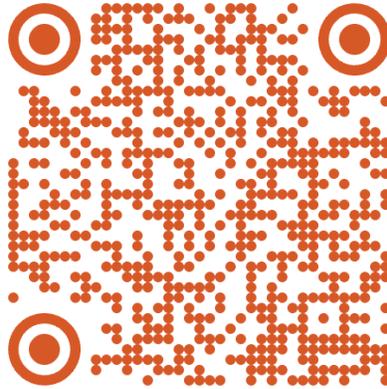


Leadership Emails



October 16 – November 13

Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

Words and Silence Are Both Equally Important

Life Punishes the Vague and Rewards...

“Heads I Win. Tails I Don’t Lose Much.”

What Am I Missing?

Tell Me a Story

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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Words and Silence Are Both Equally Important

Today, I'll be sharing an excerpt of an email I received from one of our outstanding practice leaders. This leader is one of the most committed to scheduling time for dedicated and consistent team training, and boy, does it show!

What you're about to read ties directly into the "Five Why's" message I recently wrote, as they took the time to ask more "why" questions to better understand the lack of results they were getting with the team's treatment coordinator.

As an important starting point, this particular team goes through the exercise we suggest about going through the "4 Questions" on a regular basis when having meetings.

1. What is going well?
2. What challenges are we facing?
3. What questions do you have for anyone present?
4. What decisions are we making today to put into action?

This format is simple, repeatable, and effective. See the process come to life in their discussion:

"Kevin,

We had our monthly meeting/training recently, and although it was cut from a full day to a half-day training, it was much needed and we got a lot accomplished. Our team meeting focused on treatment acceptance, financing options and practicing rebuttals; and boy what a difference it makes! We started our meeting highlighting goals we have already accomplished this year, and having one employee share their "Getting to Know You" questions/answers.

Book keeping items included a quick run-down of the financing options we offer and going through new 'financing binders,' which include how-to's, quick tips and notes for processing payments and/or patient financing.

From there we then had a great discussion about what's going well, and what are some of the biggest challenges we are facing when it comes to case acceptance. Old habits die hard, and return quickly, when we aren't constantly reminding ourselves, training and challenging ourselves; and with our collections down this month it's obvious we all needed a reminder and a bit of a kick in the pants.

As we went through our routine with the treatment coordinators, we discussed and tweaked some things, asked more 'Why' questions than we normally would (thank you for your message on that topic!), then we discovered a few things that had been lacking this month—getting the clinical yes along with restating the problem utilizing specific verbiage; and also practicing the PAUSE!

The pause is something that seems so simple but can hold a wealth of information. We realized that some of our treatment coordinators were going straight from presenting fees, to notifying the patient we collect in advance; without giving the patient a chance to react.

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This presented two problems: one, the patient was overwhelmed, and two, when the patient DID react we had no clue if they were reacting to the cost, or to the fact that we were going to collect that day.

We decided that if we pause after presenting cost we can gain a lot of insight from the patient's reaction which can then dictate the next step, vs. having to accept "no" without knowing what the patient is objecting to (the cost, or paying up front).

With this new insight we were able to role-play the clinical handoff and practice the PAUSE as well as some other scenarios. I think these were the two greatest take-aways from our meeting: (1) utilizing the right verbiage (that we know works), and (2) often times saying nothing at all. Words and silence are both equally important.

Having the time to recommit to the processes we worked so hard to change and to continue training on the things that have made such big differences in our practice is so important! It was eye opening to me to see how quickly little words can slip in and sabotage the whole process and how important it is to constantly be training, even on the things you think you are doing well!

Thanks again for everything you and the DST team do! From phone calls to the recommendations (including book recommendations), to the messages you all take the time to write and send and so much more y'all are so often my daily dose of motivation and I appreciate it all very much!! The DST team has had such a positive impact and made such a difference in not only my career, but in my personal life as well. I am very grateful."

There are many lessons in this message.

Relate them to your own situation and take the necessary actions to create a different outcome.

What stands out most to you?

My favorite is "the pause."

We all tend to rush through the day, through patient appointments and conversations with teammates.

You have heard it time and time again from us...SLOW DOWN!

I look forward to hearing each of your breakthroughs as you reflect and dissect areas where you would like to see better results.

I promise it will be time well spent.

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Life Punishes the Vague and Rewards...

Over the last several weeks, I have been re-reading two books published by Tim Ferris (who is most famous for his book, “The 4-Hour Work Week”), “Tribe of Mentors” and “Tools of Titans.” The summaries he has written from interviews with successful people in Tribe of Mentors are fascinating and insightful.

In Tim’s introduction, he writes about something that I have experienced success with for the majority of my professional life, which is about asking better questions to obtain more desirable outcomes.

The following quote is powerful and rings true as I reflect back on my moments of both success and failure.

“Life punishes the vague wish and rewards the specific ask.”

Far too often, I witness people struggle to achieve a defined objective (although sometimes this is a problem too...objectives are too general and not specific...another topic for another time) because they are not committed to carefully crafting the conversations they have with patients.

Words become powerful when combined with good intentions.

Over the years, I have engaged in countless conversations focused on getting more positive results when asking a patient to make a commitment to their health, most specifically when it comes to the presentation of the investment.

A typical cause of this unsuccessful outcome is a team member not being clear and specific when speaking with patients.

To gain perspective of where the breakdown occurs, I use a simple and straightforward approach by asking a number of very specific questions looking for details about the conversations so I can begin to determine where she is off in her engagement.

Let’s use a specific conversation I had where it took me a while to figure out what was happening because I was being given vague answers in return to my questions. I was finally able to get this team member to walk me through the exact words she was using when presenting treatment.

The final question she was asking to get her patient to say “YES” to the financial commitment of the treatment plan was...

“So, Mrs. Smith, what do you think about all of this?”

The problem with this question is it can go off in many different tangents and doesn’t ask for anything specific at all. In fact, it gives the control to the patient, which is never a good idea.

As an exercise...

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- What question would you ask?
- If you are a treatment coordinator, what question do you ask? And could you ask a better, more effective question than you are using today?

I want to get back to the book.

Tim goes on to say...

"After all, conscious thinking is largely asking and answering questions in your own head. If you want confusion and heartache, ask vague questions. If you want uncommon clarity and results, ask uncommonly clear questions."

The RIGHT questions will lead to the answers you are looking for in order to achieve your defined objective.

This way of thinking can be applied to your interactions with patients and team members, as well as those outside the practice in your personal life.

Take the time to be more specific for the sake of efficiency and sanity. The more clarity you create with others, the more clarity you will receive in return.

Once you have the correct information from the responses you receive, you can more effectively determine the next step in the process towards achieving an outcome you desire.

A wonderful exercise would be for you to choose a question(s) you want to enhance so you can give yourself a better chance at achieving a more desirable response:

- Write down the current way your are asking the question(s) you chose...
- Followed by an updated version of the question(s) that is more specific...
- Then try it out with your next interaction where the question(s) is appropriate.

If you would be so kind, please share your results with me so we can celebrate the advancements you make by paying close attention your word choice.

Be bold, be courageous, and go forth with conviction in your efforts!

You will be so proud of the success you achieve!

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“Heads I Win. Tails I Don’t Lose Much.”

Every so often, I go back and read notes from my past presentations. I was reflecting back on a specific presentation I gave to all of our doctors and their spouses in 2017 at our annual Doctor’s Retreat in San Diego, CA. A simple quote caught my eye from a brilliant investment banker who has been revered for his success in a brutally competitive industry.

He said, *“Head’s I win. Tails I don’t lose much.”*

To give you some context, Mohnish Pabrai was having a conversation with Guy Spier (another successful investment banker who wrote the book, *“The Education of a Value Investor”*) about making investment choices and how Mohnish remained so calm and confident in his choices, win or lose.

You may be thinking, *“Why is Kevin sharing stories with us from the investment world, as it has nothing to do with dentistry?”* Many of those who attended that retreat asked the same question while listening to me present my big takeaways from the book.

This statement speaks to an individual’s Resistance to change...to try something new or different. Mohnish’s words speak to the age-old question, *“What do I have to lose?”*

When you embrace change from people who have a track record of success, you are dramatically increasing your odds of a positive outcome.

I believe those who are Resistant to change are being shortsighted, focusing on all the reasons something will not work, versus all the reasons why it will.

Let me share an example of my point from two completely different conversations I had with team members from two separate practices.

My first conversation took place with a new treatment coordinator who was about to ask for money at the time of scheduling for the first time. Her experience has been to get people scheduled and collect money after the treatment was completed.

This was new territory for her. She was nervous, yet excited at the same time.

We talked through several approaches and confirmed the talking points to use to be prepared to overcome insurance objections, as well as about the change in protocol to collect before, rather than after, treatment was completed.

She left the call confident she would do a good job, and this particular young lady made my day as she shared how this would be an experience for her to grow both personally and professionally.

It would expand her own belief in what is possible, along with what she was capable of executing on. I was proud of her shift in mindset.

She was courageous and was committed to having the conversations with conviction.

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I received an email full of good news, which is always welcomed! I will share the points she made in her message:

1. It wasn't as difficult or scary as it appeared to be when she was thinking about it leading up to the first conversation.
2. One patient paid for the entire treatment plan up front to save the 10% courtesy reduction in the fee.

A second patient paid half and said she would have the rest of the money at the time of the scheduled appointment.

The third patient said she was waiting on her tax refund, so she gave \$200 and promised to have the rest at her appointment.

Three victories for someone who was a bit worried about what the patients would think about her.

3. She acknowledged taking this step has put a new perspective on how she views trying something new or different.

I was so proud of her and she did a great job! She will continue to have victories because she has the right attitude and approach to the importance of her own personal growth.

My second conversation was the exact opposite.

This conversation was with someone who constantly complains and makes excuses as to why anything and everything will not work.

I haven't given up hope for one day getting through to her, but for now, I could easily predict how the conversation would go...such a shame.

This conversation had to do with overcoming the objection about a patient only committing to the dentistry insurance will approve.

This woman is convinced no one in her town will do any dentistry other than what the insurance approves.

Here are the highlights, or rather lowlights, from our conversation:

1. The patients who live in our area don't make a lot of money.
2. Our patients can't afford to pay for comprehensive treatment plans.
3. Everyone who comes to see us has dental insurance. We don't have many fee for service patients.
4. No one is going to pay for treatment at the time of scheduling.

And the list went on.

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By the way, this is not the first time I had this conversation with her. In fact, it is probably the 6th or 7th time we have gone round and round about this very topic.

I will share one fact with all of you to make a point of how Resistant this woman is to trying something new and different.

The practice she works at has only 37% of the patients who use insurance. Now, she didn't give me this information, I requested it from someone else in the practice because I knew she wouldn't take the time to uncover this fact because it would eliminate her excuse.

No matter how many examples I shared, or ideas of verbiage to use, she shot me down every time. I continue to "grin and bear it."

Her Resistance isn't impacting me, other than me having to listen to someone who seems to be very unhappy in life, which is unfortunate.

Referring back to the quote, "*Head's I win. Tails I don't lose much.*" I asked her, and now will ask you:

Why not try something different...how bad can it be?

Take advantage of calculated risks.

Win and you experience powerful breakthroughs and success you can be proud of.

And if you "lose?" Well, you're one step close to the breakthrough you are hoping for. Which, funnily enough, is also a win.

The only true loss is not trying at all.

Some people will choose to go through life, stuck wondering why nothing good is happening. These people will continue to bring a bad vibe to their teams; they will continue to blame everyone for the failures and lack of progress.

Other people will choose to go through life wondering what else they can try to improve upon in all aspects of their life; they recognize the power and joy of having the courage to be bold and daring.

These are the people who others will look up to and admire for their efforts.

These individuals are the people who blaze the trail for big breakthroughs.

Everyone wants to be around people who have this kind of vibe, energy and attitude.

Which way of life will you choose?

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What Am I Missing?

Continuing in the spirit of asking better questions in pursuit of better pathways to positive outcomes, I want to share another approach I use when solving problems in real time.

I'm reminded of a past trip when an uncontrollable travel situation caused a delay in my flight. I decided to make a list of all the things I could accomplish with my newfound "free" time. I was able to get ahead on emails, follow up on phone calls, and check in periodically with Julie and the kids so they knew I was thinking of them. I missed them tremendously while away on this particular trip.

In addition to those tasks, I spent time catching up on my reading goals. While reading a story by one of the creators of several blockbuster video game series, I came across a question he always asks himself when he gets stuck or is trying to recover from a failed project attempt:

"What am I missing?"

A smile came to my face after reading this, because it's a question I ask myself all the time. Its simplicity has led to many significant breakthroughs in my life (and continues to do so).

I share this story because a very smart young lady once asked me:

"Kevin, how do you come up with solutions to problems so quickly?"

I believe she was referring to my ability to think on my feet and have an answer to almost any question I'm asked. I explained to her my simple approach to problem-solving in real time:

5. Determine the Source of the Problem

I start by identifying whether I (my team, my client, etc.) am creating the problem or if it's being caused by outside circumstances. There's a significant difference in how you approach the situation depending on which answer you come up with.

6. Clarify the Desired Outcome

Next, I ask myself what I want the outcome (or new outcome) to be. If I'm not aware of where I want to go, how can I create a roadmap to get there?

7. Identify What's Missing

Then, I ask myself:

- *"What is missing?"*
- *"What did I leave out?"*
- *"What consideration did I forget to take into account?"*

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This process helps me focus on the gap. Solutions to problems often lie silently in these empty spaces, waiting to be explored in order to uncover a positive path forward.

No blaming. No finger-pointing. No accusations.

Instead, I remain 100% focused on how to achieve a different result.

When you focus on developing the problem-solving side of your brain, you'll find yourself less distracted during the day and enjoying a calmer sense of peace: you trust, you know, that the answer will flow to you soon.

There's no need to dwell on an issue for an extended period of time. Set the intention in your subconscious to work on the problem using the process above (or any method that's already worked well for you).

This approach works for both short-term problems and those you've been wrestling with for longer periods.

For example, I recently came up with a new approach to solve a complex, frustrating problem I've been working on for over a year.

The idea came to me during a conversation with a friend about a challenge he was facing in his business. I suggested a few ideas he loved, and then it immediately dawned on me that these suggestions were exactly what I had been searching for myself!

Whether or not this becomes the ultimate solution, I don't know yet, but I guarantee it will move me closer to a workable answer.

Had I not set the intention for my subconscious mind to continue working on it, I may not have been alert enough to recognize this new approach when it appeared.

People who are exceptional problem-solvers bring immense value to any organization. You become the "rock," the go-to person when times get tough or uncertainty arises. This is a worthy stature to strive for.

As a side note: in addition to the obvious career benefits of advancing this particular skill set, it's also a powerful asset in your personal life...which, arguably, could be even more valuable.

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Tell Me a Story

As I sat down to write today's message, I was reminded of a powerful excerpt from one of my favorite authors, John Eldredge. His writings have been very influential in my life and faith journey, as he connects with me in a way most other authors do not. His ability to weave words together to tell stories is magical. He creates vivid pictures in my mind as I travel down the path he takes me on, sharing tales of life lessons.

In the particular message I'm referencing, he shares a summary of what all great stories contain when well constructed. I believe all of us can benefit from understanding the structure of an effective story, one used by famous authors, movie producers, and storytellers throughout history.

Here is a brief excerpt from John's message:

"Notice that all the great stories pretty much follow the same story line. Things were once good, then something awful happened, and now a great battle must be fought or a journey taken. At just the right moment (which feels like the last possible moment), a hero comes and sets things right, and life is found again."

Let's break down John's summary.

8. "Things were once good."

Most patients, hopefully at one point in time, have had reasonably good oral health. We can take them back to this moment in life so they can recall the feeling and appearance of that time. This gives us a basis for comparison to today's problems.

9. "Then something awful happened."

This is the perfect moment to introduce photos or scans. It's important to move from "telling" to "showing" the patient what the reality is. It's even more effective to engage the patient in "self-diagnosis" by having them look at their own pictures and identify the problems they see.

This step sets up our doctor to become the "superhero" who saves the day.

10. "And now a great battle must be fought or a journey taken."

Here we set the proper expectations for how we'll correct or fix the problems, whether that means creating beauty in cosmetic cases or relief in cases of pain, and create a vision of what "victory" will look like for the patient.

11. "At just the right moment (which feels like the last possible moment), a hero comes and sets things right, and life is found again."

This is a powerful moment for us to create an effective handoff to our "superhero" doctor to save the day. It's the climax of the story, where we let the patient know their problems can

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be solved once and for all with the help of our doctor. This is the defining moment where we bring the patient's story full circle.

I've been telling stories to sell for the vast majority of my life. I first stumbled upon its effectiveness, then became more intentional in studying and refining my craft.

I believe, with all the confidence in the world, that following the art of storytelling is why I've been blessed with success in every business venture I've been part of; and why so many people I've helped have also become successful when they embrace the storytelling concept.

I promise you one thing: if you spend time developing your storytelling craft, you'll be better off both personally and professionally.

You'll be amazed at how captivating you'll become to those willing to engage and listen.

You'll become more influential.

You'll be more effective in positively inspiring others to "see the light."

- Where can you implement this in your own life and begin telling an inspiring story?
- How are you going to do it this week? Tomorrow? Even today?

When you do, tell me how it went! I look forward to hearing about your positive experiences as you hone your craft and become a masterful storyteller.

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