



Leadership Emails

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Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

June 16 - July 14, 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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Learning to Love the Plateau (Part 3)

Today we wrap up this series on “*Learning to Love the Plateau*,” which has been fueled by team members asking smart, introspective questions about life’s journey, combined with the excellent work of George Leonard in his book, “*Mastery*.”

I believe one of the reasons we do not embrace the plateaus and the practice is because we do not spend enough time living in the moment. We fail to be present much throughout the day. When we get a moment to sit down, relax our mind and reflect on the day, we can barely remember anything that happened. This tends to be because we are not focusing on what is happening right in front of our faces. We go through the motions, counting down the time until we move on to the next “thing” for the day, whether it be related to our daily professional schedule or our overly-committed personal schedule that leaves us more exhausted week...after week...after week...after week.

Knowing this, I encourage you to consider the following question carefully:

What can you do to slow life down and be more present than ever before...with each moment...with each person...you have the privilege of experiencing each day?

There will be glorious moments to celebrate.

There will be devastating moments to seek comfort to cope.

There will be mundane moments to find value in.

There will be uncertainty we must persevere through.

And, there will be moments we do not know how to interpret or even how we feel about.

All of these moments can be embraced and valued, as they all contribute toward the satisfaction we will have being in each and every moment life brings us.

Leonard has beautiful words to help us reshape how we view the opportunities in life. I pray you will take the following words to heart, along with the previous messages, and create new meaning in your journey through life. It can be as meaningful and magical as you like, if you are willing to adjust your perspective around the mundane moments that lead up to your defined milestones.

“Goals and contingencies, as I’ve said, are important. But they exist in the future and the past, beyond the pale of the sensory realm. Practice, the path of mastery, exists only in the present. You can see it, hear it, smell it, feel it. To love the plateau is to love the eternal now, to enjoy the inevitable spurts of progress and the fruits of accomplishment, then serenely to accept the new plateau that waits just beyond them. To love the plateau is to love what is most essential and enduring in life.”

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In closing, I am reminded of a quote from the legendary country singer Dolly Parton, as she states so vividly what we must endure when on the path of success: *“The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.”* Well said Dolly, well said!

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Learning to Love the Plateau (Part 4)

I know, I know...I said we were wrapping up this series last week...but I couldn't help myself and had to extend it one more week to share a wonderful story with all of you. One of our newest doctors in the DST Universe wrote me a powerful message that ties directly into our theme of loving the plateau. For those who take the time to read and feel into these words, I hope they can be a catalyst for you to reflect on the happenings and experiences you are having in life, both personally and professionally.

Enjoy!

Good Morning Team DST,

One of my favorite things to do is to go hiking in the mountains. Personally, I never really care which hike I take, only that I am amongst the mountains. During the drive out to our hike yesterday, my wife was really concerned that my mood has been more somber of late. She is the concern of this success. I told her, "There is a lot of work, there are a lot of demands that I will have from people, and my responsibilities have increased; nothing more by chance and only by design." As I thought of this, while hiking, our goal was to summit the South Lawson Peak in Kananaskis. This is where my story comes from.

My journey in life has commonalities, whether it be my newfound relationship with Dental Success Today or climbing a mountain. Let me put it in perspective for you as I have been hiking for years. I started to compare the beginning of my journey with DST to my failures and successes in both dentistry and climbing mountains.

I started out yesterday by downloading my GPS map, I read a bit about the hike (pitfalls, what to watch for, weather, what other people have done), and found the location. I packed our bags, food, water, and emergency supplies. I was thinking that since we are getting older, maybe I should get a satellite phone. I was trying to make sure we had everything that we needed for this destination.

We began our walk, which started off easily. As I walked more, I thought of my conversation with Scott. He asked me the question, "What is my destination...truly, what is it?"

As our journey becomes more challenging, we must give more effort. As we climb higher, the views begin to happen. We start to see the valley showing the upper and lower lakes, which is our first milestone of success. My wife began to complain. I am not picking on her, she is tired and sore, and from the results of our efforts the night before, it made our journey tougher than it should have been.

I think some more, how does climbing this mountain relate to DST? To me the answer was obvious: to get where we are going, we have to be able to get to the destination being fit enough and dedicated enough, and if we are planning this journey, perhaps we need to be rested enough as well. I am not saying that on Friday night we shouldn't go out, but perhaps

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we need to limit that indulgence. My wife, who loves the hikes, said, "We need to get more on track and exercise more with less indulgences, especially the night before."

This was my first pearl! As we are hiking, I look up and see a summit, thinking, "Wow, we have reached our goal, this journey was not so bad." However, thinking of how we prepared for the hike, I knew we were still far from our destination. This happened multiple times. In situations like this, the GPS map comes in handy to be able to see where you are, and where you are going.

How does this compare to DST? Simply, don't get caught up on early success. There is still a lot of hard work left to be done. I shared this discovery with my office manager. When hiking, you will see false summits. Once a false summit is achieved, you have a feeling of utter disappointment because the ultimate goal has not been achieved.

This brings me to my second pearl. Knowing your destination and having your map will encourage you to celebrate your wins along the way to your ultimate destination.

As we approached the ultimate summit, we were truly pushing ourselves. We had barely eaten and were quite hungry. I ask myself, "Why do we do this to ourselves? We could have just sat around at home and enjoyed some wine." We question the futility of this hike. As we both get through our crankiness, judgments, and me driving my wife nuts, I start to wonder: how does this compare to DST?

This is a tough one, however, as I am listening to the book, "Positive Intelligence," the "Judge" Saboteur comes to mind. This is significant. I start thinking about all of the employee interactions, the employee fatigue, the owner frustrations, and I can feel myself succumbing to inner fears. Scott and his team have provided us with a map, which is my GPS. I have assembled a team, and our leaders need to lead all of us as we commit to a pace that will give ourselves the opportunity to reach our ultimate destination.

I know this is a simplistic view. I compare our journey with DST to hiking mountain peaks as it takes the same amount of preparation, planning, focus, effort and execution. I thought I would share this with you, and especially with my great team members who are supporting me in my decision to join DST. Perhaps, understanding my judgment and reassuring them that it will be alright is most important. Since we have a map, I am confident we will achieve this ultimate destination.

It has been wonderful to read the responses from many of you who have taken the time to share stories over the course of this "Learning to Love the Plateau" series. I want all of you to know you provide much encouragement to carry on with my messaging when you share your stories...thank you! We're all in this together.

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Renewal (Part 1)

Since 2017, the week leading up to the 4th of July holiday has taken on new meaning for me. I have a deep love of country, so celebrating America's Independence has been a time honored tradition for me that only becomes more fervent as I become more seasoned in life's experiences. I believe I understand the value in what freedom offers my family and I, which I do not take for granted, especially when those very freedoms can easily be lost if not fought for on a daily basis.

One of the freedoms I appreciate the most is in the pursuit of my best life as I imagine it to be. I believe I have been able to create a well-designed life because I have been willing to question everything in order to seek out the "answers" about how to reach the outcome I envision. The most effective way I have found to do this is by attempting to look at everything with a "fresh set of eyes." I have experienced many breakthroughs because of the effort I place in gaining this perspective.

A couple months ago, I found myself struggling to see anything with clarity. No matter how much I forced myself to look at moments in life without bias, I was failing miserably. I felt as if I was stuck in a murky bog in the middle of a storm—every one of my senses was clouded by something. I shared my story with a close friend of mine I consider to be a genuine sage in life. By the end of our conversation he helped lift me out of that murky bog and quelled the storm that was holding my back from having clarity on many matters at hand.

I will share with you the simple concept gifted to me that advanced my techniques for being able to see all things anew. Through his studies, my friend shared with me a suggestion to see everything in life as if I have no memory whatsoever of anything I have ever experienced. It was a fascinating exercise, which I began to practice right away.

As I went outside, I decided to practice on simple things that I would see around me. I looked at the sky as if I had never seen it before. The blue sky took on an entirely new meaning. The intricate detail of a flower's petal was magnificent. The pillowy clouds took on shapes I never would have noticed before. Even the smell of the South Florida air took on a different depth of aroma than I could recall. It was a fascinating experience!

I have continued this mindset daily, which has resulted in a renewed sense of creativity and clarity. I am solving problems more effectively than I have for quite some time. I am coming up with unique solutions to projects where I felt roadblocks were stopping me from making progress. The momentum and enthusiasm I am feeling is welcomed and invigorating.

I believe you could benefit from adopting this approach for your daily life as well. Imagine a few scenarios where you could benefit from "erasing all memory" of your past experiences...

Patients...

Imagine each patient coming into your office as if it was the first time ever. You could say directly to each patient on record, "Patient, today we are going to take a look inside your

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mouth as if it was the first time we have ever seen it before. We are going to erase all memories of conversations we have had in the past and start fresh...are you ready?!?!”

Practice Processes and Systems...

As you go through your daily routine, act as if it is the first time doing it so you can be positively critical of each step to assess its effectiveness and efficiency. Be keenly aware of opportunities for a new way of executing on a particular process.

Team...

As you perform your daily duties, take a look to determine how you could more effectively set up your team members for success as your patients are guided through your experience.

Personal Life...

Imagine what you would witness if you approached your personal relationships as if you were getting to know each person for the first time:

- How would you approach your spouse differently?
- How would you interact with your children?
- What would a conversation look like with your parents?
- How would you show a renewed interest in your best friend?
- How much more experiential would your next adventure be?

I admit, it is difficult to stay in this mindset all day and in all facets of life. The results of what I see and experience have been incredible during the times when I am able to slow down my mind and adjust my focus. My efforts have led me to a heightened sense of peace and positive contentment; I have experienced so much positivity since renewing my perspective.

In the end, the main word of encouragement, whether through this method described or another, is to slow down and dismantle the biases you have created in order to allow an opportunity for a good outcome to arrive, especially in situations where one has eluded you.

Be curious.

Be innovative.

Channel a sense of renewed enthusiasm.

Look at life like a child again.

May all in your life show up with a sense of wonder and excitement!

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Renewal (Part 2)

As we continue to explore the concept of renewal, I want to build on the messaging by focusing on what is at the epicenter of our lives. Similar to how we have all created a biased lens through which we look at all things in our life, it is most likely we have lost focus on what is the driving force behind our decisions—our epicenter—and how it is influencing our daily experiences.

I am convinced every human being on the planet is experiencing some level of trauma from the extensive lockdowns, which is impacting our level of focus, engagement and performance. I believe the effects will continue for years to come. The good news is we all have the power to change the course of the personal impact we experience. I have become keenly aware of the impact I have experienced, which is why I am sharing these concepts with you to help take ownership of where you are headed from this point forward.

The basis of our decision-making begins with our internal prioritization—our epicenter—where all things begin. It has become quite clear to me through asking specific questions to others that the majority of us have either drifted off course, having no clarity on what influences their decisions, or have specifically made the effort to readdress why they are making decisions differently than in the past. The vast majority of people fall in the earlier category, where things seem a bit foggy or they have “nothing left” to put in any effort to manage how life is currently unfolding.

As I mentioned in the last message, I found myself struggling in all areas of life. Day in and day out, I had to work extremely hard to be focused and engaged. As I began to assess the source of my derailment, I noticed my daily priorities and routines were all over the board. I became aware of this after I read one of my daily devotionals that exposed my laziness of staying steadfast in my thought patterns. I found myself questioning occurrences more than usual, and being frustrated by moments I normally would not even notice. I knew I needed to reset.

In the end, I realized I was about to make commitments to life and business events that were out of alignment with my core beliefs, which was causing my undue stress and anxiousness. Once I took a step back to reengineer my daily commitments, I realized I had drifted away from my commitment to live simply. I have lived a life of over-obligation before, which I have now long loathed, so I needed to correct my line of thinking in order to get back to being my usual self.

I was able to identify three main areas, which I since have corrected, as the source of my drifting off course:

1. Going to sleep later than usual.

I was in a restful rhythm where I felt content with the time I had to spend with Julie and in solitude after putting the kids to bed for the night. For some reason I lost track of the time and found myself still awake an hour or more into the evening. I also found I was “catching

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up” on personal and business matters where I would typically leave that be at an earlier time. The combination was leading to less rest and an anxiousness of an unsettled mind.

2. Waking up and rushing into my day.

After a less than satisfying sleep, I found myself out of my routine of waking up naturally in a state of gratitude. Instead, I was jumping out of bed feeling rushed to get the day started. I love my mornings and the routine I created. So, as I realized how much this had changed, I simply had to get this part of my day back in order to set myself up for a successful day.

3. Spending less time focused on my faith.

The final major piece to the puzzle was a by-product of the first two aspects of my life I identified. I would typically find myself immersed in my faith several times a day, whereas during this foggy period of time I would either skip these moments or rush through them. The combination of less prayer and reading led to a distraction from my core influences that I leaned upon to make all my decisions, whether significant or mundane.

My epicenter became muddled. I made an immediate adjustment based upon my discovery to realign myself so all things would flow from a place of goodness and peace. The commitment to my faith and family were needed to reestablish my number one and number two driving forces. From there, it flowed to my professional and voluntary commitments I have made, followed by time for myself, which is still a work in progress, as I am not taking enough time to care for myself. Life is a journey, as they say!

A deeper level of discovery was finding myself fragmented by trying to equally balance all priorities, rather than allowing for my core to be the beginning and the end. These areas of my life became parts, rather than having them be connected in alignment.

I encourage you to take the time to assess your epicenter and rearrange what is out of alignment so you can focus on what your source of strength and resilience is. I am convinced this is the key in one's pursuit of joy and positive contentment.

Develop quality daily habits to support your defined daily routine that are congruent with your core beliefs and values. Similar to the shakiness and instability you feel when you drive a car out of alignment, so goes the same for life.

I am back to living life simply with realistic daily habits, as this approach will give me the highest probability of success day to day, as well as for the long road ahead.

Begin to look at all things as if brand new.

Assess your epicenter to be aware of what is driving your daily actions.

Enjoy the process!

I want to leave you with a profound response I received from last week's message—part one of this series on renewal—as I believe it will add value to your personal process of assessing where you are currently at in life.

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"Kevin,

This message was EXCEPTIONAL.

Wow, I'm instantly feeling the weight of this concept of erasing all memory of experience.

If this message was just for me, thank you.

I imagine the ripple of this one will travel far.

I was moved by the simplicity of the title, 'Renewal.'

I found this intriguing: the definition of renewal is, 'the replacing or repair of something that is worn out, run-down, or broken.'

Applying that directly to my thought-life is powerful and humbling; realizing that some of my programming is worn out...run-down...broken...is actually quite freeing.

It gives me hope that much discovery and improvement lies in waiting!

Excited to take this journey into renewal with you!"

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Renewal (Part 3)

It is estimated that on average we have the capacity to speak 150 words per minute; ranging from 7,000 total words spoken per day for men and upwards to 20,000 total words spoken per day for women. It is also estimated that our minds can process almost three times more than what we speak out loud, averaging 400 words per minute of self-talk. You may be asking, “Kevin, how do these statistics fit into a message series on Renewal?” Well, keep reading to find out!

It would be a natural progression to connect our most recent efforts to our choice of words we speak to ourselves as well as to others. Let’s begin with our self-talk. In order to have the opportunity to be the best version of ourselves while being in a state of joy, it is important the words we speak in our minds be congruent with the personal outcomes we want for how we feel each day.

Mental resilience only comes from the constant reinforcement of positive thoughts. Since we are able to process 400 words per minute in our minds, it is mission critical to be aware of the tone and content of those words. When your mind is working as your friend (75% or more of the time) more often than your enemy (25% or less of the time), you are providing yourself the framework to experiencing desired outcomes (a reference from the book Positive Intelligence).

Knowing the power your own words have on your disposition and demeanor in life, how you begin your day and the reminders you give yourself throughout the day will determine the influence you have on others.

- What are your first/last thoughts as you rise from a night of sleep?
- What are your thoughts before you engage in your first/last conversation of the day?
- What are your thoughts before your first/last conversation with your team members?
- What are your thoughts before your first/last conversation with your patients?

The questions above are an excellent starting point to be able to identify what you are saying to yourself, which leads to the words you speak to all the people you come in contact with throughout the day. Whether you like it or not, your word choice will have an impact on everyone who comes in contact with you. You are not the only one who is impacted by the quality of your chosen thoughts.

- *I choose to begin the day with gratitude.*
- *I choose to smile, exude enthusiasm and offer love to my family as we unite in the morning to begin our days.*

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- *I choose to pray for the right words and energy to offer value to those I am honored to have the opportunity to serve.*
- *I choose to remind myself I have value to offer and leave others better off for having had an interaction with me.*
- *I choose to tell myself I am worthy, valuable and loved.*

I need all the above as much, if not more, than most.

I have to ask: at the end of the day, do you care to know whether you were a powerful and welcomed force for good, or a destructive and debilitating person of negative influence?

This question directly impacts the level of effort you choose to give towards the quality of thoughts that travel through your mind. In case you could use a clinical reason to adopt a more positive self-talk approach, it has been documented that positive thoughts help calm fears aroused by the amygdala, which is the part of the brain that governs your level of anxiety. This is a powerful piece of information in our pursuit of peace, joy and a feeling of being positively content.

When you combine looking at the world as if it is the first time with ensuring your epicenter is in alignment to support your daily desired outcomes expressed with the proper word choice you speak to yourself and others, you are setting the stage to be a light unto yourself and those who are blessed to be in your universe.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to renew just one word of self-talk and just one word spoken to someone else before the day is done.

What will you choose to say today?

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