



LCP Dental Team Coaching (the new name for Julie Weir & Associates) is recognized as the premier consulting firm specializing in pediatric dentistry since 1996.

Five Easy Ways to Improve Your Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is essential to create a harmonious and enjoyable work environment. Psychologist Daniel Goleman describes emotional intelligence (EQ) as the ability to recognize and communicate using the appropriate feelings in specific situations. Many situations occur each day that affect team morale. It is important to think about your team members' feelings when you react to a situation. As a leader, your team relies on you to model these behaviors appropriately. Examine and reflect on the five suggestions below to identify ways to improve your emotional intelligence.

1. BE MINDFUL OF YOUR FEELINGS

- Start out each morning by identifying how you feel. Take a few deep breaths and examine your mood.
- Visualization is a helpful tool in mental preparation. Take a moment to visualize yourself from the outside. Are you wearing your emotions? If you looked into a mirror, how would your body language and facial expressions seem? Picture every patient arriving on time. Visualize your team all getting along and helping each other with their challenges. Although this sounds far-reaching, we create our own realities. Henry Ford once said, "If you think you can or you think you can't, you are right."
- If you feel frustrated, chances are your team feels it too. Instead of internalizing your frustration, examine what causes this reaction and address it. As an example, imagine that your assistant does not have the proper tray set-up. How could you respond with emotional intelligence?

2. DEAL WITH EMOTIONS WITHOUT BEING OVERWHELMED BY THEM

- Emotions are intrinsic to humans; however, keeping calm under pressure is a powerful skill. When you feel stressed, pause. Remember that emotions are temporary. Pausing before responding allows your mind and body time to depress the negative feelings.
- Recognize situations that trigger negative emotions. Identify ways to adjust your response into a positive reaction. Respond with careful thought and consideration to avoid misunderstanding and hurt feelings.

3. LEARN TO RECOGNIZE CHANGES IN TEAM MEMBERS' BEHAVIORS

- The ability to read body language and other nonverbal cues is an important and necessary skill as a leader. Emotions are contagious and an employee's change in behavior can decrease morale and productivity. Preventing conflict begins with reading and understanding nonverbal cues.
- Take time out of your day to talk individually with your team members to get to know them. Once you understand who they are, you can recognize fluctuations in their behavior.
- When you notice changes in your team members' behavior, discuss your observations with them. Start by saying, "I noticed that you may be having a hard time today. Is there anything I can do to help?" Your employee may or may not share with you what is bothering them. If they decide to share, focus on listening and do not interrupt. Avoid glossing over

what they say to insert something positive. Instead, you can say, "I understand how you must be feeling, let's work together to find a solution."

- If your team has trouble staying productive and positive, identify their needs. Could they use more training, or do they just need a leader that believes in and supports them? The more assistance you have, the better. Identify someone who has the ability to step into a lead role and assist you with guiding your team and getting on track. By implementing the right people to support your leadership, you are investing positively in your team.

4. LISTEN AND LEARN FROM YOUR OWN FEELINGS AND THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS

- Ask your team members how they feel each day while making eye contact. John Maxwell says, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." Do you exhibit compassion towards your patients and your team members? Address each team member individually rather than as a group. This shows your team you are interested in them as individuals, not just as employees.
- Once you are aware of your own feelings, realize that your team members feel the same feelings. Understand and appreciate your team members as humans. Try to see their perspective. Remember that everyone is at a different stage in their lives. Empathy goes a long way in people trusting you. The law of common ground teaches that for someone to meet your expectations, you must first meet them

where they are. Feedback goes both ways. Ask your team about things you can improve on in your practice. They may have some great unrealized leadership or communication ideas. Your team members will feel appreciated by listening to their feedback.

5. MAINTAIN OPTIMISM THROUGH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

- When you are going through a difficult situation, be an encouraging leader. If your schedule falls apart, don't blame someone or complain. Encourage your team to use their skills to fill those openings.

- Start each morning meeting with a positive quote, silly joke, or inspirational thought for the day. Encourage your team to continue thinking about it through their work day as they deal with challenging situations. They can then share the age appropriate joke with patients throughout the day.
- Buy a notebook or journal and write down each day the top three things you are thankful for and three things you are excited about. This could be your family, friends, your practice, or something as simple as your morning coffee.

Responding properly to an external situation can improve interpersonal communication and build positive relationships. Using emotional intelligence, we can become better communicators and leaders. Reading emotions is not easy, but it can help to imagine that you are in your employees' shoes. What would you be feeling? How would you respond if you were going through that situation? We expect our team members to have high emotional intelligence, be intuitive and respond appropriately, so we are responsible to emulate those same behaviors. Treat your employees the way you want them to treat your patients. Everything rises and falls on leadership. If your team isn't communicating effectively, take inventory of your own behavior and ask what changes you can make in communicating with your team.

“When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures of emotion.”

Dale Carnegie

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