

Ep #16: How to Achieve Success by Managing Your Emotions with Brian DesRoches



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Allison Watts, DDS

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Welcome to *Practicing with the Masters* for dentists with your host, Dr. Allison Watts. Allison believes that there are four pillars for a successful, fulfilling dental practice: clear leadership, sound business principles, well-developed communication skills, and clinical excellence. Allison enjoys helping dentists and teams excel in all of these areas. Each episode she brings you an inspiring conversation with another leading expert. If you desire to learn and grow and in the process take your practice to the next level, then this is the show for you. Now, here's your host, Dr. Allison Watts.

Allison: Welcome to *Practicing with the Masters* podcast. I'm your host, Allison Watts, and I'm dedicated to bringing you masters in the field of dentistry, leadership, and practice management to help you have a more fulfilling and successful practice and life.

Welcome everybody, those who are here live and those who are listening recorded. We are so thrilled to have you here. This is the Transformational Leadership call with Brian DesRoches. I am just excited to have you here, Brian. I'm honored and excited.

I don't know how many years ago now that was that I met you for the first time but when I went to Frank's courses and met you, I decided I needed to have Brian in my life because if he was good enough for Frank, he was good enough for me [laughs].

Brian: Thank you for this opportunity, Allison. I appreciate it.

Allison: Yeah, I'm so excited to have you here and I know that your work has evolved since I took the leadership course. I'm sure it's much different because I know you're constantly learning and learning about the new research. Those of you who don't know Brian, and even those of you who do know Brian, you may know all of this already but I'm going just go ahead and do a formal introduction.

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Brian is a Ph.D. He's a consultant, a psychotherapist, and does nationally-known workshops. He's the facilitator of a couple of different workshops, you can tell us a little bit about that, Brian. He's also an internationally published author. Dr. DesRoches has worked with dental professionals for over eighteen years providing consulting, coaching, and workshops. He's facilitated presentations and workshops for study clubs and dental practices around the country.

His innovative approach to integrating the latest research in neuroscience with practical skills provides the unique and powerful process for experiencing a high-performing, profitable, and fulfilling practice. He developed and facilitates the Practice Leadership course, that's a workshop, right?

Brian: Yes, you betcha.

Allison: Then, Optimizing your Influence in Patient Relationships course. He's the author of three books now. I remember when *Your Boss is Not Your Mother* came out. That was when I was working with you back in '95.

Brian: '95, yep.

Allison: That's been published in six languages now. Then he also has *Reclaiming Yourself* and his newest book which, is it already out or is it coming?

Brian: Not out yet.

Allison: Okay, not out yet. That one's called *Engage, Influence and Prosper: A New Paradigm for Success and Happiness*. I'd like to hear about that book but I don't know if we'll have time today. But I know you're going to teach us some of the tools that are probably in the book.

Brian: Yes, I can talk about them.

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Allison: Yeah, I'm so excited to have you. We did our prep call on Monday and just thrilled with what you have to share with us. Is there a particular area you want to start? Do you want to start with the Level One and Level Two?

Brian: Well, yes, let me start with this. One of the things that, one, the opportunity that working with the dental profession has given me is to learn a lot about complex organizations and complex systems. If there's ever a complex system on the planet, families, churches, and dental practices probably fit the bill. They're just, they're very different complex, when you think of the number of services, it's like a mini General Motors.

To put together all the services that are needed, customer service, scheduling, production, you name it, in a relatively small group of people to provide an essential healthcare service. It is really in many ways quite a feat. It takes a lot of focus, a lot of intention, a lot of planning, a lot of management and leadership both. I've had the opportunity of working with great dentists over these several years and learning a lot in the process about the process of leadership and the process of management in those complex systems.

Allison: Yes, and you say that both of them are important.

Brian: Oh, definitely. I tell dentists when they contact with me about a workshop that looking at a dental practice from two levels—or leadership, just operating an organization with two levels has been a very helpful way, a model, or a prototype, or a paradigm to think about leadership.

That Level One is what we measure. It's results. It's human behavior. If you can measure it, see it, and quantify it, it's a Level One phenomenon. That's where practice management happens. That's the level of protocols, procedures, financial results, feedback. The kinds of systems that are needed

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clinically, administratively, and technically to produce a great service and a great product. So that's absolutely essential. What I tell all my clients is that there are very good people that do that very, very well. I don't do that. That's not my area of expertise. There's many people that do it much better and I refer to them whenever I encounter those kinds of questions because it's not where I have my expertise and my skills.

I hang out at what I call Level Two. Level Two is the emotional process that has a lot to do with leadership. If Level One is about management and compliance, which is very much what it's about, and follow up. Level Two is about how does one induce or generate commitment. How do you get people to follow? Whether it be the patients, your team members, even family members because the process of leadership is one that influences all of us in our relationships and is essential.

So at Level Two there's this process of emotional influence. I liken it to Einstein's great quote, "The significant problems we have created cannot be solved at the same level of thinking that created them." So thinking at Level Two is a different kind of thinking as opposed to linear cause and effect. It's very circular. That can confound some of us sometimes.

That leadership, we are in a field of influence. Influencing and being influenced and how does one optimize that process in relationships? So I focus on Level Two. The skill of managing one's own emotional state, the internal experience, in such a way as to be able to engage skills and engaging those skills and applying them to be able to influence others in a positive way. That's the prosper part. You know?

Allison: Yeah.

Brian: Thriving and growing in a healthy way is what prosperity is. That's where I focus, is Level Two I call it.

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Allison: Okay. Can you say something about the field of influence? You're talking about the field of influence from us as the dentist to the other people but also it feels like it's just a big energy field almost.

Brian: If anyone is familiar with quantum physics, the field of influence in quantum physics is the relationship that little quanta, little energy packets, have with each other. As a result of that relationship with each other, produce everything that we see that we call the universe. It's in a field of influence. Those field of influence can be millions and millions of miles apart or they can be three inches apart. The same process happens with us as human beings. In our relationships we create a field of influence. That is, my internal experience, my thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and physical sensations are influenced by your thoughts, feelings, emotions, and sensations. That's just a process none of us can escape as long as we're alive and breathing. We are influenced by others and we influence others. The process of being able to, in that field, being able to manage one's internal experience is the process of being able to optimize that influence.

Let me give you an example. You've been thinking about having a meeting with your team about you want to introduce some new systems. You think about the meeting and all of a sudden some anxiety comes up. You want to ignore it and set this anxiety aside. You know, that's a natural phenomenon. You go into the meeting and you attempt—one attempts to communicate without being anxious but in the field that is created within that relationship, the other, if you will, organisms, the other human beings in that field, their nervous systems will pick up that anxiety.

It will interfere with their capacity to listen, to learn, to change. They'll pick it up through their filters. Likewise, if you're with a

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patient who is anxious let's say because anxiety is so contagious, you will catch that anxiety. Then what do you do? Try to fight it? How do you manage that anxiety in such a way as to be able to influence the patient positively?

So that's that field of influence that we all participate in in our practices, in our relationships, in our families, in our friendships, all the time. To understand it, that is to be able to see it for what it is and know that if one has the skills or the capacities to manage that influence, which is happening anyway, it gives you—I'm going to call it gives you some advantages in terms of being able to deal with all of the stuff that happens in a practice. The unpredictabilities and the challenges, the emotional challenges to a great degree as well as in other relationships, the field of influence it's called.

Allison: So okay, the anxiety is there.

Brian: Yeah.

Allison: The tendency is to want to resist it but I think we've all heard what you resist, persists.

Brian: Yeah, there's a phenomenon in neuroscience called attention density. That is when we focus on something, even in our attempt to resist it, we're actually focusing on it. Paradoxically, we are strengthening the neural network associated with that which we are paying attention to because even if I don't want to think about something, I'm paying attention to it.

Allison: Right.

Brian: We're kind of caught there in terms of what I ignore, I push away, I'm actually strengthening within my brain.

Allison: So when you feel that anxiety come up, what are the skills or what are the steps to know that that's somebody else's and

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then to manage your own internal state so that you can positively influence the other person?

Brian: Been working on this for years and years and I break it down to three basically. The first one is the capacity to, what many people call mindfulness. I prefer to call it just observation, self-observation. From the Latin word *observare*, to watch over. So observing oneself and becoming, “What’s happening in my body?”

Then the capacity to have an intention. What I mean by that is to have a predetermined way that I want to experience myself with others. When I say a predetermined way, I have actually created for myself a set of memories that I can redirect myself to to remember that when I’m feeling incompetent or feeling challenged or feeling people are ignoring me. The patient is not paying attention. My team doesn’t think what I’m saying is important. Whatever thoughts and emotions, emotional thought patterns get triggered in relationships.

It is incumbent upon, I would suggest, the leader to redirect the internal experience toward a positive state. That is to pay attention. To direct attention at that point in time to what my intention for my own experience is. This is where it’s a little bit different thinking because it’s very self-referential as opposed to other-referential, when I look out there and I want to change them. I think most of us have had the experience of how futile that is even though we keep trying to do it.

Much more effective, if I can change my internal experience and that will influence the other person in the field of influence. It’s very powerful. It’s called interpersonal neurobiology and there’s a lot of research going on around it.

So first is to observe. Second is to recall or remember, “What is my intention?” And a positive memory of oneself because

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memory is state-dependent. And secondly, directing my attention to that memory as opposed to the nervous or the anxiety or the negative experience that I may be having at that point in time.

Allison: Okay, so number three is direct the attention to that memory?

Brian: Attention, yes. So it's observation, intention, attention. The word attention means to stretch out. The word intention means to stretch in, are the origin of those words. So I stretch in and I pull out of myself, what is my intention to experience myself based on memory? Then I stretch out in terms of being able to express that by then remembering it.

Allison: Cool. Just to keep going, I'll ask you about this remembering the positive memory of yourself.

Brian: Right.

Allison: So how do you... so I don't know if we have a call long enough for this conversation [laughs]. How do you create a positive memory of yourself?

Brian: [Laughs] All of us have them. We all have positive memories of ourselves doing something really well, feeling very good. That moment when you go, "Oh, I got it." That experience when a patient is very complimentary and says, "Thank you so much." Some of us, it's not unusual to kind of, "Oh, that's nothing, it's nothing." And we don't take the time then to allow that experience to soak in in terms of our brain.

In other words, my observation is that because the brain is fear based, because it's a survival mechanism, it wants us to survive until tomorrow, we have to be very intentional about remembering and strengthening the positive internal states that we experience instead of automatically strengthening the

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negatives, which happens so quickly and so automatically in a dental practice and in an anxious world.

Allison: So you're literally talking about any positive memory that we have that's happened to us? Yeah, okay.

Brian: Yeah and actually I recommend people... most people have one or two, at least.

Allison: Yeah.

Brian: If not, you can create them. For example, when I am working with my clients and I begin to feel or experience their anxiety, then it is incumbent upon me at that point in time and my responsibility to them but to myself is to remember, "I'm competent. I'm capable. I can handle things. I trust myself under any situation or circumstances."

And to allow myself to feel the truth of that so that I can be present. That's my first obligation, in my belief, to the people that, to anyone, my family members, my clients, you on the phone, we're talking here. That's the first and foremost thing. Otherwise, if I'm not able to do that, I can't be present the way I want to.

Allison: Right, well you can get hijacked by their stuff.

Brian: Precisely, precisely. That's what happens is many of us don't—there's ways to deal with that emotional hijacking processes as Daniel Goleman called it in *Emotional Intelligence*. One of the predominant ways is to redirect one's focus and build those powerful, beneficial, positive memories of oneself.

Allison: Okay.

Brian: Then practice it. It works. State-dependent memory is what it's called and all memory is state dependent. Once you can do that, your capacity to engage people increases significantly.

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Allison: Cool. So really it sounds like the key, at least in my mind when I'm sitting here listening to you, is to be self-aware enough to realize that you are feeling something.

Brian: Right. That's the first criteria is to be aware of your somatic markers. Some people get a tight stomach. Some people they get ... you know, there's all kinds. They're called somatic markers that mark the soma uniquely to each of us and tells us we're in a negative emotional state.

Allison: Then it seems like over my lifetime it has been sort of challenging I guess because what you're saying is the emotional system is we can hold feel other people's emotions. It's been hard for me to tell which ones are mine and which ones are theirs. It doesn't matter though, right?

Brian: No, it doesn't matter.

Allison: The intention is just to bring yourself back to your own competency and your own wellbeing.

Brian: Precisely.

Allison: Okay.

Brian: There are two things. One, if we look at leadership in itself, the origin of the word. It's an eighth century word from Old English, ledenshippe, L-E-D-E-N-S-H-I-P-P-E. What the word means, or the origin of it means, a state of being, that's the "shippe" part. Leden means to cause others to go with one. So the origin of leadership, its eighth-century origin, was a state of being that causes others to go with one.

Well one of the phenomenon we know in all organic systems in nature, and particularly in human relationships, is people are naturally, the body, the organism is naturally attracted and moves towards that which is positive. The body withdraws from

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or tries to push away when they have a negative experience. It's emotional physics. So the more that I can maintain a relatively neutral or positive experience, I increase the likelihood of people moving in the direction in which I'm engaging them.

Allison: This is what came up for me is the idea of positive affirmations, that you say these positive things to yourself. But then if you really don't believe them then how...? I don't know, I just feel like there's a little bridge there between saying positive things to yourself. You're remembering...

Brian: Right. I get this question often, "Well that's just affirmations." Well I don't know about the audience that's listening but my experience of affirmations has been that my body oftentimes will argue with me, my nervous system.

Allison: Yeah, that's what I was thinking.

Brian: Right and the reason that is is that if there's no pattern or neural network that is significant or strengthened enough to place that belief system, then the body is going to do what a body does naturally, which we call resistance to change. It's going to push it away. So there's no such thing as resistance to change, all there is is there's no pattern for the change that one wants to make. So the body resists it because there's no pattern internally in the nervous system.

Allison: Okay.

Brian: So affirmation combined with memory, which is essential because that's the state-dependent part, that's what fires and wires the neural network, is the important part.

Allison: Okay. So you're just building new neural pathways, stronger than the negative ones.

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Brian: Amen. And not only building them, what you're doing is in many ways you're linking them with the negative. So that when the negative gets triggered, because of the linking process that happens in the brain, the positive will also get stimulated.

I remember as one dentist said to me, he said, "Brian, I'm becoming aware that I have a choice. I can go to heaven or I can go to hell. It's my choice and it happens inside of me. Sometimes I will still choose hell."

"Oh, okay." We all have choices. But to have the choice is what's important. The choice is the matter of what the new neuroscience is saying of creating neural networks of information and energy associated with positive states that can be referenced when the environment, the world, what people do, triggers negative states in me.

Allison: Cool.

Brian: And it works. The neuroscience is there. What's amazing is that it actually works. Then when you combine that with skills that enable you to influence in a positive way the brains of others and to put it matter-of-factly, that's what you're doing. You're changing their nervous system. I would suggest to all the listeners that what leadership is, it's changing other people's nervous systems. I mean, it sounds pretty practical, but that's what it is.

Allison: Yeah, it sounds practical but it sounds kind of weird.

[Laughter]

Brian: What's the weirdest part?

Allison: I don't know, when you say you're changing their nervous system.

Brian: You are.

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Allison: I mean, I get it. You are because you're influencing their state of being.

Brian: Exactly.

Allison: Right, yeah.

Brian: I remember being at a presentation once talking about optimizing influence with patients and I was talking about the fact that influence was going on in the room right now with all of them and with me and then with each other. One of the dentists got upset. He got up and he said, "You cannot influence me. You cannot do that." I looked at him and I said, "You know what? I just did."

Allison: [Laughs]

Brian: The reaction in and of itself is a function of the field of influence.

Allison: Right.

Brian: And it wasn't intentional on my part, it just happened to be what happened.

Allison: Yeah, wow. So one of the things we talked about the other day that I wanted you to speak about was the I-based communication.

Brian: Yeah, yeah.

Allison: You get into that deeper. You know, I've heard people say, "Speak from an I." What I've heard it is more like, don't say, "You did this and you did that." Or, "You should do this." It was more of that kind of thing. But you're talking about having your own, I guess how I interpreted it was knowing what you think, knowing what you believe. Like standing up for yourself and speaking, right?

Brian: One of the things...

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Allison: Taking responsibility.

Brian: It is. It's interesting to listen because my belief and observation is that leadership is about an I. It's not about we. Because we is the big hideout for irresponsibility. When somebody says, "We can't communicate." Who's we? Who's the we? Then who's going to change the we? We do not change. We develop patterns in which they're stuck. So I-based communication is based on this is what I'm thinking, this is what I'm observing, this is what I'm aware of and it facilitates. Using I-based communication facilitates and stimulates the frontal cortex of the people to whom you're communicating.

Now, the importance of that is that's where thinking happens. It doesn't happen in the back of the brain and it certainly doesn't happen in the emotional brain. It happens in the frontal cortex. So as much as possible, I want to express my thinking, my concrete observations of things, my awareness of something. Then inquire, become curious, about the observations of those individual others to engage their frontal cortex. So people-based.

Allison: Oh, you're not going to speak here about your feelings. This is more just like stating the facts.

Brian: It's stating the facts but it's also where—I mean, I can state the facts and be in a very rigid emotional state. We've all experience that where people say, "Well this is the way it is." Their emotions are driving; they're not thinking when they say that. When people do that, there's no thinking going on. They're driven by their emotions and so they're using either conflictual or avoidant pattern behavior that is anchored in that negative state. That's very different than me saying, "Well, when I see this, when I observe this, when you ask me that question, this is what my thinking is. This is what I'm thinking about."

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I'm emotionally influenced at that point in time because I can't not be but I want to engage the thinking process as much as possible. And Allison, I love feelings. On the Myers-Briggs I'm an ENFJ. I'll be the first to tell you I think feelings are wonderful but if the basis for making decisions and communication, I mean it's part of it. But in terms of leadership, using I-based approaches, observation, concrete, engaging the frontal cortex in a neutral or relatively positive state, when you do that, it positively influences the person to whom or persons to whom you're talking. And allows them to move towards, allow them to engage their thinking.

So it's I-based speaking, I-based listening. Most people think communication, listening is you. I have to listen to you. But if we looked at the neuroscience of how listening happens, sound waves come in, the emotional brain processes them like a pinball machine. If you ever find yourself distracted when somebody is talking to you, it's because your emotional brain is doing the pinball. It's just stimulating all kinds of memories.

I-based listening is directing your frontal cortex to pay attention to and be present to the sounds, the images, and the words that the person is saying. It actually is directing your frontal cortex to do it because that's where listening happens. It doesn't happen in the emotional brain.

Allison: Wow.

Brian: Yeah. Being able to do that allows you to for example create emotional vacuums instead of filling the space between people. Like say you and a patient, or you and one of your team members, instead of filling it with frustration or anxiety or disappointment, the three major negative states that we get into: anxiety, frustration, and disappointment. Instead of filling the space, which allows no room for someone to move towards

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you, you're able to create a vacuum. That vacuum will be filled by people thinking and moving towards you.

Allison: Okay and so can you tie—because I asked you the question about the I-based but it just kind of popped in my head while you were talking about the changing people's nervous system.

Brian: Right, changing their brain.

Allison: Optimizing our influence. So can you tie all of that together?

Brian: Yeah. My profession, the profession that I'm in, coaching and consulting and as a psychotherapist is to help people change their brains. Help people change their patterns of thinking, their patterns of relating, is to help them develop new patterns. Not by necessarily changing the old ones but by developing new ones and strengthening those. It's the same thing with team members or in any relationship that we're in, patterns develop.

Everyone on this phone knows there are patterns in their practice, some of which work and some of which don't. They know there are patterns that they have, patterns of relating, patterns of dealing with difficult patients or an empty hole in the schedule that induces a reaction and there's a pattern. So the question is does the patterns that I have developed serve me well? Move me in a positive direction? Or are they patterns that I've strengthened that are in fact are negative? They're not a positive influence in my life. It's not about focusing on the negative, it's about creating and developing positive patterns.

So in answer to your question, with that context, in any situation or relationship where there's communication, such as on the phone right now with you and I. I am aware that there are people listening and I do want to positively influence them. I want to. Even though I can't see them, I want to positively

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engage them. One of the things important to do that is to be able to communicate in ways that make sense.

One of the things I've learned in working with the dental profession, they're high S on the Myers-Briggs if people are familiar with it. That is concrete and specific and that's helped me to learn a lot. So very practical skills that are concrete and specific.

But let's say I'm with a patient or you're with a patient, Allison, and the patient seems to be not paying attention. You're making a case presentation, it's important to you. You put a lot of work in it. You notice the patient, you know, sometimes you look in their eyes and they're not there anymore. You don't know where they are but you know they're not there.

That induces oftentimes a state of anxiety in one watching that. At that point in time that anxiety will be picked up by that patient and it will induce an even further withdrawal. And oftentimes then we resort to trying harder, communicating more, trying to get a point across at that point in time. Filling in the space.

Allison: Yeah.

Brian: When the most effective thing to do that I would suggest at that point in time is to back off, become aware, and express what you're thinking. Example, "Gee, Allison, I am aware that I have been sharing a lot of information with you. Let me tell you what I'm thinking. I'm thinking that this may be more than you want to hear right now and I'm wondering how I best can communicate what I see in the treatment plan in a way that works for you."

Okay? I-based. And I guarantee you, if you do that, well I can't guarantee but I'd say the probability is 95 percent that what will happen is that you will stimulate the frontal cortex of that person. They will come out of their trance. They will be able to

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engage. You can then use a process called externalization, which is to take it out of the field and form a third link. I mean, literally I have people put their hand out.

It's what happens in a treatment plan. You're externalizing the discussion so you can focus on something outside of the relationship because there may be anxiety in it. So you're externalizing. That works very very well so much of the time. It's to balance it because if one person in the dyad, two people, if one person is anxious that is literally in family systems it is an unstable system. The way you stabilize it is by externalizing the problem or the issue or the discussion. You talk about it as if it's separate from but still part of, like a tripod. There's no such thing as a two-legged tripod, there's a third leg.

Allison: So you're saying by saying, "I'm thinking that" and you describe it. Then you say, "I'm wondering, I'm thinking that I'm giving you too much information." Did you do that right there? You externalized it.

Brian: Exactly. That's what externalization is is I'm saying what I'm thinking, I'm getting it outside of the relationship. But it's still part of it. But I'm expressing my thinking so that that brain right there is aware of my thinking, its images, and thoughts and comes out of its trance.

Allison: When you were in the place of the patient was anxious and then you caught the anxiety and you started doing that trying harder thing. Your step right there in that moment is just that becoming aware.

Brian: That's the moment of awareness. I see it frequently. Many of the dentists that I coach in order to... They'll oftentimes work very hard at Level One.

Allison: Yes.

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Brian: New skills, what can we do? Better communicate.

Allison: Show them more pictures, show them more models.

Brian: Yeah, I've got to make this happen. I think Level One is important but we have a difference in levels here. Level One, trying to do something at Level One to create an experience at Level Two, very very seldom works.

Allison: Right.

Brian: If I want to change someone's experience, the first thing I need to do is manage my own internal experience. Then use a set of skills that will in fact change or influence at a minimum their experience with me. And so I first have to kind of, as I tell people, my job is to manage the missile silo that I live in. That's where I manage this one here.

There are a number of other communication skills that I call our self-referential and they're just different. They're different than what we've learned because many of these communication skills most of us learned are linear cause and effect. You do more. If it doesn't work, you do more, do different, do less, just do something.

Allison: Right.

Brian: It neglects this Level Two because we all know, Allison, you know, I know, everybody listening knows, it is internal experience that drives external behavior.

Allison: Yes.

Brian: That's just, we want to create a very inviting practice. You want people to feel warm and comfortable and welcome. You want them to feel safe. Those are all internal experiences that people have. The environment has an impact, definitely. But the relationship and the field of relationship is much more

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significant. You know, I oftentimes get questions, “Well, this is hard to do.” It’s really not. It’s just a matter of being aware and using some skills that are different.

Allison: I just think there’s just a tiny little gap for me. It’s like when you think, “Okay, what’s happening here?” So you become aware of your emotional state.

Brian: What’s happening, right.

Allison: Just making that leap and it seems like it happens pretty fast but you’re saying in order to become aware you notice what you’re feeling. You have to.

Brian: You notice what your experience is.

Allison: What you’re experiencing. But then how do you get to that thinking? Like it seems like you would get stuck in the feeling and...

Brian: And most of the time we do. I will tell you to build the observation network that we have with the capacity for the brain to observe itself, for the mind, if you will. So it takes a lot. It takes practice, there’s no question. We aren’t taught that. I went through years and years of graduate school and nobody taught me how to think, particularly not to be aware of my thinking. We’re just supposed to know that.

To build the observation network, the neural network that is able to observe, it does take time. It doesn’t happen overnight. But what’s interesting is once that neural network starts, it’s easy to strengthen. It just takes practice. It’s like implementing with a new procedure. It’s like going to dental school. It takes practice. Once again, none of us are going to escape the process of influence. So if you’re in it, why not enjoy it?

Allison: True.

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Brian: You know? Let's put the odds on our side. And in the process, it benefits everybody else too.

Allison: That observing thing, is just having this conversation enough to go back and say, "Okay, I'm going to start observing now." Or, "I'm going to start becoming more aware."

Brian: When I do the Practice Leadership course, what I recommend for implementation is number one, avoid the temptation to go back and start implementing communication skills or telling your team this stuff. No, no, no, no, no, no. I understand the enthusiasm sometimes. My recommendation is to spend the first week if not two just observing yourself in relationship with others. Start to just build that neural network of observation.

And identify, for example, when I experience anxiety relative to my competence, when I feel or think or interpret or perceive a situation or something that someone said and it triggers my memories of being incompetent, inadequate, and not enough. And we all have those. So it triggers that set of memories in me. I know what it's like in my body. It's like my chest has been excavated. That's what it's like.

So I know what that sensation is and I know when it happens. It's like, "Oh, oh, yeah." At that point in time I'm aware that's what's happening and I redirect to the truth. Not to what I learned to believe but to the truth.

Allison: Yeah.

Brian: So that's the process that happens. By that first week or two, I mean everyone that's listening could spend the next week or two just *observi*, watching over, just observe your emotional reactivity, both positive and negative to the environment.

Allison: And that means no judgement.

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Brian: Well, you can judge. The brain judges automatically because it's the way it gives meaning to things. So the brain automatically kick into judgement mode. But even observe the judgement. It's like, "Oh, there it is. Oh yeah." But it's to become aware of what's happening. "Oh, this is what frustration is like for me. I get a tight stomach. Oh."

Then when you do that, you begin to observe, what are the situations in which that's happening? There you can begin to build. Okay, in those situations, how do I want to experience myself? Not how do I want to change others. But how do I want to experience myself? What do I want to be different for me about my internal experience?

Well when that happens for me, I know the main thing for me is I want to remember that I am competent and capable. I trust myself. I can handle things. If I don't have an answer I can always find one. That's what's important. It takes time. It takes practice but it's well worth it because it's happening anyway.

Allison: Right.

Brian: You know? It's like [makes high-pitched sound] and the neuroscience is on our side. Psychophysiology, the new neuroscience, interpersonal neurobiology is very much on our side. The science is there. It's just not been part of our way of relating experiencing because we tend to be very focused on Level One.

Allison: Right.

Brian: And forget that we live in the soup called Level Two.

Allison: Yeah, it feels so, when you described it that way, that when you observe yourself, I instantly felt this almost like space.

Brian: Ah.

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Allison: Like there's space there to make a decision. There's space to make a choice. There's space to...

Brian: There is space, lots of space.

Allison: It's like a feeling of having a little power in the moment to do something different than just get reactive or...

Brian: Right. All of us—I mean, I continue to react. Oliver Wendell Holmes said it well, it's not so important where each one of us is. It's important the direction in which we are moving. I suggest to my clients that what's important is what direction do you want to move in? Not where you are but the direction you're moving in. Because that's the strengthening process that builds the new neural networks that are accessible and then can influence others by accessing.

Allison: Wow, that's amazing.

Brian: Yeah, what's interesting, one thing about the brain, it generalizes. What I have seen is once an individual starts to implement this way of relating to oneself and being aware of oneself, in say a professional situation like a practice, it's transferable to your family and other relationships because it's very transferable. The content is different but the process is the same.

Allison: Yeah.

Brian: So it becomes a transferable, if you will, technology at that point in time.

Allison: So if you're strengthening it with yourself then your strengths is automatically applied to every area of life.

Brian: Right, right, exactly. Yeah, you can. Because who doesn't want to influence their spouse positively? Who doesn't want to influence their children positively? We all do.

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- Allison: Almost in any interaction we have we want to.
- Brian: Exactly. So then it's a matter of just taking and transferring those skills and that state to a wide variety of situations. So that's, I mean that's the approach, that's the way—over the years what's interesting is neuroscience has been really strengthened, if you will, this phenomenon called state-dependent memory and the important role it plays in terms of how we relate to each other and what gets triggered. And how we can create a new set of memories or strengthen the positive ones intentionally so we can access them.
- Allison: Yeah. It seems like you've been teaching this for a long time and it's just getting more and more clear. They can prove things that they couldn't prove before.
- Brian: Right. Yeah, there's a lot of science behind it. What has changed a lot is now with the advent of interpersonal neurobiology, there's a lot more coming out for example about the role of the vagus nerve and how do create safety for people at a deep level.
- Engager*, to engage is from the French word meaning to attract the attention of. So how do you attract the attention of others in your practice? To your thinking? Because if two people engaged, that's what they're doing, they're attracting each other's attention. It's a fascinating process in that way.
- Allison: Absolutely. Okay, we have a hand raised, Thomas Boland. Hello?
- Mike: Allison, this is Mike, can I have the next dance?
- Allison: Oh, hey, Mike. How are you? That's Mike McDevitt, right?
- Mike: Yeah.
- Allison: I recognized you voice.

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Mike: I thought that might be a way to get into the conversation. This is absolutely fascinating to me. I want to, Brian, thank you for the gift of your time and your knowledge and your wisdom.

Brian: Well thank you, thank you for that. I really appreciate that.

Mike: Yeah. It's just been amazing. As I'm listening and kind of picking up on different words and thoughts and things, I'm trying to discern is there a difference between emotional intelligence and what you're describing and the way I might distill it down is to call it emotional fitness. Or am I way off track?

Brian: I'm going to suggest that emotional fitness and emotional intelligence are probably similar. I can appreciate emotional fitness. I would put emotional fitness if I may use that term which I think as great as the first step. In other words, I have my responsibility to myself and to others is to maintain that, to strengthen my emotional fitness or my emotional intelligence through awareness and intention and paying attention to that. So building neural networks.

But my second responsibility is—because I could go up on a mountain top and do that. But my second is how do I engage others and influence them in such a way that they too experience themselves? I start to influence them. To me, that's the essence of leadership is first I manage what's happening here and redirect that and strengthen those neural networks. Secondly, I engage others in such a way that I increase the probability that they also begin to experience themselves in a thoughtful, positive way.

Mike: Neat, cool.

Allison: You know what, Mike?

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Mike: So we might be able to engage them and encourage their emotional fitness?

Brian: Oh, I can tell you right now I guarantee that. I think that's essential that you will. If anything, a leader's primary responsibility is to help people mature.

Mike: Hmm.

Brian: It's not that people are immature, it's just that we are so driven by our emotions particularly in a highly-anxious society we live in that helping people mature means helping them function at a more thoughtful, self-referential, a responsible level for the choices they make in their life. That's done very thoughtfully and that's what a leader does I think, whether it be with patients, team members, or family members, you know?

Mike: Wow. That's really powerful, thank you.

Brian: Does that make sense?

Mike: Oh yeah.

Brian: It makes sense to me. I never thought about it but thank you. You helped me make sense of that and clear that up, that's good, thank you.

Mike: Well, but you know, I mean putting the idea of fitness in too—because we're in our healthcare professions and certainly in dentistry trying to promote health.

Brian: Yes, exactly.

Mike: One of the ways I try to do that is to share with the patient that I see themselves as healthier.

Brian: Wow, wow, wow.

Mike: I got that from Naomi Raymond.

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Brian: Yeah.

Mike: So if I see them as healthier...

Brian: Right, exactly.

Mike: Than they might be right now, then I try to engage them almost provocatively by saying, "If you could be healthier, would you be open to doing some things about that?"

Brian: Yeah. And that, number one, what you're doing is you're focusing on a positive so it stimulates a positive picture. Secondly, it's moving them towards differences. One of the things that's so key, particularly in communication with other brains is to create positive differences. The art of creating positive differences. Because it's a difference, Mike, that moves people from one place to another. If there's no difference, there's no movement.

Mike: No, no.

Brian: Most of us create differences based on a reduction in the negative, avoidance, as opposed to creation of the positive. That's what you're doing in that statement. There's a picture you're creating and then you're actually influencing the patient to think about a difference. So you're engaging their frontal cortex and this is then and this is now. That is called *motivare*, motivation.

Mike: Okay.

Brian: It's emotion.

Mike: I recently reread *Appreciative Inquiry*.

Brian: It's kind of like that, yeah.

Mike: Okay, okay, all right.

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Brian: Very, very similar. Very similar to that. Loaded with curiosity and loaded with thinking positive differences and creating them. And creating pictures of them in people's minds.

Mike: I can't tell you how valuable this is. It's just amazingly valuable. Thank you so much.

Brian: Well, you're so welcome. Thank you for that. I appreciate that. I'm experiencing my confidence. These are the kind of memories that are so important to build on.

Allison: Yeah.

Brian: It's just so important right now for me to remember, "Yes, I'm learning how to communicate this well. I am competent." That is so important for me to remember because nobody else will remember it for me. So, thank you, Mike. Thank you for that.

Mike: I'll remember it because you're moving me down the road.

Brian: Wonderful, that's great.

Allison: Mike is very good at this. You know what, Mike, I think it's so funny that you raised your hand because you popped in my head when he talked about painting a positive picture for themselves. You're the person I thought of.

Mike: Well, thank you. Thank you.

Allison: Mike will take this information and he will positively impact not only his patients but other dentists.

Brian: Wonderful.

Allison: Yeah, he's an excellent teacher.

Brian: That's great, Mike. Glad to hear it. Glad to hear it.

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- Mike: Thank you so much. You've certainly added to my understanding. That means a whole lot. Thank you.
- Brian: Good, you're welcome. Thank you.
- Allison: Thanks, Mike. All right, if anybody else has a question just push *2. We don't have much longer. We only have a few minutes. The name that...
- Brian: Go ahead.
- Allison: Somebody did raise their hand. Do you want to say something, Brian?
- Brian: No, I was just going to say that if anyone, I know Dr. Chris Wilson is sponsoring a two-day leadership course that really goes into this and does a lot of enactments. With your permission, I'll just give you the phone number for his practice in Vermont?
- Allison: Sure.
- Brian: It's (802) 728-3343.
- Allison: Okay.
- Brian: It's going to be at the Black Stallion Inn at the end of September in Vermont. Dr. Chris Wilson has a private practice there. He's sponsoring a workshop for I think about ten or twelve dentists.
- Allison: Okay, thank you.
- Brian: You're welcome, thank you.
- Allison: And I think they have, do you want to give any of your contact information? Do you have a website or a phone number or something?

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Brian: Sure. I have a website. It's under revision, it seems like it's always under revision, but www.BrianDesRoches.com. The phone number is there and my email address is B as in Brian, last name DesRoches at ATT.net. But the phone number is on the website and a little section on the services I provide to the dental profession are there too. Allison, I will be presenting a day-long workshop at the Greater New York Dental Society meeting this fall on the second day, Saturday, a day-long one.

Allison: Okay.

Brian: It's in relationship to patients particularly.

Allison: What date is that, do you know?

Brian: Like December 1st, I think?

Allison: Okay, I think it'd be easy to look it up.

Brian: Yeah.

Allison: Okay, well I'm going to call on, now the name that shows up is Destiny Beills.

Mark: That's me, Allison. I don't what that name is but this is Mark Battiato.

Allison: Oh, hi Mark.

Mark: Hi.

Allison: I don't know where these weird names are coming from.

Mark: Yeah, I haven't changed that much yet.

Brian: Yeah Mark, you don't sound like a Destiny to me.

Mark: I haven't moved that far that direction yet [laughs]. Hey, I just wanted to make a couple of comments and then just your thoughts, Brian. I saw you about ten years ago in Napa.

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Brian: Yeah, your name is familiar to me.

Mark: Yeah, it's great. This call has been awesome. Since you were in Napa, you're like a fine wine, just maturing, going deeper, which is cool. One thing when you were talking about just some thoughts about the anxiety?

Brian: Yes.

Mark: Which I've struggled with that in relationships, with marriage, just things like that.

Brian: Sure, sure.

Mark: One thing that's really kind of helped me and I'm just going to throw this out and just kind of ask you the connection here. Which I think I kind of know but I just want to throw it out there, is that when we all go through this or I do, one thing, whether it's with a person, or a situation, or a conflict, or someone in my family, or something that's said about me or whatever. Or my thoughts in my own brain like you're saying.

Brian: Right, right, a lot of cues to that process, yeah.

Mark: One thing that I've done that's been kind of like a—I don't think it's an affirmation because I agree with you on what you said about those, that they don't last. Is that I go back to kind of a foundational truth that I believe. There's actually a song called "The Voice of Truth" that's a Christian song. I always go back to that. What's the voice of truth saying about you right now, Mark?

Brian: Wow.

Mark: And what's the voice of truth say about this situation? Who you are? Then it gets me to say, you know that's, what is my—because this is my belief—what is my creator saying about me? What's the truth about me?

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Brian: Wonderful.

Mark: Then really, it's just kind of helped ground. I was just going to kind of throw that out to a) how is this emotional fitness, emotional intelligence? I like what that last caller said, the doctor, about emotional fitness. How does that relate at all to your spiritual growth and maturity as far as enhancing that?

Brian: Well, for me, personally they're not separable. So what you're basically doing is you're creating a triangle. You're looking at this negative belief that gets triggered by the anxiety about yourself. You're seeing that it's there. Then you are referencing another truth which is the truth, I believe, about yourself. So you have strengthened that neural network. Literally you've developed a neural network that once the negative happens, it to a great degree automatically triggers and this is what happens. It triggers that linked positive.

So depending if it's not really overwhelming, it will trigger that and then you will ask yourself that question. You have the answer to that question and that I would imagine creates a different emotional state within your body.

Mark: Yeah, I think what you said about changing the nervous system of other people is so huge because I have a daughter who's fifteen and a son who's eighteen. You know, just when they're going through all their stuff, girls especially, it's amazing. I never realized this until I had my girl, the attacks, but I always tell my daughter, I say, "That girl said that but what does the voice of truth say about you?"

Brian: Yeah, yeah.

Mark: It gets her to change her whole body.

Brian: Yeah and what you're doing is you're asking, which is a really important question. In human communication, the why question

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tends to be provocative and anxiety-producing. A what question stimulates the frontal cortex. So when you say, “What is the voice of truth saying about you?” You have actually influenced her to remember. You’ve helped that brain remember and then you’re helping that brain strengthen the truth.

Mark: That’s awesome, I didn’t know that.

Brian: Does that make—does that?

Mark: Oh yeah, I never thought of it. That’s awesome.

Brian: Yeah, you never ask a patient why for example. You never ask a team member why did you not do, you know, because you will send them right to the back of their brain. What, how, what could be different, let’s think about this. This is what I’m thinking. Ways of engaging the frontal cortex which are all pretty concrete and practical. But that question right there, what a gift you’re giving your daughter. What a gift.

Mark: Yeah.

Allison: Yeah.

Brian: You know, you’re not telling her what to think. You’re becoming curious about what’s possible for her to think. And curiosity...

Mark: I guess I’m just passing the gift from the greatest gift maker to her, so, appreciate that.

Brian: Yeah, curiosity is from the Latin word *curiosus*. It means to care for. So that’s what you... that’s wonderful. Wow. Thank you for that.

Mark: Thank you for clarifying that. That’s awesome.

Allison: Thanks, Mark.

Mark: Sure.

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Allison: Thank you so much, Brian. We're actually out of time.

Brian: Yeah, thank you, Allison. This has been delightful, it's been reinforcing for me because every time I have an opportunity to talk about the principles and how this works, it strengthens my belief in a theoretical foundation that makes sense and it just strengthens me inside. I really appreciate that.

Allison: Well, I appreciate what you've brought to us, each individually and if we choose to use this, it will impact many, many people.

Brian: Amen.

Allison: Our patients and our team.

Brian: Exactly.

Allison: Yeah.

Brian: Goodbye to everyone who's on and I thank you for listening and I thank you for your time.

Thanks for listening to *Practicing with the Masters* for dentists, with your host, Dr. Allison Watts. For more about how Allison Watts and Transformational Practices can help you create a successful and fulfilling practice and life, visit transformationalpractices.com.