



Leadership Emails

Leadership Emails

Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

August 18 - September 15, 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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Permission

Since returning from Nashville last week after completing another set of live training events, I found myself connected in conversations and messaging on the topic of permission. I do not believe in coincidences, as I believe all things show up when a message is intent on being delivered.

What sealed the deal for me on this message of permission was when I “randomly” opened Scott’s latest book, *The Four Freedoms of Dentistry*, and my eyes instantly were drawn to a paragraph where a doctor shared his story about Scott giving him permission to create the practice he had always desired, and subsequently, has now built.

Previous to the moment I described above, I had two conversations and one email exchange where permission was a direct component necessary to help three separate team members break free of self-imposed restraints they had all put in place without realizing it. All three of these team members felt as if they were not able to be their true selves as they struggled in being more influential for their patients and team members.

I want to break down one of those conversations, as I am confident someone could benefit from the content in order to support you on your journey as you navigate your own efforts to share your gifts to their maximum potential.

“Kevin, are you sure it would be OK for me to talk to patients about what is possible even before we have them fully committed to getting all of their problems taken care of?”

Yes, it is more than OK!!! In fact, discussing the future possibilities could be the missing piece of the puzzle for a percentage of patients who need your vision and guidance to be the catalyst to BEGIN with the problems in order to achieve the true reward of what is possible, which they may have never known before!

You have permission to be BOLD and DARING!

“Kevin, what if the patient gets upset because I am being too truthful with them?”

I hear the words “too truthful” far more often than I would prefer. There is no such thing as “too truthful.” You are either truthful or you are not. You either provide the full truth or you only share part of the truth—or none—which is not being transparent.

If you want to maintain your sense of integrity, it is important to be truthful with patients all the time because patients deserve to know everything! I realize it comes from a good place when you are considering what to say and what not to say. Those good intentions are noted, and still, are misguided.

Apply positive pressure on yourself to create an environment where all of your patients know exactly where they stand with you at all times. Give them the reassurance they know it all and are given the facts and encouragement to make smart decisions about their health. Eliminate any opportunity for doubt to exist. It is a refreshing and welcomed atmosphere for all!

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You have permission to speak the TRUTH!

"Kevin, I just don't want to say the wrong thing to the patient and mess up our chances of getting the patient to schedule treatment to fix their problems."

In order to make progress and advance our influential abilities, we have to try something new if we want to achieve a more successful outcome. As Maegen often says, "It is about progress, not perfection." Say it once, reflect on your delivery, make adjustments, and keep trying until it becomes second nature. There is no need to put additional pressure on yourself to get it "perfect" the first time.

Perfection is a myth and illusion. It does not exist. Release the belief you can achieve perfection and simply strive for excellence. Try your best with maximum effort, as it is all we can ask of you. You will get better with each attempt until you eventually become a master. The road to mastery begins with a single step. Be courageous and go for it!

You have permission to be COURAGEOUS: to try, fail, and try again, until you achieve your desired outcome.

"Kevin, I am having a tough time feeling like myself when I try new verbiage as it seems unnatural."

As our discussion continued to unfold, I was able to discover she was trying to sound like another team member who was having success with a particular way of getting patients to say "yes" to treatment. Instead of applying the talking points in her own unique way, she was trying to mimic her teammate in the exact same way, which is near impossible to do if you want it to come across as sincere and authentic.

As the cliché goes, "You be YOU!" We do not want any of you to be any different than who your true and authentic self is. Your genuine approach wrapped up in warmth, care, concern, and kindness is what will draw a patient into a meaningful discussion where they feel confident to make a smart decision.

Authenticity builds trust.

Trust builds relationships.

Relationships result in commitments.

Commitments will lead to an improved state of health and well-being.

Mission accomplished!

You have permission to be your AUTHENTIC SELF!

If you will, allow me to add two more permissions for all of you to accept and act upon:

You have permission to be EXTRAORDINARY!

You have permission to be filled with JOY!

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I don't know about you, but I am hearing this message loud and clear! In fact, as I conclude today's message, I am certain these "coincidences" were meant for me to experience too, as I strive to be as effective as I can be at shining a positive, productive light unto the lives of those who I am blessed to serve.

Together, we are on a mission to create positive outcomes for those who entrust themselves to our care: physically, of course, but mentally and emotionally as well. Let's give our people, and ourselves, the attention and effort we all deserve!

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Failures and Mistakes (Part 1)

Last week's message on permission struck a chord with many of you. Today, we naturally build upon the foundation we laid last week and dive deeper into an exploration of "failure."

There is an abundance of messaging on this topic, with the main differentiation being the assumed definition of failure. I would like to focus on a particular Merriam-Webster definition entry:

"A falling short: deficiency."

I believe most people define failure with an idea of it being absolute, as if there is no chance of achieving the desired outcome you have defined. This mindset is what establishes our own internal beliefs and self-limitations. It also leads to lowering an individual's expectations as to what they are capable of achieving. Arguably, the most destructive component in this mindset is the sense of discouragement that can hold one back from sharing their gift to the fullest. It is as if one gives up aspirations of greatness in order to avoid the feeling of failure again.

As an alternative to this limiting belief, let's instead focus on what deficiency existed that led to failure. In other words, what was the missing link to achieving your desired outcome? Here are some examples to help you put your failures into proper perspective.

Common Deficiencies:

- Lack of Information
- Lack of Communication
- Lack of Proper Verbiage
- Lack of Focus
- Lack of Effort

After reading the list above, do you feel differently about failure?

Does it have you thinking about a certain situation in your own life and that maybe, just maybe, you simply made a mistake or overlooked a detail?

I am reminded of a message from former Legendary UCLA Men's Basketball Coach, John Wooden, who has a powerful perspective that he taught his World Championship teams.

"I had mistakes, plenty, but I had no failures. We may not have won a championship every year. We may have lost games. But we had no failures. You never fail if you know in your heart that you did the best of which you are capable. I did my best. That is all I could do."

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Are you going to make mistakes? Of course. But it is not a failure if you make the full effort. It is not a failure if you take note of how you can change course and try again in a way that could yield a more desirable outcome.

I told my players many times, 'Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.' If you prepare properly, you may be outscored but you will never lose. I wanted our players to believe that to their very souls because I know it is the truth. You always win when you make the full effort to do the best of which you are capable.

I also know that only one person on earth knows if you made your best effort: not your coach, not your employer, not your husband or wife, boyfriend or girlfriend, brother or sister. The only person who knows is you. You can fool everyone else."

Wooden's last two sentences are incredibly powerful, as the focus shifts to your character and integrity.

"The only person who knows is you. You can fool everyone else."

You have to live with the decisions you make, including how much effort you give to all you do in your career and life. I will leave you with this thought to ponder for a moment, as honestly as you are willing.

I want to highlight one final deficiency, which happens to be the most significant in my eyes, and is supported by Wooden's brilliant insight:

- **Lack of Preparation**

Another one of my favorite quotes on the importance of preparation comes from another legend, former Alabama college football coach, Bear Bryant.

"It's not the will to win that matters...everyone has that. It's the will to prepare to win that matters."

Preparation is key. There are so many opportunities to prepare to "win." The two most obvious examples within your practice are:

1. **The Morning Huddle**
2. **The Afternoon Huddle**

We speak extensively on this topic, even to the point where people instinctively know when the message is coming. The best teams commit to preparation, knowing it is as essential as any other aspect of effort each day. It is no surprise why the top performing teams typically end with more desirable results, consistently, than those who leave it all to chance.

In your life at home, consider how much better your day would begin if you took the time to prepare the night before, or how much smoother dinner would go if you took the time to meal prep prior to the moment you wanted to begin cooking.

Small hinges swing big doors.

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I propose a challenge for you:

Take a few moments to identify areas in your career and life where you can better prepare to improve your outcomes and manage your stress level in better ways. Write them down and keep that short list in a place you'll frequently see it as a reminder. Then, simply observe how you respond and what happens next.

Next week, I will follow up with Wooden's perspective on what true failure is (which I happen to wholeheartedly agree with) and I look forward to sharing it with all of you who are unfamiliar with his wise words and teachings.

For now though, I encourage you to ponder this message and consider how it can immediately benefit you.

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Failures and Mistakes (Part 2)

As I mentioned last week, I want to share how legendary basketball coach, John Wooden, classifies failure. I believe he brings home this important message by distinguishing when failure comes to fruition.

"You can make mistakes, but you aren't a failure until you start blaming others for those mistakes. When you blame others you are trying to excuse yourself. When you make excuses you can't properly evaluate yourself. Without proper self-evaluation, failure is inevitable."

I would add to Wooden's philosophy by saying **gossiping and complaining will also lead to failure as you are intentionally trying to destroy the essence of teamwork by inserting negativity and unproductive thought patterns.**

This is why I created the "Champion's Agreement" for all of you to use as a guiding light in how you approach daily life within your practice. For those who want to consider adopting it, I've included it here.

I encourage your entire team to use this agreement as part of your formal commitment to each other. If taken to heart, it will elevate your communication, accelerate your personal development, and transform your interactions.

As a reminder:

- You have permission to fail.
- You have permission to try again, and again, until you achieve your desired outcome.

There are many reasons that provoke people to blame others. One of the most common reasons is caring too much about what other people think of you. We are so worried about what people are saying about us that we allow it to cloud our judgment and responses when things don't go our way.

Wooden shares a simple, beautiful message encouraging you to look within rather than outward for validation and worth.

"Do not become too concerned about what others may think of you. Be very concerned about what you think of yourself."

Too often, we care more about a stranger's opinion of us than our own.

Your opinion of yourself begins on the inside with your character. What do you believe in, and are you willing to stand up for it despite what others may think or say?

It's what my dad meant when he said, 'Be true to yourself.' This comes first, then the opinions of others."

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Clear as day, I remember the moment I decided to stop caring about the opinions of others. I made the choice out of respect for myself and did not have an ounce of ego or arrogance associated with my newly adopted mindset.

I welcomed constructive feedback and still do to this day. I no longer would allow anyone's disparaging comments to steal away my joy, momentum, or clarity anymore. It continues to be such a relief to go through life focusing on my personal core values and not the selfish motives of others.

Establishing examples I can use as my compass and my personal checks and balances has been life-changing for me. This is why I recently spent time writing on this very topic, so you too can be more self-sufficient and focused, without the distraction or worry about opinions that, in the end, do not matter.

Let's end with one final permission:

- **You have permission to focus on YOU!**

When you are the best version of yourself, everyone benefits! Be selfish and give yourself the time and attention to be your best. I promise, it will be time well spent!

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Champion's Agreement

Blaming... Complaining... Gossiping...

As I continue to read interviews conducted by Tim Ferris in his book “Tribe of Mentors,” one stood out in regard to a fundamental aspects of our daily lives...teamwork...and most specifically feeling like a cohesive unit.

Aniela Gregorek came to the US as a political refugee from Poland. She's won five World Weightlifting Championships, set 6 world records, and is currently the head coach of UCLA's weightlifting team, an author, and translator.

Anyone who reads this can find value in Aniela's response to the question:

In the last five years, what have you become better at saying no to?

“I've become better at saying no to negativity. The first sign of negativity, for me is irritation. When I recognize it, right away I save myself and my loved ones a lot of emotional pain by taking time alone. Breathing deeply helps. In between breaths, I have time to slow down and see the thoughts running through my mind as well as see the other person in front of me.

I say no to blame, no to complaints, and no to gossip. I also teach my daughter these three rules. If I have nothing positive to say, I don't say anything. It makes my life easier and happier. The moment I start one of these three behaviors...blaming, complaining or gossiping...I become negative. It's a sign of avoiding what I am responsible for: my life.

Negativity is like pollution. It pollutes the mind and relationships. It's passivity. When there's constructive criticism with an intention of helping someone to be better or do better, then the act becomes active. It's important how I convey the message, since the intention is not to offend or hurt someone's feelings. If I see negativity seeping in through someone I interact with, a client or friend, I guide that person toward positive solutions.”

I'd like to share some tremendous wisdom I see in Aniela's statement:

1. “I say no to blame...no to complaints...and no to gossip.”

Simply, if you engage in any of these 3 actions you're now part of the problem.

There's no benefit to blaming anyone for a mistake or issue. It's more productive to identify what happened and work on a solution, rather than expending energy on tearing someone down, arguing over who's fault it is.

Complaining...no one wants to hear about it. It's very simple: just stop.

Be someone who solves problems, not someone who creates or fuels them.

Champion's Agreement

Finally, gossiping...shame on anyone who engages in this activity. You're supposed to build up your teammates, not tear them down, especially when the words you are spreading may not be true.

I'd create an agreement all team members sign as part of their employment agreement saying they will not engage in such destructive behavior. Nothing productive results from these behaviors, thus, they shouldn't be tolerated.

2. "If I have nothing positive to say, I don't say anything."

I'm always amazed when I have conversations with team members who want to say negative things about teammates. It usually begins, "Well, normally I don't say anything about other people, but I have to tell you about this..."

Whenever someone begins a conversation like this I know what is coming, and I know this person engages in this kind of activity and conversation all the time. You can't fool me.

The way to handle situations like this is to say, "Well, here is what happened, can you help us fix it?" It's not about one person, it's about the team. We win as a team. We lose as a team.

You don't have to go out of your way to get someone else in trouble to make yourself look better. There are deeper issues with a person who constantly is looking to find the faults in others.

3. "When there's constructive criticism with intention of helping someone be better or do better, this act becomes active."

Aniela goes on to say it is also about how she conveys the information she wants to share to help someone become better or do better.

We all could do a better job of receiving well-intended constructive criticism. There's no need to take words harshly when they're coming from a good place. If someone is being hurtful, however, that shouldn't be tolerated.

If you proactively seek out constructive criticism, it makes it easier to receive because you're asking for it. Any good leader is going to give it to you so you can grow as a person, and professional. When this originates from your own desires, it's much easier to stomach what someone is about to tell you.

We all spend a lot of time with our "practice family," and in some cases, more than with their own families. Everyone deserves to have a respectful and comfortable place to perform their life's work: getting patients healthy.

So many times, the reason why we aren't achieving defined objectives is because we are sabotaging ourselves by not supporting each other, having empathy for individual situations in life and functioning as a solidified unit.

The simple question is, what can you do individually to advance and strengthen the supportive culture within your practice?

Champion's Agreement

Seriously consider my suggestion of creating “Agreements” as to how to act within a professional workplace so you set the proper expectations for how we expect everyone to conduct themselves on a day to day basis.

If everyone made a strong commitment to together, we'd have less problems, be happier at work, and create more victories for our patients and team.

Will you make that commitment, and choose to be extraordinary with me?

Let's Take a Stand Together!

Agreement 1

- I say NO to blame.
- I say NO to complaints.
- I say NO to gossip.

Agreement 2

- If I have nothing positive to say, I won't say anything.

Agreement 3

- Where there's constructive criticism with the intention of helping someone be better or do better, I agree to receive constructive criticism with kindness and respect.
-

My Name:

My Doctor's Name:

My Practice's Name:

Today's Date:

My Signature to Commitment:

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Sapere Vedere: Believing Is Seeing

“Seeing is believing.”

It is a commonly used phrase to encourage people to show proof in order to gain one’s trust, especially in matters that seem to be unlikely and unbelievable. I am certain you have heard a patient say, *“Well, no one has told me about this problem before...”* and this becomes the defining moment as to whether you “win” your patient over or “lose” them to carry on to the next team of oral health specialists who will tell them what they want to hear versus the truth.

This defining moment typically hangs in the balance waiting for proof to create belief. Yet, I believe, the way “proof” is presented and the order of it happening will determine the outcome of trust in a relationship, especially when it comes to a person’s health.

In my recent studies, I came across an explanation of a concept I believe can help bring a new perspective when we consider how to gain the trust and confidence of people in our lives, both inside and outside of the practice. I have used this approach for a long time now, without knowing the concept had a specific definition to it.

The Latin term, *“Sapere Vedere,”* makes a slight adjustment to the phrase we are all familiar with by flipping it to mean, *“Believing is seeing.”*

Sapere

Knowing how, knowledgeable about something, awareness.

Vedere

The ability to see.

Leonardo da Vinci is credited with bringing awareness to this concept as his method of visualization: *“Knowing how to see...”* as he engaged with the world around him. Leonardo believed it was important to see things of this world “correctly.”

When applied to artistry—and I believe clinical work is its own form of artistry—it means artists have this otherworldly ability of not simply painting what they see as much as them having the ability to see what they paint.

In other words, we tend to get so committed to our objective and the steps to completion that we neglect to see new and unimaginable discoveries along the way to completing our objective or helping others see the world as we see it.

I took a deeper dive into this concept and expanded the meaning to be, *“Dare to know.”* Or, *“Have courage to use your own reason.”* We position ourselves to have a more profound impact on people in our sphere of influence when we dare to know more about the person and/or situation. The more we know, the more likely we can help someone see a situation differently, such as their health.

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Leonardo believed we first see with our brains, then our hearts, and then our eyes.

This is why we spend so much effort encouraging you to use photos to support your verbal diagnosis of a patient's problems. The photos engage a person's brain, then your carefully chosen words (hopefully a combination of factual and emotional) engage with a person's heart, which leads them to see it through their eyes like never before.

You as the artist see it differently than the average person, so it is important to take the steps to help people believe what they see by using a different process than everyone else.

This is why we encourage you to guide patients to self-discovery: *"Mrs. Smith, is there any area of your mouth that you see has darker shading?"* When the patient discovers something different first, they will want you to help them understand what is going on by natural default. You are helping the patient BELIEVE what they SEE.

Most people buy into the notion of, *"I will cross that bridge when I get there."* Whereas, I would prefer to, *"See the bridge before I go across it."* The latter gives me more time to be thoughtful and discerning about an upcoming decision I will need to make, rather than feeling as if I need to make a rushed decision about something. The differentiation between these two philosophies is especially important when applied to something as impactful as personal health.

I am confident this topic would make for an insightful discussion as a team. I believe it will force you to see your patient experience in a different way. It will make you think about each part of the experience in ways you may not have thought of before. I promise you: it works. But only if you apply genuine effort and intention.

As always, it is your choice to do something or do nothing. I will end here and allow you a moment to ponder what you do with this.

Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

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Die Empty

I have a straight-forward message for you today.

Throughout all of the work we have done over the last few months, I have been waiting for the day to share a brief message with you from author Todd Henry; a man who has created a powerful vision of life, journey, and purpose.

Today is that day.

I hope his message strikes a chord and helps you continue to evolve your own vision for sharing your gifts and being a positive light unto this world. Whenever you find yourself in self-reflection, contemplating how to give your best each and every day, may these simple words brighten your spirit and illuminate your path.

Henry used two words—die empty—as motivation to write five best-selling books and help pioneer the podcast revolution. Henry explains why he chose these words as his inspiration:

“Because I want to know when I reach the bookend of my life that I’m not taking my best work to the grave. That I’m doing everything I can each and every day to put that work into the world and be of value to others, and I’m building a body of work I can point to at the end of my life and say, ‘Yes! That represents me.’ I want to make sure I’m not allowing myself to succumb to fear, apathy, or the paralysis that comes from uncertainty so that someday I can die empty of regret and full of satisfaction for a life well lived.”

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