount of value you bring to relationships.

I encourage you to make the choice to be a force for good and a light unto other's paths. Choose to be extraordinary!

Here's to opening your parachute everyday in order to move one step further along your own path of achievement and happiness.

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Into the Storm

This week I was briefed on the results of some controversial conversations: conversations that could have gone badly off the rails if they were not approached in a strategic manner. The two situations were completely different, yet the approach was similar. The most important factor was that the team members who wanted a positive outcome stepped up to manage the situation by seeking advice. Both of these team members were willing to face the reality of the situation head on instead of allowing it to fester and turn into a tsunami.

The first conversation was in an early stage, but teetering on the verge of becoming a “storm” within the practice if it was not addressed immediately. To the team member’s credit, she recognized this and quickly talked through it with me so she would be confident in her approach to quell the brewing storm. During our time together, we came up with a strategy and specific verbiage to create a calm, neutral environment while we addressed the issue in a reasonable and constructive way. In the end, the issue was put to rest immediately following this proactive conversation, resolving what would have been a disastrous situation.

On the flip-side, the second conversation involved a team member who found herself in the middle of a situation that was quickly approaching the level equivalent to a five-alarm fire. During our conversation to come up with a strategy to extinguish said situation once and for all, it became apparent that one of the parties involved was intentionally keeping the drama alive and ongoing. This is not the first time this team member has been in the middle of unwelcome situations, so I offered advice to be assertive and take a final stand against the destructive behavior.

It was reported back to me that the conversation was intense, but ended with a significant personal breakthrough for the person who was creating and propagating these problematic situations. In the end, the instigating team member admitted her wrongdoing, offered a genuine apology, and shared a personal struggle she was experiencing and carrying into her professional setting. The atmosphere in the practice is much lighter and more enjoyable since this situation has been resolved.

Both of these team members who initiated efforts to bring resolution to matters at hand deserve a tremendous amount of credit for their willingness to go headfirst “into the storm” to bring order back to the practice. One situation was out of absolute necessity, while the other was out of avoiding a future issue.

Recounting these two stories reminds me of a company I purchased goodies from last Christmas. This company is similar to Conundrum, a brand I highlighted back on March 3rd in a message focused on living beyond your own boundaries. Froning Farms was founded by Rich Froning. Those of you in the fitness world may know him as the legendary 9-time CrossFit Champion. He raises bison on his family farm and sells low-fat, high-protein bison food products. He also has an apparel line founded on the tagline, *“Into the Storm.”*

He has a great story.

If you are intrigued, you can check it out on his website: froningfarms.com

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I recently received a promotional email from the company about the newest apparel offerings. One stood out to me because of its message about the mighty bison, which ties into today's message about confronting difficult situations head on.

"When bison are up against a storm, they turn to meet it head on. They square their shoulders and brace against its power. They never try to avoid the hardship."

I believe the mighty bison has always stood for strength and courage. I love how Fronging takes their disposition and turns it into inspiration, so much so that I put an "Into the Storm" sticker on my laptop as a daily reminder of my commitment to business and life regardless of its complexity. I speak often about having physical objects within your sight to help you stay focused on your mission and this sticker is another simple way of staying on point day in and day out for me.

We all find ourselves in the middle of a storm or facing a developing storm where some encouragement could be beneficial to help "meet it head on" like the mighty bison: encouragement to "square your shoulders and brace against its power."

Embrace the opportunity to meet hardship face-to-face and dissolve its ability to leave more carnage along the way.

Embrace the difficult situations.

Stand with confidence in the face of adversity.

Seth Godin said it so well in his book, "*Linchpin*," where he summarizes the power and influence a person has who is "impossibly good at their job."

"...the competitive advantage the marketplace demands is someone more human, more connected, and mature. Someone with passion and energy, capable of seeing things as they are and negotiating multiple priorities as she makes useful decisions without angst."

Flexible in the face of change.

Resilient in the face of confusion.

All of these attributes are CHOICES, not talents, and all of them are available to you."

Here's to squaring our shoulders as we head straight into the storm, taking on the hardship that comes with it. You can do it and may be the only person with the courage to do so.

What path will you choose?

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Learning to Love the Plateau (Part 1)

In a recent conversation with a high-achieving team member, I was asked a question that comes up several times a year:

“Kevin, how do you make it through the periods of time where it seems like nothing is happening even though you know you are putting in a lot of effort?”

Her question is insightful and is a one that all of my high-achieving friends have in the back of their minds. It is a good “checks and balances” approach to remind ourselves of the reality of the “Road to Mastery” in life and business.

George Leonard wrote a legendary book titled, *Mastery*. It is on my Top 10 list of all-time influential books I have read. Arguably, the most significant challenge when setting high standards of achievement for yourself (and your team) is that there are far more moments of “plateau” than there are moments of great achievement.

Back in 2018, I prepared a brand new presentation for our annual Doctor’s Retreat with the intention of expanding everyone’s awareness of what the real pathway to success looks like, which is filled more with plateaus than surges of growth. The majority of people are overly anxious to see results faster than what is humanly possible. This is the achiever, the motivator in those who strive for success. It is the nature of the beast. Very few people speak about the time between major victories and what must be embraced and endured.

As I shared my response to the insightful question, it reminded me of Leonard’s description of Mastery, most specifically, the journey we all experience.

“In this light, you can see that those upward surges on the mastery curve are by no means the only time anything significant or exciting is happening. Learning generally occurs in stages. A stage ends when the habitual system has been programmed to the new task, and the cognitive and effort systems have withdrawn. This means you can perform the task without making a special effort to think of its separate parts. At this point, there’s an apparent spurt of learning. But this learning has been going on all along.

How do you best move toward mastery? To put it simply, you practice diligently, but you practice primarily for the sake of practice itself. Rather than being frustrated while on the plateau, you learn to appreciate and enjoy it just as much as you do the upward surges.”

I believe most people do not embrace the concept of “practice” because it tends to have a negative connotation to it. What I mean by “negative” is that most people see practice as repetitive, boring and exhausting. They do not see the beauty in practice. They do not see the power in focusing on the fundamentals of a given skillset. They do not see how practicing builds power, beauty and elegance. Practice is the pathway to excellence.

I want to take this topic outside of the career perspective and give it light unto a different topic.

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I was fortunate to play college baseball. It was an experience I will forever be grateful for. There was a moment during my freshman year where I experienced an elbow injury that could have jeopardized my ability to perform at a high level. I was introduced to a physical therapist who videotaped me throwing a baseball and quickly assessed my mechanics. What happened during his discussion with me was nothing short of remarkable.

The physical therapist pointed out three areas where I was producing unwelcome stress on my elbow. He promised me that if I put effort and intention on practicing new mechanics that I would not only be fine, but in fact, I would produce even greater results than I did before sustaining the injury. He told me that if I was willing to practice the new mechanics for three weeks - twice per day and thirty minutes a session - I would be back to health and stronger than ever. At the time, baseball meant the world to me so I was willing to do whatever it would take to get back to the game I loved so much.

I began practicing the same afternoon I was given the instruction. It was difficult and initially painful, yet I stayed committed to the plan and embraced the experience. As each day went by, I found enjoyment in focusing on the details of the new foundation I was building for my beloved skillset. After three weeks I was blown away at the results.

Prior to the injury I was clocked at 79mph throwing from the shortstop (SS) position on the ball field. Post-injury and after all the practice of my new mechanics I was clocked at 91mph. It changed the course of my baseball career forever. I went from being the backup SS to the starting SS, beating out the senior who was playing in front of me. I gained a new level of confidence and sense of enjoyment for the game. I was proud of myself for the major accomplishment I had just achieved. It is a moment I will never forget and forever be grateful for.

Although I did not go on to play any level of professional baseball, I experienced a high level of play in various other opportunities, traveling the country playing competitive ball through my mid-thirties. All of this because I committed to the dedication and practice it took to achieve a breakthrough. I embraced the plateau. I believed something extraordinary was on the other side of the effort without knowing how long it would take. The "Road to Mastery" can be exhilarating if you allow it to be.

- How do you feel when you find yourself in a plateau?
- What can you change in your mindset to embrace the plateau rather than be frustrated by it?
- What will it take for you to love the plateau...to embrace the practice it takes to perform at a level of excellence?
- What negative connotations do you have around practice?
- Who or what could be the motivating factor for you to see practice and plateau in a different light?

These are all exploratory questions for you to reflect upon privately, as well as collectively as a team.

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I will close out today's message with a quote from Robert Louis Stevenson to give you a different way to think about the road to Mastery:

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant."

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Learning to Love the Plateau (Part 2)

As we continue to move along the “Road to Mastery,” I want to shift focus and appoint a new meaning to the word “goal.” We all have goals, whether they are documented or not is the only difference. Our doctors set goals for the team to achieve. The world pushes the agenda of “goals” in life and career. “Goals” are all around us.

Leonard writes about the positioning of goals brilliantly as he acknowledges the importance of them, while also highlighting the importance of where they stand in the hierarchy of significance and what has true meaning over superficial meaning that is fleeting with short-term meaning.

“Early in life, we are urged to study hard so that we’ll get good grades. We are told to get good grades so that we’ll graduate from high school and get into college. We are told to graduate from high school and get into college so that we’ll get a good job. We are told to get a good job so that we can buy a house and a car. Again and again we are told to do one thing only so that we can get something else. We spend our lives stretched on an iron rack of contingencies.

Contingencies, no question about it, are important. The achievement of goals is important. But the real juice of life, whether it be sweet or bitter, is to be found not nearly so much in the products of our efforts as in the process of living itself, in how it feels to be alive. We are taught in countless ways to value the product, the prize, the climactic moment. But even after we’ve just caught the winning pass in the Super Bowl, there’s always tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. If our life is a good one, a life of mastery, most of it will be spent on the plateau. If not, a large part of it may well be spent in restless, distracted, ultimately self-destructive attempts to escape the plateau. The question remains: where in our upbringing, our schooling, our career are we explicitly taught to value, to enjoy, even to love the plateau, the long stretch of diligent effort with no seeming progress?”

Leonard’s insightful perspective brings renewed awareness to the importance of “enjoying the ride,” rather than only enjoying the moment we arrive at our final destination. Since there are varying degrees of time in-between the achievement of defined goals, it can become exhausting, potentially debilitating, to only set our sights on the final destination.

For a significant portion of my adult life I was focused on the “goals” society deemed important. This period of time was exhausting, meaningless, and full of disappointment. I loathed the time it would take to get to the next “big thing” I thought would make me happy. I forgot how incredible it could feel to simply embrace practicing during a plateau... for example...the feeling I experienced in my baseball rehab story from my last message.

My personal breakthrough at the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012 forever changed the way I looked at life’s journey. Goals now became the catalyst for me to get excited about the journey to achieve them. I now look forward to and enjoy the process it takes to achieve a defined objective. The learning process is interesting, the practice is enjoyable, and the checkpoints on the “Road to Mastery” are arguably more exciting than the final outcome.

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I focused on this portion of Leonard's writing because we spend the majority of our time in this aspect of the journey. Whether it be in our personal life or professional career, we will spend far more time taking steps toward our next defined goal than we will standing still at the final destination.

- What comes to mind after reading this message?
- How might you think differently about the journey versus the final destination?
- What will change as you move forward?

I encourage you to deploy this message at your next team meeting. I believe you could elevate the atmosphere in your practice if everyone collectively adopted a shift in their view of the plateau time periods. You all could experience a new level of enjoyment and satisfaction as a team if you find newfound value in plateaus and practice.

What will you choose to do?

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