

# Leadership Training

## *January 2026*

*Happy New Day...I Mean...Happy New Year!*

*Why Conversations Fall Flat...and How to Change That!*

*One of the Most Underrated Communication Skills in Dentistry*

*You're Allowed to Be Human in Conversations*

*Questions Are the Engine of Great Conversations*



*Today...*  
**Choose to Be  
Extraordinary!**

# *Happy New Day... I Mean... Happy New Year!*

The moment has arrived: at the stroke of midnight, a New Year began. Welcome to 2026!

The majority of the world will follow traditions by creating a list of all the things they will commit to doing differently than the year before, marking the latest version of New Year's Resolutions that will likely fall to the wayside come February, if not sooner.

This year, I encourage you to redefine what “new” means in all aspects of what the fresh calendar brings.

*Instead of making a lengthy list of commitments you aren't truly committed to, why not break it down to something simple and relatable?*

*New = DAILY...not just once, or once in a while.*

*Happy New Day...every day!*

*What can be on your list TODAY—not this YEAR—but simply TODAY, that you can commit to in order to live your best life?*

If you are willing to consider this approach, what would you choose to do **DIFFERENTLY TODAY** that will lead to good, healthy outcomes in all aspects of your life?

If you are willing to consider this approach, what would you choose to **ELIMINATE TODAY** that will create the space for you to apply your focus and efforts towards activities that will lead to good, healthy outcomes in all aspects of your life?

The foundational basis of choosing what to invest time, energy and attention into is to start by recommitting to what works well in your life already. For easy success, find the good, and double down. Acknowledging the core

fundamentals in life will make it easier to add and subtract throughout 2026, and ultimately, to look back and say it was a well-lived year.

Imagine the psychological victories you can create for yourself by creating daily wins in 2026.

TODAY, I am going to commit to the following 4 things. At the end of the day, I did all 4...VICTORY! Tomorrow, I choose what is on the daily list, which is now custom to your daily life, versus a static list that may or may not be applicable to each day. This works effectively in all aspects of your life.

What will you commit to doing TODAY to have a positive impact on the patients you serve?

What will you commit to doing TODAY to have a positive impact on your team members' collective efforts to create an extraordinary patient experience?

What will you commit to doing TODAY to have a positive impact on your friends and family, who you choose to do life with?

What will you commit to doing TODAY to have a positive impact on YOURSELF, in order to experience joy and fulfillment, making each day more valuable than ever before?

I will leave you with a thoughtful quote I came across recently about the importance of TODAY...

*“What you do TODAY is important because you are exchanging a day of your life for it.”*

Give it all you have each day of 2026 in effort to create 365 customized opportunities for a year's worth of DAILY victory celebrations.

# *Why Conversations Fall Flat...and How to Change That!*

Have you ever walked away from a conversation (maybe with a patient, a team member, or even someone you care deeply about) and thought, *“I had more to say...why didn’t it come out right?”*

You knew what you meant. You felt it clearly inside. But somewhere between your thoughts and your words, the message got tangled.

The moment passed, and later—sometimes much later—you replayed the conversation in your mind and wished you could step back in and try again.

*This happens more often than we admit, especially in dentistry.*

Our days are full. Our environments are fast. Conversations happen in hallways, operatories, team huddles, and treatment rooms that are often under pressure and time constraints.

We talk about important things quickly and move on, hoping our message landed the way we intended. But communication doesn’t always work that way.

I love this quote from George Bernard Shaw:

*“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”*

What an insightful way to put it; can’t we all feel the truth and humor in that?

If I were to say the same thing another way, it is that what we say and what people experience aren’t always the same.

Many of us assume that improving communication means talking more clearly, explaining more thoroughly, or finding better words.

*While those things matter, they aren't the foundation.*

At its core, effective communication isn't about saying more, it's about connecting better:

- *Connection determines whether a patient feels cared for or rushed.*
- *Connection shapes whether a team member feels heard or dismissed.*
- *Connection turns information into trust.*

The strongest communicators I've found in dentistry aren't performers; they don't dominate conversations or rush to fill every silence.

Instead, they bring a calm presence. They listen before responding. They notice the person in front of them, not just the task at hand. They understand something subtle but powerful:

*People inaccurately remember the words we use, and accurately remember how they feel in our presence.*

This matters deeply in our profession. Dentistry is personal. It's vulnerable. Patients bring fear, past experiences, financial concerns, and uncertainty into our spaces. Teams bring stress, expectations, and a desire to do meaningful work at an extremely high level.

When communication lacks connection, even good intentions can feel transactional. When connection is present, even difficult conversations can feel respectful and welcomed.

The encouraging truth is that connection doesn't require perfection. It doesn't require charisma. It doesn't require having all the right answers ready.

*It requires presence.*

Presence looks like slowing down just enough to truly see the person across from you. It looks like responding rather than reacting. It looks like being willing to listen for understanding instead of listening just to reply.

As leaders, clinicians, and teammates, we shape culture one conversation at a time.

The tone we set—calm or rushed, curious or closed—creates ripples far beyond a single interaction.

Over the next few messages, I want to explore practical and very human ways to strengthen communication in our practices. Not through scripts or techniques that feel forced, but through small shifts that bring conversations back to their true purpose: connection.

Because when communication improves, trust grows.

When trust grows, relationships deepen.

And when relationships are strong, everything else tends to follow.

By the way, these same principles apply to conversation with those we love the most: our spouses, children, family, and friends.

I feel a tremendous responsibility to communicate well with my wife, Julie, along with Addison and Owen, who happen to be at ages where it is easy to see how I influence them in a significant way every single day.

*I feel the significance and privilege of the responsibility to be fully present, vitally engaged, and relatable in my communication with them. I am shaping who they will become with each conversation and interaction.*

Is the effort worth it? Absolutely; from all aspects and for all people!

Which is why I want to go on this journey, together, so that we can all elevate our commitment to creating connected communication.

I will leave you with one powerful question to reflect on:

*Where in your day do conversations feel the most rushed or transactional, and what might change if connection became the primary goal in those moments?*

Turn your answer into action, and it could change how you experience the world...and how the world experiences you.

# One of the Most Underrated Communication Skills in Dentistry

There's a common myth about communication that quietly creates pressure for many people. It tells us that good communicators are confident speakers...people who always know what to say, how to say it, and when to say it.

But in real life, especially in dentistry, confidence alone rarely builds trust.

*Curiosity does.*

Think about the conversations that have stayed with you over the years: odds are they weren't memorable because someone impressed you with their knowledge. They stayed with you because you felt seen, heard, understood.

That doesn't come from confidence. It comes from curiosity. Curiosity shifts the focus of a conversation away from me and toward you.

It invites understanding rather than control. It signals respect without needing to say it out loud. In a dental practice, curiosity transforms everyday interactions into memorable ones.

With patients, curiosity sounds like:

*“What concerns you most about this right now?”*

*“How is this impacting your daily life?”*

These questions don't slow treatment down; they deepen trust. They communicate that the patient isn't just a procedure, but a person.

With team members, curiosity sounds like:

*“Help me understand what you’re seeing.”*

*“What would make this easier or clearer for you?”*

These moments build connectedness as human beings; they tell your team that their voice matters, even when decisions are difficult.

*Curiosity also reduces pressure on us as communicators. When the goal is to understand rather than to impress, we don’t have to perform. We don’t have to fill every pause. We can let conversations breathe.*

This is especially important for leaders. People don’t need leaders who always have the fastest answers, they need leaders who ask thoughtful questions and genuinely listen to the responses.

Curiosity invites collaboration. Confidence alone can unintentionally shut it down. There’s a quiet strength in asking a good question and waiting... allowing someone else’s perspective to shape the conversation...in being open to learning something new...even from those we lead.

When curiosity leads, conversations become less about control and more about connection; less about defending and more about discovering.

*And here’s the surprising part: curiosity often builds confidence over time.*

When people feel heard, trust grows. When trust grows, communication becomes easier for everyone involved. You don’t need to dominate conversations to be effective. You don’t even need to sound polished. You simply need to care enough to ask—and most importantly, to listen—without rushing to fix or correct others. That kind of communication changes cultures, one curious conversation at a time.

*This approach works everywhere in our lives; try it with your loved ones. Enter your next conversation with the intention of creating curious connection: do this with your spouse, your kids, your family members, your friends, and feel the energy shift.*

I have seen firsthand the positive impact this approach has had in conversations with my daughter, Addison. I ask her questions based in curiosity so she can feel heard and to show I care enough to know what it going on in her ever-developing, brilliant mind.

For an 8-year old, we have deep conversations where I believe I am understanding her more and more as she grows and develops into a beautiful young lady.

*As her father, I believe it is essential to show her this love and respect so she seeks it out with everyone in her inner circle throughout her life.*

Curiosity transcends, but also fuels, our personal and professional objectives. Genuine curiosity gives us so much in return, especially considering all it requires of us is an open mind, an open heart, and a little bit of courage. The rest takes care of itself.

For your personal reflection:

*Where could curiosity replace confidence in your conversations this week, and what small shift would make that possible?*

# *You're Allowed to Be Human in Conversations*

One of the quiet sources of stress in professional communication is the belief that we must always have the right answer. There's a false belief that uncertainty is a weakness, or that pausing and saying, "I don't know yet," somehow undermines credibility.

In dentistry, this pressure can feel especially heavy.

Patients look to us for clarity. Teams look to us for direction. Leaders often feel responsible for projecting certainty, even when situations are complex.

*But here's a freeing truth: meaningful communication doesn't require mastery, it requires honesty.*

People don't expect perfection: they expect sincerity, they expect the truth.

Patients don't need every answer delivered flawlessly: they need to know you're thoughtful, transparent, and willing to walk with them through decisions.

Team members don't need leaders who pretend to know everything: they need leaders who are grounded enough to say, "Let's find out together."

Some of the most trust-building phrases in communication are simple:

*"That's a great question."*

*"Thank you for sharing."*

*"Let's take a moment and explore this together."*

These statements create partnership rather than hierarchy; they invite collaboration instead of pressure.

When we release the need to sound perfect, conversations become more human, more relaxed, more effective.

Now, this doesn't mean being unprepared or careless with our words, it means allowing room for learning, reflection, and growth...both for ourselves and for others.

*Radically honest communication signals integrity, builds credibility, and subconsciously notifies others that they don't have to pretend or perform. This type of exchange feels real because it is real.*

In a connected team environment, transparency isn't weakness, it's leadership. It creates space for trust, learning, and shared responsibility. People who feel heard and valued step up for one another, and oftentimes, without even being asked.

That's because when we show up as humans first and professionals second, conversations become more meaningful. And meaningful conversations are where clarity and commitment are born.

Reflection question:

*Where might releasing the need to "have it all figured out" create more trust within your own thoughts and your conversations with others?*

# Questions Are the Engine of Great Conversations

Statements inform. Questions invite. That distinction matters more than we often realize.

In dentistry, we explain things constantly: diagnoses, procedures, timelines, expectations. Information is necessary, but information alone doesn't create connection. Questions do.

A well-placed question shifts a conversation from one-directional to connected. It tells the other person, "Your thoughts are important and valued."

Good questions are open, generous, and sincere. They aren't traps. They aren't rushed. They aren't designed to steer someone toward a predetermined answer. They create space for a thoughtful response.

*With patients, questions slow the process just enough to ensure clarity:*

- "I know all of this may have been unexpected; what is top of mind for you right now?"
- "Of everything we have discussed, what was unexpected?"

*With teams, questions build alignment:*

- "From your perspective, what do you believe we are missing?"
- "From your perspective, what would help this work better for everyone involved?"

Silence after a question isn't failure...it's respect. It allows people to gather their thoughts, name concerns, and speak honestly. Strong communicators aren't afraid of that pause.

Make it your mission to become comfortable in silence. Deep and meaningful conversation takes time. When questions lead, conversations become collaborative rather than transactional; people feel included rather than managed; heard rather than handled. If communication feels stuck, the answer often isn't another explanation...it's a better question.

Reflective Question:

*What question could you ask today that might change the tone of an important conversation?*