



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 Things Effective Leaders Do Differently in a Crisis

Dental practices look much different than they did before COVID-19 devastated the world and the economy. Lost revenue, employee turnover, and slow schedules contribute to stress for dentists all over the country. Doctors are grasping at straws trying to return to normalcy. While it may be tempting to thrust back into a full schedule to alleviate financial hardship, lack of preparation can derail even the most successful office. As practices reopen and experience this new normal, teams must refocus on connecting with others and maintaining a positive, encouraging mindset. This will foster patient, parent, and team member reassurance and indelibly ensure practice success.

### 1. Focus on Others

- **Genuine connections are the foundations to the doctor/patient relationship.**
- **Make the patients' needs a priority** by seeing the practice through their eyes. Is this a place you feel safe and want to return?
- **View patients as relationships, not as production.** Ensure you visit with them long enough to build and maintain a connection.
- **Ask patients how their visit went** and if necessary, listen to and resolve any concerns.
- **Encourage patients to write reviews** on Facebook and Google so potential patients can hear about their experiences. If a negative review comes up, do not ignore it. Share with the team and take action, as necessary, to resolve any concerns.
- **Follow up with patients** who have had a challenging visit. Care calls should be made by the doctor.
- **Meet individually with team members** each week to ask about their families, how they are feeling, and ask if there is anything you can do for them.

### 2. Awareness of Self

- **Self-aware leaders take an honest and accurate assessment of their skills** and use that knowledge to positively impact the practice.

- **Be mindful** of the messages, verbal and nonverbal, you send to your patients, parents and team members. Most experts agree that 70-93 percent of all communication is nonverbal. Each morning and periodically through the day, check your tone, body language, facial expressions, and posture. If you stood in front of the mirror, how would it make you feel?
- **Review values and keep a journal.** Journaling helps you to think out situations, reflect on the day and plan for the future. It also helps you achieve a deeper understanding of obstacles, challenges and responses to them. Keeping notes on your values and why your work is important to you helps to align your vision and your behavior. While it is easy to get off track, having a constant reminder can help you make decisions that are more reflective of who you want to be.
- **Ask team members about your performance** and how you can improve. This helps you gain insight into things in which you may be unaware. Consider creating an anonymous survey your team can complete to give you feedback on your leadership performance. Self-awareness helps manage stress, leads to better decisions, and ultimately, guides others to do the same.

### 3. Positive Mindset

- **Create a life that satisfies you through developing your self-confidence.** Be aware that self-confidence (the way you treat yourself) serves as an instruction to others on how to treat you.

- **Begin each day with a thorough morning meeting.** Share a positive thought or quote, appreciation for your team, and communicate about any new changes as things progress.
- **Keep smiling.** Patients and team members look to their doctors and leaders for reassurance. A positive, encouraging leader helps a patient feel hopeful and safe.

#### 4. Grateful Heartset

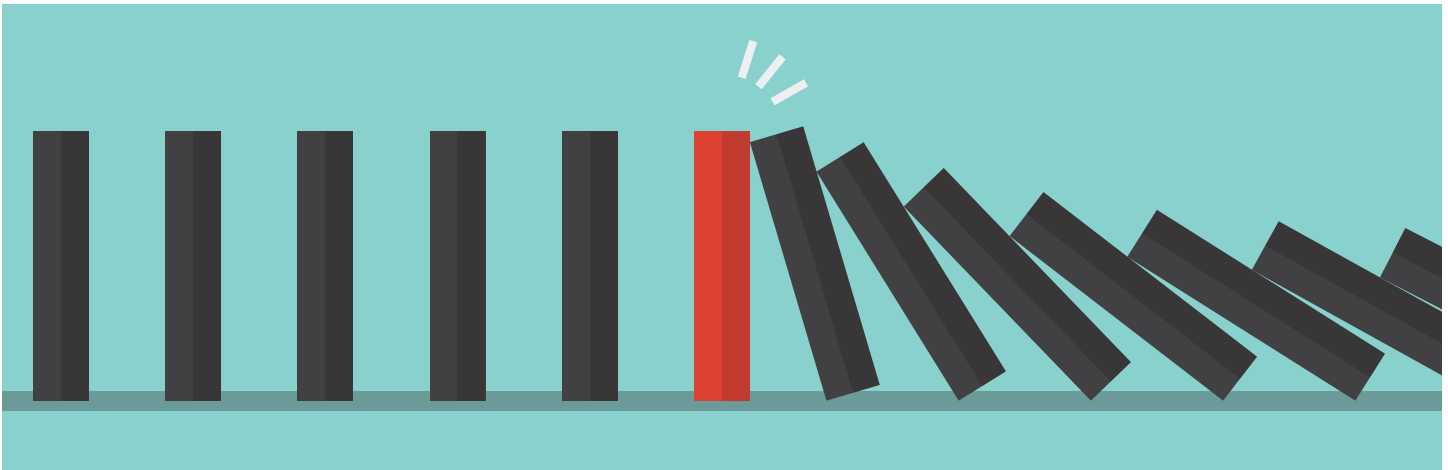
- **Share appreciation for your patients, parents and team members.** We are all in this together and by patients and your team showing up, you can safely provide necessary dental care to communities that need it.
- **Write down five things you are grateful for each morning.** Lead with those five things in the forefront of your mind and eventually, leading with a grateful heart will become automatic.
- **Celebrate all wins, big and small.** If you see one of your team members doing something awesome, celebrate and share it. Consider highlighting a team member each week on social media as a “Rockstar” and post some things that make them so special.
- **Control your emotions, don’t allow them to control you.** So many things are out of your control; however, you have complete control over how you respond and show up to every interaction.

#### 5. Careful Communication

- Make sure office policy/agreement changes are in writing and that parents sign all updated forms.
  - Check with your malpractice insurance carrier for a COVID-19 Pandemic Dental Treatment Consent Form.
  - Financial Policy changes. We recommend changing the policies to Agreements. People don’t like policies and they prefer agreements.
- **Prepare for patient questions.** Now, more than ever, teams need coaching on careful communication. Patients and parents seek safety and reassurance, so each team member must feel comfortable and confident with these challenging conversations. Prepare team members, both clinical and front office, for questions they are going to get from parents. It can be easy to get caught up in using scripted conversation when handling difficult situations; however, patients and parents need to feel protected and cared for. When team members respond to tough questions, it should be natural and conversational, as opposed to heavily informative.
- **Be aware of others’ situations.** Avoid assumptions about patients and what they have experienced during COVID-19. While everyone has been affected in one way or another, it is important to realize people are affected on different levels. When someone shares a challenge they are facing, connect with them on a genuine level and show support

during this tough time. On the other hand, do not assume patients have been as heavily affected. Maintain a positive, encouraging tone and share a smile.

- **Communicate with parents the modified schedule and why it is important.** “We understand an afternoon works better for your schedule. However, in order to maintain safe social distancing and proper infection control to keep everyone safe, we have modified our schedule to make this as efficient as possible. We could see Johnny at 9 a.m., or 10 a.m. Which would work better for you?”
  - When confirming, remind parents of any changes in protocols for patient arrival and check-in.
  - Email any consent forms and treatment plans in advance and have the parent sign and return by email prior to arrival. Let parents know that this new system is in place to ensure their safety and to limit personal contact.
- **Embrace technology. Share with parents the modified patient check-in procedures.** It is more important than ever to get away from manual and paper processes.
  - **Parent or guardian should call or text the office from their car** once they have arrived. Consider having older children come into the building while their parent waits outside. Allow only one guardian in with the patient to minimize the number of people inside the building.
  - **Require online new patient registration and health history updates.** Avoid using paper forms and pens in order to minimize contact. Reach out to your website or patient communication software to get online forms implemented right away.
  - **Screen patients and parents according to ADA and CDC recommendations** as they arrive.
  - **Consider storing Credit Cards on file.** Seventy-five percent of patients would be willing to leave their credit card number on file and authorize it to charge up to \$200 after insurance pays their portion.
  - **Begin using contactless payment options such as Apple Pay, Samsung Pay or Google Pay** so physical credit cards do not need to exchange hands.
  - **Create an online Patient Portal** to increase communication with parents and provide them the ability to pay their bills. Pre-COVID, 50 percent of account balances were paid online. This percentage is on the rise. Check with your PCS which may provide a link that can be texted to parents to pay for the visit.
- **Communicate the advantages of teledentistry.** If parents are not coming into the office or back with their child, communicate with the parent through an iPad and talk about changes in treatment, recommendations, and future appointments that are needed. Consider scheduling a Zoom Video Conference with parents to discuss treatment recommendations instead of in-office conferences.



The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world as we know it. While it is impossible to predict what the future holds or what the long-term effects are, leaders should take action now to bring genuine connections and relationships back into the practice. John Maxwell, author and speaker, says, “people may hear your words, but they feel your attitude.” In a time where people need reassurance and safety more than ever, building relationships and maintaining a positive mindset and heartset should be top priority. Flexibility, trust, and honest and open communication will help ease the transition as everyone gets used to this “new normal” in dentistry.

**“If you want to win over another person, first win his heart, and the rest of him is likely to follow.”**

*John C. Maxwell*

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