

Lunch Keynote - *Learning to Fly! Eight Rules for a Fulfilling Career* - Dr. Dale Benson

Dr. Dale Benson – Former Vice President of Innovation, Quality and Practice Management and Director of the Leadership Development Institute for AltaMed Health Services in Los Angeles, founder and former Executive Director of the HealthNet Community Health Centers in Indianapolis, Past President of the American Association for Physician Leadership, author of *The Leadership Lectures*.

Kay Johnson – Chief Development and Communication Officer, HealthNet Community Health Centers in Indianapolis

We have to Learn, Unlearn, Re-learn. We have to become transformational.

“Leaders are called to stand in that lonely place between the no-longer and the not-yet.”

-- Mary Lou Anderson

As transformational leaders, we will find ourselves standing in that lonely place. It will feel like we are going to fall down the mountain. We have to learn to fly. In this room, we have a room of frequent fliers who are learning to fly. Falling off a mountain is not comfortable. There are a lot of big changes impacting the practice of medicine. Pain is inevitable but misery is optional. If we choose to respond to the situation with low morale, we will have low morale. If we choose to be upbeat and make a difference, we will... and we will fly.

As healthcare providers, we have the privilege of sharing in the intimacy of the exam room. That has not changed. That is something that we should always remember.

Benson's 8 rules:

Rule #1: Be proud of what you are doing (not in an egotistical sense). Oliver Wendell Holmes – every calling is great when greatly pursued. Even on days when your mountain is collapsing beneath you. “Part of true success is understanding that there is something bigger and more important than ourselves.” Marcia Ann Gillespie

Rule #2: Be humble that you have this privilege. “The first test of a truly great man (or woman) is his/her humility.” --John Ruskin. Leadership is not a trumpet call to self importance. Be a true leader. Walk the talk. If serving is beneath you, then leadership is beyond you. To share an exam room is a sacred privilege. Be humble with your interactions with your patients. To lead an organization is a privilege. Be humble.

Rule #3: Your career is an important part of who you are. Respect that. Make the most of it. Don't trivialize your career. Get better at what you do every year. Share what you know to others. So when you retire, you can look back and at the bottom line – you can know joy and great fulfillment.

Rule #4: There is more to life than your career. You must never forget the balance between your personal life and your professional life. No one on their deathbed ever wishes that they spent more time at the office or the hospital. You people are driven. You need to be equally driven to spend time with your families and your friends. “Life is not measured by the breaths that you take but by the breathtaking moments.” There aren't too many breathtaking moments at the clinic. Often, those are at home, with family, with travel. Wrestle with your priorities. Have a plan about this – write down that plan. Share it with your spouse. Maybe share it with your boss. Then make it happen. Without a plan

to make it happen, you will be devoured by your career. Your career is an important part of who you are, but there is more to life than your career.

Rule #5: There are a lot of irritations. Focus on what is important. It is said that wisdom in leadership is that art of knowing what to overlook. Overlook the unimportant. Every day the irritations come along. You can burn up your adrenaline and your arteries worrying about those irritations. Discipline yourself in the art of knowing what to overlook. “Wisdom in leadership is the art of knowing what to overlook” --William James. Look at the situation from the scheme of things. How important is this to my patients? To my colleagues? To my organization? To my life goals? Think about that. “One of the disciplines for building a rich soul life is the simple act, on a daily basis, of remembering what is important to you.” -- David White.

Rule #6: Affirm your colleagues and co-workers. Thank everybody. Everyone likes affirmation. Everyone needs affirmation. You occupy an elite position in your organization. An affirmation from you can be profoundly meaningful. Be lavish but genuine in your affirmations and your thank you’s. Thank you’s is rated as immensely important by employees. Staff, secretaries, etc. Take a minute and thank them. Make it a policy for never going home at night without finding someone to thank them for helping you. If you can’t find someone in person, send an e-mail. This might be the most important thing you do all day. How many people directly report to you? Add to that the number of people who work with you who help you do your job. How many? How many of these people have you thanked in the last week? Take this list of people and put them on your calendar. On that day, find that person and thank them for helping you. Have you ever received an unexpected note of appreciation? What did I do? I read it. Then I read it again. Then read it again once a month. I sent it to my mother. There is so much power in appreciation. So much power in affirmation. “Most managers wildly under-estimate the power of the tiniest personal touch.” -- Tom Peters.

Rule 7: You are very fortunate. Pass it on. Accept and understand what you have and pass it on. Reference to the movie, Pay it Forward. “Practice random acts of kindness.” Keep your eyes open for opportunities to practice random acts of kindness. On a daily, practical level, practice random acts of kindness with your support staff every day. Remember there are no unimportant jobs. No unimportant people. Surprise them with a random act of kindness. Go ahead and make their day. “You make a living by what you get, you make a life by what you give.” -- Winston Churchill.

Rule 8: Take care of your patients. Take care of each other. Take care. Remember that the central focus – despite all of the changes – is your patients. Remember that every patient you encounter is hurting – this may be physical or psychological or social or spiritual.... You are in the business of healing of human hurts. Take care of each other. What we do in healthcare is so stressful, we could not do it without each other. We are also human. We also have hurts. Every person you meet is fighting a battle which you know nothing about. We need to be quicker to put our arms around each other and say – “I know.....I’m here to support you.”

Reflections:

“Life is too long, not to do it right.”: --Mike Vance.

“Happiness doesn’t always come from doing what we like to do, but rather from liking what we have to do.” Wilfred A. Peterson.

“We can choose how we respond to things.” “The point of life is not to be great, but rather to be all you can be” --George Will. The point is to be real, genuine.

Below is the combined wisdom of 5 giants in their respective fields:

There is a fundamental dynamic that must permeate each one of us and everything that we do. That bottom line is love. Leadership expert James Autry – “Good management is largely a matter of love” (Book: *Love and Profit, the Art of Caring Leadership*). Avedis Donnabedian: The secret of quality is love. You have to love your patients. You have to love your profession. You have to love your God. If you have love, then you can work back to change the system. Leadership without love is shallow. “Someday, after mastering the winds and the waves and the tides and gravity, we shall harness – for God – the energies of love. And then, for the second time in the history of the world, humankind will have discovered fire.” –Tielhard de Chardin. “Life is a web of love. Our role is not to break that web, but rather to make it stronger.” – Dr. Jack McConnell. The web of love is the foundation for building a fulfilling career.

Song by Beth Nielsen Chapman - How We Love
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pTDQe_h8Hc

*Life has taught me this:
Every day is new, and if anything is
true,
All that matters when we're through
Is how we love.
Faced with what we lack, some things fall
apart.
But from the ashes, new dreams start,
All that matters to the heart is
How we love.
How we love.
From the smallest act of kindness,
In a word, a smile, a touch.
In spite of our mistakes, chances come again.
If we lose or if we win, all that matters in the end
is how we love.
How we love.
I will not forget your kindness
When I needed it so much.
Sometimes we forget, trying to be so strong
In this world of right and wrong,
All that matters when we're gone,
All that mattered all along,
All we have that carries on,
Is How We Love.*

Story from Washington DC shared by Dr. Benson.

I hailed a taxi. The driver was an African American woman – one of the most outgoing, affirmative, caring human beings I had ever met. I learned about her life and philosophy why she loved so much doing what she did. She learned about mine. At the end of the ride, she said, “Have a great life.” I remember thinking how neat that was. Most of us say, “have a great day.” She said, “Have a great life.”