

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

Artificial Intelligence Vs. Emotional Intelligence: Influential Leaders Know Which Matters Most

A dental team will have consistent harmony and joy when paired with leadership that values and exemplifies emotional intelligence. Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to recognize and communicate using the appropriate feelings in specific situations. Every team member has a heart, and how leaders handle those hearts determines how influential they will be. Many experiences occur each day that affect team morale. As beneficial as AI is, it will never replace the human connectivity only a leader with EQ can provide. A leader models the appropriate behaviors to respond to situations that can trigger positive or negative feelings in team members. Identifying those feelings and the proper responses will set a standard for the team to emulate. These four insights aid leaders in becoming emotionally intelligent “Influencers.”

They are present and mindful of their own feelings by:

- Beginning the day with a consistent morning routine where they evaluate their emotions and keep those in check as they walk into their office.
- They take a moment to visualize their mood, body language, and facial expressions.
- Intentionally taking a step into the day with positivity. They visualize every patient arriving on time and ready for treatment and their team all getting along and helping each other with their daily workload. To create an amazing day, one must picture what that day looks like before it becomes a reality. Henry Ford once said, “If you think you can or you think you can’t, you are right.”
- Realizing that if they start their day short-tempered or frustrated, their team will see that and begin to internalize that- either defensively or by disengaging from the negativity. Instead of internalizing frustrations, influential leaders calmly find the root and examine they can address and correct the underlying trigger. If an assistant does not have the proper tray set-up, how should a leader respond using their emotional intelligence?

They process their emotions without letting them overwhelm their actions by:

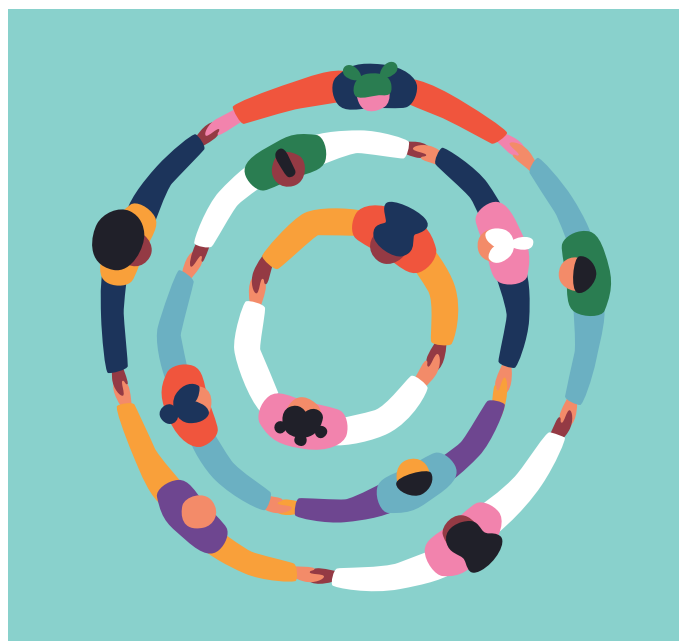
- Processing all their emotions without letting them take control.
- Pausing and reminding themselves that this emotion is temporary. Taking a breath before responding allows the mind and body time to depress the negative feelings. Exhaling the initial knee-jerk anger can give leaders the extra moment to refocus that the problem isn’t doctor vs. team member, but doctor and team member VS. the problem.
- Recognizing situations that trigger negative emotions. They identify ways to adjust their response into a positive reaction by responding with careful thought and consideration to avoid misunderstanding and hurt feelings. Self-awareness can fix interpersonal conflicts before they begin.

They are aware of and recognize changes in their team's behaviors by:

- Reading body language and other nonverbal cues.
- Being proactive when a team member starts to exhibit negative emotions. This can save morale and good vibes. Emotions are contagious, and an employee's change in behavior can decrease morale and productivity quickly.
- Getting to know their team members individually. One-on-one conversations that focus on team members' emotional well-being breed understanding. Understanding who they are will lead to recognizing how their behavior might fluctuate and affect the team.
- Discussing their observations and concerns with their team members privately. Influential leaders say, "I noticed you may be having a hard time today. Is there anything I can do to help?" Team members might not always feel comfortable opening up or feel defensive when their emotions are exposed. Influential leaders remind their team that they see and hear them. If a team member shares, the leader actively listens and does not interrupt. The human tendency is to gloss over what they say to insert something positive. Instead, actively listening leaders say, "I understand how you must feel. I want to help if you would allow me. We can get through this together."
- Realizing that a change in a team member's needs can drastically affect focus and productivity. If the gap is skill-based, could they use more training, or do they need a leader that believes in and supports them? The more support they have, the better.
- Identifying someone who can step into a co-leadership role and support the team will be beneficial. Developing the right leaders can be a growth opportunity for everyone. It shows a leader's trust in their group and ability to delegate. It can give the team confidence to take on more tasks or responsibilities in the office without being asked. Just because an employee has been with a practice for a long time does not qualify them to be a leader. This person must exhibit the qualities, values, and ethics that align with ownership and the practice vision.

They exhibit an optimistic mindset that is solution-focused by:

- Being an encouraging leader. If their schedule falls apart, they do not blame someone or complain. If they make the problem a team member, this puts them at odds with that person. Instead, they encourage their team to use their skills to fill those openings and show support for their ability to excel.
- Starting each Morning Meeting with a positive quote, silly joke, or inspirational thought for the day. They encourage their team to continue thinking about it throughout their workday as they deal with challenging situations. They can then share the age-appropriate joke with patients throughout the day. Passing the responsibility for that quote, joke, or thought around the team also encourages initiative and inspiration across the group.
- Inspiring their team to "catch others doing things right." Human nature tends to point out everything that is going wrong. Influential leaders challenge their team members to find something positive about the day they will share at the end-of-day huddle. It is good to discuss stumbling blocks to be aware of and how to use those as stepping stones for doing better individually and collectively.



These emotional intelligence guidelines allow leaders to become proficient at communicating effectively and directing their teams. Too often, leaders become impressed with or distracted by the newest AI bombarding their Inboxes. Leaders who want their team members to exhibit high emotional intelligence, be intuitive, and respond appropriately must also model that for their teams. They must help their team realize their value and that they are appreciated. How leaders respond to different situations will impact

interpersonal communication, build positive relationships, or deteriorate them. It is demotivating for a team if a leader has specific expectations of the group; however, they don't hold themselves accountable for emulating the same high standards. As helpful as Siri, Alexa, Lasers, and all the latest technology may be, they cannot ensure that patients and their parents receive the empathy and individualized treatment that they expect and deserve; only engaged and valued team members will meet and exceed the emotional connection that all human beings need.

“As more and more artificial intelligence is entering into the world, more and more emotional intelligence must enter into leadership.”

Dr. Amit Ray

Published four times a year, Practice Management and Marketing News is a featured column in Pediatric Dentistry Today.



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