



Leadership Emails

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Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

November 16 - December 14, 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.

Leadership Emails

What's Your Story?

I want to build on the “No Judgment” message from last week by shifting into the genuine interest you have to gain an understanding of who it is you interact with every day. When you release judgment and biases from your mind, you are able to see others for who they are. Now, how do we gain a that perspective when talking with others? Let's explore it with a question from the book, *“The Gift of Influence.”*

The author, Tommy Spaulding, shares a story about one of the people who had a positive influence in his life, a man who he credits for “saving” him from total destruction in life. He gives credit to the relationship he built with this influential gentleman (Bill) due to the curiosity he imposed in getting to know Spaulding early on in their relationship.

“I keep coming back to the simple act of curiosity that sparked our relationship.”

He goes on to state...

“At the end of the day, Bill helped me understand that true influencers are obsessively interested in learning about the people around them, whether they're friends, co-workers, neighbors, or complete strangers. And sometimes, as we'll see, all it takes is a simple question to build a lifelong bond...”

What's your story?”

I believe I have done well showing interest in others my entire life. Unfortunately, it began from a place of shame. Thinking I was not very interesting or important, I did all I could to keep the emphasis on others by asking lots of questions about them and encouraging them to share their stories, rather than me share mine.

However, after I had my pivotal breakthrough in life, I realized I could keep this same approach of showing genuine interest and curiosity, but now I do it because I want to know a person's story, where they come from, what has influenced them, and what matters to them. I have developed relationships with people who I never would have imagined, and believe a significant reason why is because I asked thoughtful questions and actually listened with great interest.

One of the greatest compliments I have received was from the real estate agent who helped us with our home search when we moved to Tennessee this summer. We got together to have coffee after our official move as we both appreciated each other's approach to life, so we have stayed connected as friends. He took a moment to tell me he was amazed how every time we spoke on the phone and were together in person, I would ask him such interesting questions. He told me he believed I actually wanted to know the answers and cared about him as a person. I never had someone acknowledge this about me in such a direct way. I was grateful for his kindness.

I share this with you because I believe the majority of people could use the positive energy that comes from genuine interest in who they are versus the surface level conversations and interactions that exist in a world so focused on the outward self.

Leadership Emails

Slow down to take a moment to get to know something unique and interesting about someone. Ask thoughtful questions and care enough to genuinely listen.

People often ask me why I ask “personal” questions on the questionnaires I send to all team members at the outset of a new relationship with a team and doctor. My response is always the same:

“It is important for us to focus on the professional observations that can lead to smart changes as you work hard to positively influence patients to get further along their pathway to optimal health. Yet, in the end, our success will be weighted by how much we are willing to get to know each other personally so we can be connected on this journey in a meaningful way.”

My favorite is the question, *“What purchase of \$100 or less has most positively impacted your life in the last 12 months?”* **I comment by saying,** *“I want to know what you value that is not tied to a significant monetary value. I want to know what is important to you.”*

It always turns into a fascinating conversation that has an immense amount of positive energy. I am certain that no one has ever asked them such a question before. If the conversation is going “so-so,” getting to this part of the questionnaire almost always injects a burst of energy and positivity. What a wonderful opportunity for me to get to know a portion of someone’s story!

I encourage you to take time to reflect on this message and the examples I shared so you can create your own approach for infusing positivity and warm energy into your interactions. With some thought and effort, you may just make someone’s day by being so kind and thoughtful.

This is another way to expand your level of Excellence.

This is another way to be positively influential.

This is a way to change the course of someone’s day...maybe even their life.

How can you apply today’s message to your daily approach with others?

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Leadership Emails

A Day Focused on Being Thankful

As is tradition every year here in the United States of America, we take a day to focus on giving thanks by spending time with family and friends. I enjoy hearing the stories of what everyone chose to do, who they chose to spend the time with, as well as what was on the Thanksgiving menu.

The spirit of Thanksgiving could well be a daily focus in order to remind ourselves of all we are blessed with in life. I would add to the daily Thanksgiving list the opportunity to share our commitment to Excellence by way of our ability to have a positive influence on everyone we have a moment with throughout our days. The amount we have to be thankful for is long when you think of all the simple things we may take for granted in our daily lives.

I am thankful, today, and every day, to be on this journey with you and have been for well over a decade now. The relationships I have been fortunate to create through my time serving all of you in dentistry and specialty care has been such a blessing.

I would like to leave you with one of my favorite Thanksgiving quotes from the comedic master himself, Johnny Carson.

"Thanksgiving is an emotional holiday. People travel thousands of miles to be with people they see once a year. And then discover once a year is way too much."

All in good fun!

Cheers everyone!

Happy Thanksgiving!

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Leadership Emails

Positive Intent

In the book, *"The Gift of Influence,"* Tommy Spaulding creates a collection of three words to support his views on influence. Those three words are:

- Interest
- Investment
- Intent

Although I have indirectly incorporated those first two words into my messaging (as Spaulding and I are quite aligned in our views on Influence), this third word, "intent," is significant enough that I want to share a choice portion of his perspective on it.

As I shared in a previous message, we must have genuine interest in others as a foundation to build upon when wanting to have a positive influence. Complementing what we have already discussed about making careful, care-filled choices with our thought patterns and actions, the key to creating the outcomes we are hoping for is to wrap everything together with positive intent.

"And that's why the third 'I' of influence is intent. Without positive intent, truly investing in the lives of others is impossible.

Intent is about asking why.

Why are you choosing to lead others?

Is it for recognition? For praise?

For approval?

For money?

Or is it because you truly want to serve others and see them succeed?

Put another way, while the first two 'I's' of influence are about earning your influence, intent is about maintaining influence for the long-term."

I would encourage you to read his message again...slowly.

By the way, please remember that we all are leaders, so do not allow his use of the word "leader" to give you an opportunity to check out and say, "Well, I am not an official leader of anything."

Oh yes you are! You go through life all day, every day, trying to influence others to see the world as you do.

Leadership Emails

You lead patients to make smart decisions about their health.

You lead team members in an effort to create a memorable patient experience.

If you have children, you are leading them every second you are with them.

If you have a spouse or significant other, you are leading them in some manner throughout your day.

You are a leader in all ways!

To get back to the core of this message, I want to apply some “positive pressure” for you to be honest with yourself and answer the questions Spaulding asks in the excerpt I shared:

- What are your intentions?
- What is motivating your actions?
- Are your actions in alignment with what you profess to be your intentions?

This is not meant to be judgmental, but enlightening. The more awareness you have, the better off you will be to act in accordance with your commitment to Excellence.

Here is to Positive Intent!

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Leadership Emails

Your Word Choice

At this stage in our discussion about positive influence, it goes without saying how important it is to choose your words wisely. Today's message is more of a PSA (Public Service Announcement) than it is anything new or revolutionary.

I am certain all of us could use this reminder, with some needing it because they are not being mindful of the destruction they are creating by being so loose with their choice of words when in conversation with others...as well as in written format via email and texting, which tends to get everyone in the most trouble because the messages are left to the interpretation of others in tone and intention.

Your word choice has the power to hurt or to heal.

Every word you say has the power to crush the will of another human soul or inspire them to strive for Excellence.

Your tone and energy add to the meaning of your words, so remain calm and measured when in conversation with others. Begin by defining how you want to be heard, then pay attention and listen to yourself to be aware of how you are coming across to others. Stay in alignment with your intentions and actions.

Stay in the "good" realm...

Be encouraging.

Offer patience and restraint.

Show strength.

Be understanding.

Lead with a gentle and loving (agape) heart.

Be sincere.

Offer whatever wisdom you possess.

Stay away from the "bad" realm...

Avoid the energy of criticism.

Do not be sarcastic.

Control your energy when you begin to feel it leveling up to the point of rage.

Defuse your temper.

Leadership Emails

Do not be spiteful.

Do not be shameful.

Once a word is uttered it cannot be taken back. Be mindful and careful with what comes out of your mouth. Take a breath before speaking to gain control and manage your emotions when you feel like you are in a contentious moment.

Being a master of your words will lead to the ultimate impact you can have with your positive influence.

Choose to speak with a level of Excellence others are too undisciplined to achieve.

Trust your instincts when it comes to managing the energy in your conversations.

Your words will determine your future.

I pray your future is bright...will it be? Your word choice may have a say in the matter!

Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

Leadership Emails

The Determining Factor

Today seems to be an appropriate day to bring awareness to the two-party system that exists in the world of positive influence. Yes, it takes more than one person for positive influence to come to life. It begins with you making the choice to strive for Excellence in your daily efforts. Then, the ultimate outcome lies with the people you interact with to determine whether or not your intentions match your output.

Tommy Spaulding does a brilliant job summarizing this concept, so let's dive back into his book, *"The Gift of Influence."*

He begins by sharing his story of asking his audiences, *"Who wants to have a negative influence on the lives of others?"* Of course, no one ever raises their hand...at least we can hope no one does! He goes on to share a positive affirmation for choosing to be a positive influence, then reminds everyone that that is where their choices will end. Let's explore what he means...

"You get to decide the kind of influence you want to have on others, but you don't get to decide the influence you do have on others."

He asks his audience a second time in an attempt to drive home this all-important point that could be taken for granted. The choice is the first step, but what happens next will determine if your outcomes match your intentions.

Spaulding then asks his audience...

"Who does?"

We all can create our own list of "Who's":

Spouse.

Children.

Fellow team members.

Patients.

Friends.

Family.

Neighbors.

The list can extend as far as you would like.

Now, the only way to actually know your influence is if you ask, or have someone ask for you, how your "Who's" have been influenced by you.

Leadership Emails

Would you be interested to know what others would say about your level of influence?

Would you be so bold as to ask people in your circle of influence to find out for certain?

If you want to be as effective as possible, with intention, I encourage you to explore feedback from those who get to be the determining factor in the reality of your actions.

It is important to be mindful of your personal mission in life at all times so you give yourself the best chance of acting in alignment with it. It is too easy to become lazy and make excuses about why you are not going to put in the effort...today...tomorrow...for the next however many days, months, or years...hopefully not forever. To have a lasting impact on others, it takes an extreme amount of focus and energy to do so, especially during the plateaus and valleys we experience in life.

The good news is...you can do it!

Make the choice to be a positive influence.

Act in accordance with your decision while being mindful throughout the day about how you are doing.

Reset if needed.

Refocus if needed.

Take a timeout to get yourself back in alignment should you be drifting off course.

Remain steadfast in your commitment and act with Excellence in mind!

People are waiting to flourish from your influence should you so choose!

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