



Leadership Emails

Leadership Emails

Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

July 20 - August 10, 2023

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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Stubborn Passion

Over the last month, I have been immersing myself in the writings of Steven Pressfield. When I find myself at a crossroads, at a moment of frustration, at a creative block, or any other significant challenge in life (Resistance), I turn to the brilliance of Pressfield's observations when it comes to kicking Resistance in the ass, so I can continue on my journey of Excellence...of good...of shining my light.

As I went back to consume the words in Pressfield's trilogy, "War of Art," "Turning Pro," and "Do the Work," I found the reassurance and direction I needed to break through this "funk" I was battling for days on end. Although I could point to any page in any of his creations, I pieced together two brief messages to create an even greater, more impactful message, which is saying a lot for Pressfield.

To start, I came to the message, "Be Stubborn." At first glance, Resistance encouraged me to bypass it, saying, "*Being stubborn is the last thing you need...move on please.*" Instead, I decided to linger in the message longer with more intent and focus. It was a sign.

Be Stubborn

Once we commit to action, the worst thing we can do is to stop.

What will keep us from stopping? Plain old stubbornness.

I like the idea of stubbornness because it's less lofty than "tenacity" or "perseverance." We don't have to be heroes to be stubborn. We can just be pains in the butt.

When we're stubborn, there's no quit in us. We're mean. We're mulish. We're ornery.

We're in till the finish.

We will sink our junkyard-dog teeth into Resistance's ass and not let go, no matter how hard he kicks.

Stubborn...I needed to dig deep and embrace my stubborn nature, which does not show up often. I tend to linger in "tenacity" and "perseverance," as Pressfield described. In this case, I needed to get "dirty" and grind it out. I could feel "The Shift" brewing inside of me, yet there was still a powerful force within that continued to block the breakout I was searching for.

Enter "Passion." Ironically, or intentionally, I did not connect these dots until I was 312 pages into my journey (165 pages of "War of Art," 132 pages of "Turning Pro," and on page 15 of "Do the Work," it finally hit me...stubbornness pushed me through!) when the "Passion" message showed up, side-by-side, with "Be Stubborn." It was at this moment where I had my recent moment of breaking through the relentlessness of Resistance.

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Passion

Picasso painted with passion.

Mozart composed with it.

A child plays with it all day long.

You may think that you've lost your passion, or that you can't identify it, or that you have so much of it, it threatens to overwhelm you.

None of these are true.

Fear saps passion.

When we conquer our fears, we discover a boundless, bottomless, inexhaustible well of passion.

Passion...I typically have an abundance of passion in the most important aspects of my life. Of late, not so much. I was feeling depleted at a dangerously low level. This is why I was so desperately seeking a spark to reignite the fire that seemed to have burned out without me noticing it.

At page 312, I immediately stopped, set down "Do the Work," and reflected on Pressfield's observation of passion from a child's perspective, "Passion...a child plays with it all day long." I closed my eyes, created a vision of Addison and Owen in their glory of playful exuberance, and began to feel my heart expanding with love and joy. My thoughts shifted from frustration and foginess to an unveiling of the pathway back to my standard of Excellence. It was a spiritual moment...transformational, actually.

In their own, unique ways, Addison and Owen embody Stubborn Passion...I credit my wife more than myself, as she is a force of nature when it comes to "Stubborn Passion," and I mean that will all the love and admiration I can possibly muster! I could share example after example, which would be most appropriate for another time.

My reasoning for making this connection between a child-like commitment to a similar adult commitment is simply to point out that we, as adults, have created our own limitations in life.

We all have created a powerful, sometimes impenetrable, "comfort zone," which equates to false limitations. Excellence is just beyond this self-imposed barrier of "comfort."

We have all created a powerful, internal force to avoid going into "the mystery," whether alone or with others. We believe our Excellence ends definitively, rather than believe our Excellence has limitless possibilities.

We put limitations on releasing our passion.

We justify giving in or giving up when stubbornness could be the characteristic to take us to the objective we set out to achieve.

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As I continued to stay focused on this moment, I released the factors (Resistance) that were negatively impacting my ability to perform at a high-level of Excellence...there were three significant factors (one life situation, one person, and one ongoing personal struggle) I decided to come to terms within this moment...such a moment of peace and freedom!

I now have “Stubborn Passion” adorned on my computer monitor with pictures of Addison and Owen staring me in the face...God’s greatest blessings who constantly teach me more about life than most anything else I have experienced to this point of 50 years on Earth.

I encourage you to assess your level of “Stubborn” and “Passion.”

We are all at different points on the scale in life. Some of us are riding “high,” while others are riding “low.”

For those riding “high,” use “Stubborn Passion” to expand the capabilities you once knew in order to expand your level of Excellence. Seek out those who could use your “high” to push them through a challenging or confusing time. Be the light...do good work!

For those riding “low,” use “Stubborn Passion” to rest easy knowing you can push through the plateau or valley you find yourself in. Allow “Stubborn Passion” to help you continue to exude a level of Excellence most would never experience without the focus on work we are doing on this year long journey together. I encourage you to seek out someone or something that can aid you as you seek your own personal breakthrough. Then, return the favor in the future as you get back to riding “high.”

Together we are better and stronger...built to withstand the onslaught of Resistance, as it never goes away permanently.

Our collective efforts are a force to be reckoned with.

Together we are Excellence personified.

Be Stubborn...Be Passionate...Exude Excellence!

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Into the Mystery

A key component to living a life of Excellence is companionship. Since we are born of love, our souls crave the bond created through deep relationships with others. It is built into our DNA to pursue meaningful connections where each individual shares an equal exchange of value in pursuit of a life well-lived.

As we all have experienced at one point or another in life, people come and go based upon the season of life you find yourself in. Rarely is one person a match for all the experiences you will have as you navigate your time on Earth. Whether it be by choice or not, you will encounter loss.

People will move away and the relationship you had tends to fade away.

People will choose a different path where you are no longer a match, so they move on to spend time with others who share their current state of being.

People die...the harshest of all realities.

And, of course, you will choose to move on from people as you become more aware of the significance of your pursuits and whether another person in your life has the ability to be a light unto your path...a rock during troubled times.

As we come to terms with the entering and exiting of people in our journeys, it becomes harder to allow new people to come along side us, especially the more we age. There is a genuine effort required to establish new relationships, especially if you have high standards about the equal exchange of value.

I have always had a difficult time helping people come to this realization for many reasons, I am certain. It is hard to explain something you have experienced when others have not or have chosen not to gain an understanding of what happened.

During a live concert (October 2021) at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, TN, one of my favorite bands, NEEDTOBREATHE, delivered one of the most impactful live performances I have ever heard. The lead singer was sharing a personal story about the uncertainty of life coming out of such challenging times of 2020-2021. He began to reflect about the love he had for his young kids, fellow band members, and others who he had been through "thick and thin" with over the course of life. It was a powerful testimony that is both thought-provoking and emotionally connected.

Before performing the song, "Into the Mystery," the lead singer (Bear Rinehart) wrapped up his story with the following words...

"It's very hard to find people in your life who love (agape) you like that (unconditionally)...you need some people when you ask them, will you go into the mystery with you...they say, YES!"

Ever since hearing this song and reflecting on its message, I have pondered who would say, "YES!"

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It has been an interesting exercise and has advanced my awareness of who is currently in my life that can help expand my level of Excellence. I am blessed to have several people who I am honored to say are in this category. Without them, I would find it difficult to remain steadfast in my pursuit to be a force for good.

I highlight this message because I believe it is important to consistently assess who you spend time with...who has influence over you. Your immediate circle will define your potential. Jim Rohn so eloquently stated, *"You become the average of the five people you spend the most time with."* How true this is! I have countless stories to support this brilliant observation.

Use this as your reminder, your reason, to take a moment for yourself—however brief or extended—to really check in on who you are choosing to do life with. There's very little in life that's as important as this.

Going back to the song, "Into the Mystery," I'd like to share what are, to me, the most powerful lyrics:

*Love is not a cage; love is not a path.
Love's a steady hand waiting for the storm to pass.
You loved me then when you needed me.
Will you still when it's not so easy?*

*Whatever you do, I will be there.
Son, I will follow you anywhere.
Into the mystery.*

"Will you still when it is not so easy?"

WOW! Very few ever will...and those who do are worthy of admiration and love.

Companionship...a vital component of life. My hope for you is that you become more aware of who shines a light unto your path and who does not; that you can surround yourself with those who will go into the mystery with you when asked!

For those of you who may be interested in experiencing this portion of the performance, I have included a link to the recording of the entire live show.

At 35:05, you will find Bear beginning to share his story.

At 38:00, you will find the song, "Into the Mystery."

I hope you enjoy it and find it as inspirational and impactful as I have.

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Just Remember Two Principles...

Tim Ferris, author of several New York Times best-selling books (“Tribe of Mentors” being my favorite), was asked by a writing student from the Paris American Academy what he hoped to convey in his book, “Tools of Titans.” Before Tim could answer the student, they were interrupted, so he jotted down notes about what he wanted to convey.

Principle No. 1

“Success,” however you define it, is achievable if you collect the right field-tested beliefs and habits.

Someone else has done your version of “success” before, and often, many have done something similar. “But,” you might ask, “what about a first, like colonizing Mars?” There are still recipes. Look at empire building of other types, look at the biggest decisions in the life of Robert Moses (read “The Power Broker”), or simply find someone who stepped up to do great things that were deemed impossible at the time (e.g., Walt Disney). There is shared DNA you can borrow.

Principle No. 2

The superheroes you have in your mind are nearly all walking flaws who’ve maximized 1 or 2 strengths.

Humans are imperfect creatures. You don’t “succeed” because you have no weaknesses; you “succeed” because you find your unique strengths and focus on developing habits around them.

Everyone is fighting a battle you know nothing about. The heroes in this book (“Tools of Titans”) are no different. Everyone struggles. Take solace in that.

I shared Principle No. 1 simply for the sake of context. I’d like to simmer longer in Ferris’ commentary in Principle No. 2.

I appreciate Ferris’ intention to lessen the importance of the word, “success,” as we have covered this topic at length in many of my previous messages. “Success” tends to be a worldly standard set that has no real significance for any one person, which is why the pursuit of being “successful” almost always ends in extreme disappointment. This is why I choose to focus on “competing” with myself when it comes to my commitment to giving my best each and every day...Excellence.

Ferris highlights the importance of habits, and I would add another layer to his comment by calling them “smart and congruent” habits, because creating a habit for the sake of putting things on autopilot will not get you closer to your defined objectives. Point being, if you are aware of your unique talents, it is more likely you will be able to create habits and routines around this talent in order to share it with the world.

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The most significant point Ferris makes is that ALL people, regardless of their status in life, fight personal battles and struggle. His comment to, “take solace in that,” is not meant to encourage you to take a breath and use it as an excuse. Rather, he is shining a light on the fact we all wake up every day, enter the arena called life, and find ourselves in the heat of battle. The difference maker is where your focus and attention lie.

Our pursuit of Excellence is providing a platform to rise above and win more battles than you lose. It makes it easier to get through your day when confronted with negativity, such as complaining or ungrateful patients, a team member who is choosing to be combative, someone in your personal life who is making your world more difficult than it has to be, or any other outside circumstance beyond your control.

Rest in your principles.

Stay committed to your beliefs.

Follow through on your smart habits.

Maximize your strengths.

Strive for the highest-level of Excellence.

Tim Ferris has connected with countless people who have made it their life mission to strive for Excellence. The fact he can share their deep wisdom on maximizing their abilities and staying committed to their missions of achieving extraordinary results—and do so with just two simple principles—is encouraging. Surely, these people who have achieved their “success,” have chosen to go “into the mystery” and have created powerful companionships along the way...even with their personal flaws and daily battles in life and business.

It is equally important to figure out what to eliminate in your life as it is to decide what to add. There are far too many people who do not believe their light can shine brighter, or, even at all. These people have bought into Resistance’s lie about them. I believe some of the most influential people on the planet are also the most flawed and battle-tested. There is something about experiencing pain, disappointment and heartbreak that prepares and propels one’s spirit toward being a light unto the world.

I know you are fighting a battle...so am I. I am in the arena daily; sometimes fighting those battles on a minute-by-minute basis. Yet somehow, I survive to fight the good fight each day...you can too...and you can do it with Grace and Excellence!

I encourage you to explore the following questions in your pursuit of maximizing each day God blesses you with on this Earth. Each day is significant, because when it is over, you are one day closer to not having another.

What is your No. 1 strength?

What impact do you believe you would have if you put an extreme amount of focus on how to use this gift to their maximum capacity?

Do you believe the extra effort and attention is worth the end result you envision?

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Choose to live a life worth remembering!

I will forever have this mantra thanks to my dear brother; the legacy he left us as he made his transition to heaven last year. I choose to enter the arena each day in honor of him. I am here to go “into the mystery” with you too, should you choose to invite me along. I want nothing more than to help you advance your own pursuits.

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A Journey Not Many Will Take

This past weekend, we hosted teams from all over the country who flew into Nashville to be with all of us (Team DST) as we focused on bettering our best. We conducted our Advanced Training over the weekend, followed by our foundational Practice Champions training on Monday and Tuesday. The quality of people over the last week was exceptional. Everyone was highly focused and excited to “better their best.” Or as I like to say, expand their level of Excellence.

On Saturday, at the end of the Advanced Event, I gave a brief presentation focused on the importance of having a Champion’s Mindset. I draw inspiration for the discussion from Jim Afremow, author of the book, “The Champions’ Mind.” I have always been fascinated with high-performing athletes and their commitment to the mental toughness to achieve greatness in their athletic pursuits.

In the first chapter, Afremow states he has documented three attributes all of these athletes have...Confidence, Concentration, and Composure...as the foundation for adopting the mindset of a champion. I would add two more “C” words to the mix...Courage and Conviction. All five of these attributes combined give you the platform to take on anything in life and profession.

One of my favorite lines in the book states, “A champion makes greatness happen, despite what may seem like impossible odds.” The key word here is “makes.” A champion does not wait around for something to happen. A champion is the catalyst for greatness to occur. Someone has to light the match to get the fire burning!

The author continues to unfold the champions’ mindset, as he has witnessed it, describing the importance to, “Maintain our eagerness to learn and grow, and to take well-trained, disciplined action to make solid changes in life.” Every champion athlete has to make tough choices along the road to achieving greatness...dare I say, Excellence!

At only 7-pages into the first chapter, the author makes a brilliant observation that could deliver enough value where you would not have to read another page in the book. He states...

“Understand that the difference between a pedestrian performance and a peak performance begins and ends with your state of mind.”

That’s it! It is, literally, that simple. The author includes a quote from legendary quarterback, Peyton Manning, at the beginning of his first chapter in the book, which says...

“The attitude with which we approach the situation can determine our success or failure.”

How would you assess your attitude and current state of mind, today?

Is your mind acting as your “friend” or your “enemy” in your daily pursuits?

This is the foundational principle referenced in the book, “Positive Intelligence.”

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Friends, if you are with me in the pursuit of expanding our level of Excellence, it begins and ends with our state of mind. Forget about the benefit you are or can be to others. How about we focus on how much YOU DESERVE to have a healthy, robust state of mind so that YOU can experience Excellence in your own way, which will automatically result in you being a light for others to experience.

It takes effort to strive for daily Excellence.

It takes Commitment and Conviction to “show up” every day with the mindset to exude Excellence.

It takes Confidence to want to step outside of your comfort zone to expand the impact you have on others.

It takes a steady hand, Composure, to handle all the trials and tribulations that are thrown at us, day in and day out.

It takes an immense amount of Concentration to stay the course when distractions are abound.

It takes Courage to go “Into the Mystery” not knowing what is waiting for us on the other side of the unknown.

It takes a Champion’s mind and heart to combine the above and unleash it in all that you do and with all those you have the honor of interacting with throughout any given day.

It is a worthwhile journey not many will take.

Will you?

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