Ep #28: Developing Leaders with Linda Doyle

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With Your Host

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.

I had the pleasure of meeting Linda at a Midmark event that I was invited to. I think it was in September and we had a great time. I know Linda prefers a little bit different style of teaching than we have for her tonight but I'm thrilled that she agreed to do this because we learned a lot from her.

Linda does a really neat sort of a—what would you call it, Linda? You gave us scenarios?

Linda: Cases.

Allison: Cases, yeah. She gave us each a scenario and kind of gave us enough information to go and have a conversation and sort of come back and report what we think we would do. Then she would give us a little bit more information and then would go back. It was just a really neat way to learn. So I'm hoping you guys can get any little bit of what she has to teach because it's amazing. So, Linda, thank you for being here.

Linda: Oh, my pleasure.

Allison: I'll go ahead and read your bio. I know you guys have probably already seen it but Linda retired from Harvard Business School

after a career spanning more than 30 years. In her last few years at the school, she was a professor of management practice. She taught leadership and organizational effectiveness in the owner-president management program and the leadership and organizational behavior in the MBA program.

Prior to her faculty assignment, she was the president and chief executive officer of the Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, a nonprofit publishing enterprise which seeks to educate leaders, communicate important ideas, and improves the practice of management. Earlier in her career, Ms. Doyle served as associate dean of administration. Other assignments at the school included three years of adjunct professor of business administration and course head for management communication, a course required in the first year of the MBA program.

She had eight years leading the human resources management activities for the administrative and support staff at the school as well as some other assignments prior to these. She continues to consult and teach and serves as an advisor to several privately-held firms. She's also on the board of directors of Midmark Corporation, which is where I met her. And the nonprofit organization Professional Women in Healthcare.

She is a native of Toledo, Ohio, currently residing very close to there in Holland, Ohio and holds a PhD and M.A. in English from the University of Notre Dame and a B.A. in English and history from Mary Manse College. She attended the program for management development at Harvard Business School. My goodness, that's a lot.

Linda: I'm so clever to give you a long bio like that because now this is three minutes less that I have to actually think and talk. [Laughs]

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Allison: You are clever, I noticed that.

[Laughter]

Most fortunately, most of the people I've invited to speak have a very nice bio. So that's pretty typical. Anyway, Linda, I'm so excited to have you here. Thank you for being here.

Linda: My pleasure.

Allison: As you and I were speaking the other night, we sort of came out with what we thought was an outline but I may ask you people, you guys who are participating, to give us a little bit of a direction of where you want to go here in a little bit. I did want to start off by asking, we talked a little bit about one of the subjects we might talk about was leadership styles.

If we could start with that, I know for me that was especially interesting because I've had a lot of experience over the years. My team and I have worked with the DiSC profile and the Myers-Briggs and even, I don't know if you've heard of one called the Kolbe, there's several different things that have to do with I guess your personality or your strength finders and that kind of thing.

Can you, I guess when we were talking about the way that you see the leadership styles, to me, that was a little bit different from what I'm used to. So I was just curious how you see—it seems like yours is more flexible.

Linda: Yeah, I find all of those tools very interesting. In fact, I trained on one of them that's fairly complex, the Bergman Method, which is the person who's from Houston might even know something about it since it's headquartered there. All of those methods are interesting for helping you become more self-aware.

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But from my point of view, anybody who sort of stops there is not really getting the value out of the process because basically a style profile or whatever tells you what your natural inclination is. How you're likely to react. Where your comfort zone is. But none of us are prisoners of our particular style. The great thing about understanding your style is it enables you to figure out how you can vary it. Or where your weak side might be.

So you can make choices to behave in a different way if the situation requires a different kind of style. Once you understand where you're coming from, you can actually give yourself a series of exercises that you can try on, to see how they work. For example, one of the choices that leaders make that is very indicative or comes from sort of where their style is centered or how a leader assigns tasks, for example, or delegates responsibility and authority.

If you always, for example, make all the decisions. If you're kind of an authoritative leader who is pretty directive and you say, "I want you to do this and I want you to do it this way." Well, that works so long as you're the central intelligence who is always present and is always available to make all decisions. But you're not really getting people on your team to think for themselves or to be more independent or to be able to take some of the load off your shoulders.

So if you, for example, choose to delegate a decision to them, one that you know you basically don't care if they choose to paint the breakroom pink or green or yellow or whatever it is, that's a task that you can assign in a way that gives them responsibility and authority. It gives them a chance to practice decision-making skills and it gives you an opportunity to step outside your usual comfort zone, your usual practice, and to behave in a different way. To get, if you will, into a little bit different mode and learn from that.

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You know, how you handle mistakes. Whether you think of mistakes as a failure or whether you think of it as a learning opportunity. You can vary how you react and increase your range of style. Because one style does not necessarily fit every single situation. Do you treat your people on your team as individuals and you deal with them each one individually? Or do you treat them like a team? Do you ever turn over an assignment to them as a team and say, "You guys come up with it."

So those are all ways in which you can make conscious choices to vary your own particular style in a particular instance. It gives you greater range, greater flexibility, so that when you need to be able to behave in a different way, you've had some practice doing it. The other thing to think about is you would not behave in the same way if you were leading the fund drive, let's say, for your local symphony and you had a bunch of the city's movers and shakers on that team.

You wouldn't behave toward them in the same way that you would towards your team at work, your support staff at work. So having a greater range of style gives you many more opportunities to be flexible and to suit your behavior to the situation you find yourself in. So I mean that's probably a fairly longwinded answer but it gets to that question of that notion of having a more flexible point of view about leadership style. I personally believe that if you have a greater range, you can be a much better leader.

Allison: Oh, absolutely. But then the question is, do you have to have a certain amount of self-awareness to even realize that you're not doing that? Or that you might want to try something different? Or, you know. Is that something you can dive into a little bit, how to develop that self-awareness? Or how would you begin to…?

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Linda: That's one of the reasons why I think those inventories that you are talking about are so useful. But sure, if you don't have the advantage of having gone through one of those kinds of assessments, you can look at some basic choices. I guess you could say there's sort of a range. You can be at one end or the other end of those ranges. If you plot where you're most comfortable on those ranges, then you step back and say, "Okay, this is where I'm usually situated in this particular range. Maybe it's time for me to learn how to move out of them."

Let me give you some pairs of things that you might think about. On the one hand, do you embrace individual differences? Do you sort of treat each person as an individual? Or do you try to work with the group as a group and help them develop an identity as a group, as a team? Do you have team goals? So do you deal with people one-on-one or do you deal with them as a collective? So that's one range where you might sort of say where are you on that?

The next one is: Do you basically foster confrontation amongst your team members? Or do you foster support among the team members? Do you try to get them to be more confrontational in style or do you get them to be more supportive of each other in your style? If you're always on one end or the other of that, maybe it'd be a good idea to try to move down the range a little bit.

The third one is, do you focus more on performance or do you focus more on learning and development? If every activity that somebody in your group performs is one where you basically expect them to be as close to perfect as they can possibly be and failure is something that's punished so to speak, that's one way to deal with people. The other is to take a failure, if you will, as an opportunity to learn and grow. To help the person figure out what went wrong, why it went wrong, what they're going to

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do differently in the future to make sure it doesn't happen again so they can build on it. To fail forward, if you will.

Then finally, do you tend to be managerially the person in charge and you emphasize that? Or do you try to basically have the members of your team have a certain amount of discretion and autonomy in their behavior? Depending on where you usually fit on that range, you might try varying that. Those are each places where you can make choices that are different than your comfort zone and that can give you a chance to learn and grow yourself as a leader and having more variability in your style.

Allison: I like that. I've never heard that before. I've never heard anything like that even. That's cool. Thank you.

Linda: Well, good. I'm so glad this isn't all old news.

Allison: Well I guess, I don't know why I'm surprised. I just, that was awesome. I'm like taking notes over here diligently. That's great.

Linda: Let me just say, a way to help people think about this whole notion of your leadership style. You are shaped by all of your experiences by who you are, by where you went to school, by where you are in your sibling order, by what kind of family, whether you were raised in town or in the country. All of these things, some of them are visible, some of them are not visible, and all of these things combine to make you the person that you are.

Who you are as a person very much affects your style. It helps to shape your style. But the other thing that affects your style is the situation that you're in. So if it's, using the example I used before, you're in one kind of situation if you're talking about leading your team at work. You're in an entirely different

situation if you're leading the fundraising committee for your local orchestra.

So the situation also will affect your style and those things combined will help you figure out what kind of team you need to build. They'll be shaped by who you are and by the situation you find yourself in.

Allison: Okay, interesting. So is there more on that topic? I don't think I have any specific questions myself. Does anybody else have a question? Okay. You're unmuted.

Caller: Okay, I have a couple of questions for you, Linda. You were talking about treating the team as a team or as individuals. Couldn't the two be combined together? That's my first question.

Linda: Sure. What I was speaking about is kind of a range. So at one extreme is you treat each individual person as though they were an individual sort of directly and not really deal with the group dynamics, which all of us who have to deal with people know that eventually group dynamics are going to be a factor. The other extreme is to treat the team as a collective, you never meet with anybody individually. It's always the team as the team and so on.

There's a whole range of opportunities in-between and of course you can vary it. In some instances, you might treat them as a team and others it might be more appropriate to deal with them as individuals. But unless you actually think about whether or not you tend to be always one way or the other, you aren't really reflecting on the opportunity that you might lose by not varying it.

Caller: Got it. Then is your goal to kind of determine where you are on these four spectrums and to broaden your range as a leader, as a manger of people?

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Linda: That's what I'm suggesting that I think is a useful effort to try simply because the same style will not work in every situation.

Caller: Great. Thank you.

Linda: Some of the topics that I often cover when I'm asked to talk about managing change or leading change are topics like the following. Why do people resist change? What are the advantages and disadvantages of different change strategies? What does it take to be an effective change agent? What can I do to prepare my organization for the future?

So just taking some of these, kind of a little bit in order. I think unless we start by being reflective on why people might resist change, we can be blindsided because we've got this swell idea and it seems perfectly clear to us why this is something that we ought to do differently and yet when we propose it, we get a lot of grumbling and sort of looking down at the floor. We're thinking, "Why aren't these people excited? This is going to be so cool."

So it's a good idea to just kind of first of all reflect on why people might not like change. So what are the potential costs of change? Well, for one thing, they may be very competent in doing the job that they presently do. If you're proposing to do something different, say you're going to change the practice software in your office, well suddenly they're going to go from being very competent to being somewhat incompetent because they're going to be faced with something that they aren't familiar with. Nobody likes to feel like they've lost ground or like they've suddenly gotten stupid.

Relationships might be affected by this. So maybe there's somebody in the office who already knows this software as an example. They're suddenly going to be the person that everybody turns to and maybe before you were the person

everybody turned to for answers. So how are relationships changed? Your identity changes. I mean, it's affected by this.

You think, if somebody in the office thinks of themselves as the really smart, go-to person, to suddenly not be the go-to person means, "Gee, my image of myself, my sense of myself, is all going to be disrupted by this." It might take time, it might take energy, and even, depending on how people are paid, even the reward structure might change.

So the change that you think is so swell may mean very different things to the people that you're working with. Unless you're aware of the potential costs of these changes, you aren't really going to be able to be prepared for some of that reaction. There's a change model that I teach at Harvard—or that I used to teach at Harvard—which is kind of useful because it helps to put together the whole notion of what it is you have to do in order to be able to get change to happen.

It's not a mathematical formula. Math is not my forte but it's going to sound like a mathematical formula. Basically, it's D, M, and P have to be greater than the cost of change. Where D is dissatisfaction, M is the model, and P is the process. What this basically means is that if people are perfectly satisfied with the current situation, there's not much of an inspiration to change. So one of the ways that you can begin to get people ready for change is to create some dissatisfaction. Now what I mean by that for example is suppose the reason that you're changing, I'm using the same example, sort of as an extended metaphor here.

The reason you're changing your practice software is because the software you've been using is not going to be supported on the kind of computer equipment that you have and you have to change because if you don't change, the whole system will crash. Well if you start to explain that the possibility is frequent

crashes will happen and patients will be unhappy and that you won't be able to get to the records you need and so on and so forth and you can make that seem quite vivid and help people understand how that's a real possibility, the satisfaction with the current system is going to be overshadowed by that possibility. So you'll begin to create dissatisfaction with the status quo by making it clear that it's not sustainable.

So that at least helps with the D part of the formula. But the M and the P are also important. The M, the model, is the model of the future. So you have to paint a picture of what the future is going to be like in this new state. It's got to be concrete enough that people can say, "Oh yeah, I can picture myself in that scenario." But it also has to be flexible enough that people can basically sort of adjust as they go along in order to get to that new situation, that new model.

The P, the process part, is how are we going to get from the current state to that new state? Because even if the future sounds really rosy when you describe it, if you can't figure out how you're going to get from here to there, people are still going to resist the change. So dissatisfaction with the present, a model for the future, and a process to get you there, those three things have to be more powerful than the cost of the change. Once they're more powerful than the cost of the change, you can get people to agree to the change.

Should I pause there for a second and see if anybody's got any questions about that?

Allison: Sure. You guys, just press *2 if you have a question. That's pretty powerful, Linda.

Linda: Well, what I'd like to do, if there are no questions at this point. I think I'd go into a little more detail and give you some tools for thinking about this.

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Allison: Okay, yes. So we don't have a question so far.

Linda: Okay. So one of the things that I have found very helpful, and especially when I've coached people through leading changes is I have what's called a dependency chart. Down the left side there are numbers. The heading on that column is "key players." So that's where you write down the names of the people that you know are real influencers, real leaders, they may not be necessarily the people who have the big job title or you know, the official title, but they're the people that everybody looks to.

If Sally likes it, we're all going to like it. If Sally hates it, none of us are going to like it. So you have to figure out who those key players are. Then as you look to the columns that you write down to the right of that left-hand column, the choices are: block it, no commitment, let it happen, help it happen, make it happen.

So in other words, on the left side are the people who are most opposed and on the right side are the ones who are most in favor of the change. Basically once you figure out who your key players are, you then figure out where do they fall on the dependency chart? Are the blocking it? No commitment? They'll let it happen, they'll help it happen, or they'll make it happen.

You have to figure out who the key players are and how far to the right you've got to get them to move in order to have them be in a position where at a minimum they're not going to block the change. If you're fortunate, they'll help you make the change. Then you've got to figure out by what process will I get these people to move? You've got to figure out what those costs of change are to them. Then figure out how to neutralize those costs or how to ameliorate it or how to end-run it. But somehow to figure out how to get those key players. Ultimately,

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if this person is a blocker and you can't move them, it's possible that then you have to get them out of the organization.

But by seeing sort of where they fall on the map, where they stand in terms of being helpful or not in the change process, it really helps you get clear in your own mind what you have to do, who you have to move, and how far you have to get them. If people aren't key players but there's some that will go along sort of with the key influencers, then you don't really need to worry so much about moving them. So it helps to break down the process of leading change into something that seems more manageable.

Allison: That's wonderful.

Linda: Now, I'm going hark back to the earlier discussion that we were having about leadership style because this where it really comes into play in terms of change management. People who are more on the side of authoritative, give direction, and so on and so forth, they are more comfortable generally speaking with what we call a bold stokes management change system.

A bold stroke change often happens when there's an urgency—it's called for when there's a crisis or when there's urgency. When there's a high level of dissatisfaction with the status quo, then you can go with a bold stroke because there's low resistance. In a bold stroke scenario, the leadership has the relevant information, the changes that are needed are clear and easy to execute, and the leadership has the power to obtain compliance.

Now, in contrast to that is what we call a long march type of change. Typically, you have to go with the long march type of change process when the changes that are needed are not clearly known at the outset. If you don't really know for example what practice software and you're going to need what you should change to and you're going to need the input of the

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employees who are going to work with it. Then you can't just dictate it from the top down because they're going to expect you to have all the answers and they're not participative.

So another reason—if the changes that you need are complex and multi-level, if there's a high need for reeducation and new skills, if the stakes to the organization are high, and if there's a high need for commitment to make the changes work, then you need a long march type of process.

The reason the style issue comes into play is that if you are in one style or another in the extreme, and you need the opposite kind of style for this particular change process, there's going to be a fair amount of discomfort and you're going to have to really be self-aware and conscious in order to make choices in a different way in order to be able to lead a successful change process.

So bold strokes versus long marches, the way to think about the differences are that in the speed of it, bold strokes are fast. Long marches are slow. At the involvement level, there's low involvement of the troops in a bold strokes, very high involvement on a long march. The leader control style is high top down in a bold stroke and it's low control and bottom up process in a long march.

In a bold strokes process, the initial results are quick and clear. In a long march, they're partial and unclear. With a bold strokes, you might have different systems, different structure there, organization levers that you can pull. When you're doing a long march it's more about shared values and skills and style. Is that new?

Allison: Yeah, that totally makes sense. Yeah, I'm just sitting here thinking one of those sounds much more difficult to me. At one point when you were talking I was thinking my natural style is more probably just in general the I guess authoritative or the

bold, like "get it done" kind of person. I actually thought, "Well can we just delegate the leadership?" Like if that's not my strength, can someone else sort of head up the thing?

Linda: Yes, absolutely. That's actually a great solution. If you've got somebody that's strong and competent and has a style that's more amenable to a long march. Yes, absolutely. You could say, "Look, you're going to be the change leader on this process because I need you to get people involved and have them buy in. We've got to get their input in order to make the right decisions. So I want you to run this process."

Obviously, that person needs to be checking in with you and you have to setup the outside parameters so that they know that they can only spend this much or they have to pick something that's compatible with this other thing. But yeah, absolutely, you can delegate that responsibility to somebody who has a style more compatible with that change process.

Allison: Okay, because I was thinking, you're the leader then you're always the leader. I mean, you're still the leader but not… go ahead, sorry.

Linda: No, you're absolutely right. You're still the leader and that goes back to that range I was talking about before. This might be one of those things where you say, "I am delegating this authority and responsibility. You guys are in charge. You're the leader of the team. Here's your parameters. You figure this out." Think of how much better and stronger they'll be as team members by having gone through that process.

Allison: That's awesome. Yeah, because I think a part of me, even though I want to give it to them, I want to take it back because I feel like I'm supposed to be the leader. And whatever that definition is, I don't know, rather than just having them check in and having clear parameters, I tend to want to take back control or something. So, yeah, that's pretty neat. Okay, that's helpful.

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Linda: Yeah, your responsibility as a leader is to make sure the right things get done well. It is not necessarily to do them yourself to make sure that they get done in your particular way. It's much more about getting the right outcomes and much less about dictating the process. That's so hard for people who have that more directive, more authoritarian type—and I don't mean that at all as a negative description.

Listen, if there's a fire in the building, I by golly want somebody who's direct and in control. I don't want him or her calling a committee meeting to decide which exit we should take. I want somebody who's up there and leading the charge and getting me the heck out of the burning building.

[Laughter]

Allison: But there's so many things where there's not a fire.

Linda: Yes, and that's the issue. Making those choices and realizing that we have choices, that we don't have to do it in the way that intrinsically feels right to us. It only feels right because of our particular style and who we are. Coming to understand that we have choices as a leader and that that actually makes us a better leader by being able to figure out what the choices are and to vary our approach over time, depending on the situation. That's what makes us a stronger leader.

It's funny because in my own career I have had wildly different assignments. At one point when I was taking over a course in the first year of the MBA program. I got out of the executive education program that the school put me through to prepare me for this in May. By September, I had to hire four people to teach the course. There were four who were staying on. We had to design an entirely new course, negotiate the schedule, and go live in September. So we had the summer to do this.

I was like the captain of my ship and I made it very clear, "Here are the parameters. This is the kind of course we're going to put together. If the material that you're proposing to put in this course doesn't fit these parameters, it's out. There's no question. There's no discussion. If it doesn't fit these parameters, it's not going to happen."

[Laughter]

Then I put everybody through a training exercise even down to including, "We're all going to grade the same set of papers and we're going to figure out who grades high and who grades low. Then those who grade low, they're going to move up however many notches we dictate based on this experiment and you're going to lower your grades by this much because we're going to have consistency."

I was just the most ruthless, authoritarian person you could possibly imagine. It's very unlike my more native style. But I had no choice or I was going to be standing in front of a class of 90 students at Harvard Business School going [makes gibberish sounds].

[Laughter]

And that, that was just not going to be pretty. So I was going to get it done.

Allison: Wow.

Linda: Then, you know, there have been other situations in which there were no right answers. I was running the publishing company at the point in time when the internet came into being. We had to make some decisions about whether or not we were going to put our content out on the web. This is back when content was free, which of course we weren't going to do at Harvard Business School and we had to figure out the safety and security of our materials and would people pay?

It was all so new. There were no models. So I was not going to make those decisions all by myself. I was going to get the smartest people I could find in the same room and we were going to hash it out together. Then we were all going to live or die together by those decisions. So complete opposite of authoritarian. It was about as participative and delegative and as non-authoritarian as you can imagine. But that was—how could I possibly make those decisions by myself? I'd have been nuts to do that in my opinion.

So you know, those are just two examples from my own personal experience of times in which you vary your style tremendously to suit the situation you find yourself in.

Allison: Thank you for that example. That's very helpful. Do we have any questions right now?

Linda: I can talk a little bit more about change management or we could move on to the set-up-to-fail syndrome if you'd like, whichever you think you'd prefer.

Allison: I think, yeah, is there anything else that needs to be said about change management as far as your…?

Linda: Let me just offer a couple more things that might be useful. When you're thinking about what change strategy should I use, and you can have blends of those. I mean, the long march versus the bold stroke is sort of lining up the factors as they typically line up but a lot of change management process requires some variability. So it's not like you can't mix and match some of those pieces. It's just a way to help you think about it.

But as you try to choose a change strategy, some situational variables that you might want to consider is the amount and type of resistance. You know, if there's not a lot of resistance and people are kind of onboard, you can go to a bold strokes

type of thing. The position of the change initiators in terms of their power and trust. So if the person who's leading the change process has a lot of power and a lot of trust in the organization, again, they can move more directly. Although, if they need the participation and knowledge and reeducation of the people involved, then maybe you don't want to go with a bold strokes type of move. But it's possible.

Another big factor is where is the locus of relevant data, energy, and the effort needed for the change? If the people who have to participate in this process have a lot of data, a lot of knowledge in their heads, and they're the ones who are going to have to put in the energy and the effort to make it happen, then you want to choose the change process that's going to draw them in and get them involved and committed.

And what are the stakes involved? How big a deal is this? Is this a bet the organization? If the software goes down, does the practice grind to a halt? If that's the case, then you want to make sure that this is something that everybody's bought into and can use and that's going to work for the organization.

Another topic that I'll put in is that getting people to help you diagnosis what needs doing can lead to more positive outcomes. So in other words, if you sit people down and kind of talk through all the issues, what it helps you do is identify different assumptions and perceptions. If people are thinking about the situation in a way that's vastly different from the way you're thinking about it, you need to get those two things closer together. And it is actually possible that you might not know all the relevant facts. So getting that joint diagnosis done can be quite useful.

Another thing another a joint diagnosis will do is to surface misunderstandings. You'll get a more complete diagnosis. It reduces mistrust because people feel like they've had a chance

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to speak and be heard. It gives the people involved an increased sense of control and mastery. They feel like they're participating and are making some of it happen not having it all done onto them. As a result of that, they're much more committed to the solution. So those are just a couple of things to put in there to go along with what we were talking about in terms of managing change.

Allison: Okay, nice. Yeah, it just seems like it does take a fair amount of intentionality and awareness. I mean, it comes back to awareness, of paying attention too. I think I'm in the conversation and I'm asking questions but I don't know that I'm intentionally looking to see what their assumptions are or what their perceptions are so that I can see if mine is close to theirs, you know? That's deep. [Laughs] Deep thoughts by Linda Doyle.

Linda: Since you've put that out there, let me just offer one more thing. There's a process that we've talked about in classes and so on in terms of getting information out and contributing information. We talk about the process of inquiry and advocacy. Inquiry is when you say, "Look, here's the subject and I'd really like to know what you think about it. I'd like to know what your assumptions are. The data on which you base those assumptions. The conclusions that you draw from those assumptions. I'd really like to understand where you're coming from." And mean it. Do it because that's going to be valuable information that you need to know in order to do your job better.

The second piece is called advocacy. Now advocacy does not mean, "I tell you what I think and then I browbeat you until you say 'Oh yes, Linda, you're the smartest person in the whole world and I agree with you.'" Because that may sound like advocacy but it's not really good advocacy.

Instead what you want to say is, "Look, I want you to understand where I'm coming from. So here are the facts as I understand them. These are the conclusions, these are the assumptions that I've made based and those facts. Here are the conclusions I've drawn. So this is where I think I should be going. Now I'm betting that there are some facts that you have that I don't have. You may see the same set of facts and draw a very different set of conclusions.

"My conclusions might not be the best ones because I either don't have all the facts, my assumptions are wrong, or my conclusions have gone haywire. You've got to help me understand what I don't know. Where I've gone wrong. Where you would draw a different set of conclusions. Pushback on my thinking. Help me figure this out. I'm putting all my thinking out there so that you can help me see where I've gone wrong."

That's the kind of advocacy I'm talking about. That process, inquiry and advocacy, where you really put things on the table and you give permission to people to pushback and to correct your thinking, to give you additional facts, to give you new insight, that is the way you're really going to come to a very positive joint diagnosis of the situation.

It requires a certain amount of humility. But, on the other hand, what I'll tell you is that if you don't go through that process and then because you've been arrogant and not listened, you find out that you've made a really really bad mistake. Humiliation is way worse than humility.

[Laughter]

And let me tell you, speaking as somebody who's made some colossal errors in my time, I definitely go for humility rather than humiliation these days.

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Allison: So are you saying that it's both of those? You want to do both of those, right?

Linda: Both of those, yes, absolutely.

Allison: Yes, that is beautiful. It's almost like a formula. Because on both ends, you're talking about the facts, the assumptions, and the conclusions. You're asking them about theirs and you're sharing yours and then you're putting it all out on the table and looking at it.

Linda: Yeah, and inviting them to comment. The other thing is that when you do that—when you don't do that, when it's all in your head, then it becomes personal. You know? You start thinking, "Well this person is stupid. Or this person is stubborn. Why don't they see it my way?" Well you know, it could very well be that there are some good reasons for that person not to see it your way but unless you're willing to go through this process, you're not going to find that out.

             So putting the stuff out on the table, it makes it less personal. It's like we're both sitting on the same side of the table looking at this stuff together. Because we're working together to get a better solution.

Allison: That's exactly the image I had, yeah.

Linda: It's a way more positive way to go about it. It's on the table and the two of us are looking at it together, not adversarially looking at each other saying, "You're a dummy."

             [Laughter]

Allison: Thank you, that was great. I'm glad I said something because that was a nice pearl. So, is there anything else about the change, managing change, Linda, that we need to cover?

Linda: You know, one of the things that I often do at the end of one of my classes is I give people some questions to reflect upon.

Since we've spent a fair chunk of time on the change management stuff, just some questions you might want to reflect on. So what style of change management am I most comfortable with? How broad is my change style repertoire? What style of change management is my organization accustomed to? As I look at the future challenges, what change style will be most appropriate? I just think those are good questions to ask yourself when you're not in the midst of it. You know, when you're not in the midst of running it.

One other thing I would just offer, if you're running a really big change operation and you know, I mean something that's kind of bet the company on, do not for a minute think that this is not very stressful and something that you should plan for as if you were training for a marathon. When things are stressful, you don't sleep as well. You don't eat right. You know, you drink an extra glass of wine in the evening. There's all kinds of things, you don't get exercise because you don't have the time.

There's all kinds of things that happen when you're running a really big, stressful change process and you need to think about how are you going to take care of yourself physically and mentally? You need to have somebody outside the organization that's safe that you can talk to and blow off steam with. And you need to be aware of the price that your family pays if you aren't taking care of yourself in a good way while all this is going on.

Allison:	And don't you think that your family pays but actually the whole, everything pays.
Linda:	Oh, sure.
Allison:	I mean, everything. Okay, yeah.
Linda:	So I've run some extremely large, complicated change processes over the course of my career and I have sort of fallen

into practically every bad habit that you could possibly think of and I know where of I speak.

[Laughter]

Allison: Been there, done that, huh?

Linda: Yeah, yeah. Don't make these mistakes. I've already made them. You should get "a get out of jail free" card on this one.

Allison: Thank you so much. Now it's just listening to it. It's actually heeding your warning. Can you repeat those questions again? What style of change management…?

Linda: Am I most comfortable with.

Allison: Okay.

Linda: How broad is my change style repertoire? In other words, do I always run the exact same top down or do I always run the long march or can I vary in between those two depending on the situation? And if you always tend to go—just the question you asked was perfect, Allison. Can I delegate this change process to somebody else who has a different style because I'm not good at this and I can see by the situation that it requires this more participative style and that's not who I am. That's a great question but until you raise awareness of what your change management strategy typically is, you're not aware enough to even think about asking somebody else to run it. So that was such a great question.

Allison: Thank you.

Linda: So how broad is my change style repertoire? What style of change management is my organization accustomed to? In other words, if you always make all the changes top down, you give them directions and that's it, when you start asking them to participate and tell you what they think, they're going to kind of

look at you funny. Because they've never been asked that question before.

So if your organization is only used to one style, that is actually going to make a different kind of process more foreign and possibly create more resistance. Of if you always ask what they think and if they always get to participate and then suddenly you've got something that you've got to impose because it's clear that this is what the practice needs and there can't be any ifs ands or buts about it, they're going to think, "Well, why aren't you asking what I think?"

So knowing what your organization is accustomed to helps you think about how you introduce a different kind of change management process and why it's necessary. You need to explain why it's different and why it's necessary in order to get people to be more accepting of that process. Then finally, as I look to future challenges, which change style will be most appropriate? That was the last question.

Allison: Thank you for repeating those.

Linda: Sure.

Allison: I was wanting to write them down and I couldn't write fast enough. I also thought somebody else might have the same question.

Linda: Well if they do, it's what, *2?

Allison: *2, thank you, Linda.

[Laughter]

So we are getting close to the end. We have about five minutes and I don't know if we have time to do a quick…?

Linda: I can do a very quick just description of the set-up-to-fail syndrome if you'd like.

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Allison: Yeah, I think that would be great. Then if you're open to it, I'll just tell anybody that listens to the call that if they have questions or something, is there a way to, are you able to do any kind of follow-up questions or anything? We didn't even talk about that ahead of time.

Linda: Oh sure, I mean if somebody would want to email me a question or something like that you mean?

Allison: Yes.

Linda: Yes, I can give you my...

Allison: Or if you want them to go through me, I can email you. But if you don't mind them emailing you then...

Linda: Either way is fine.

Allison: Okay, yeah, that might be a good thing at the end just to give your email if you're willing.

Linda: Okay, sure. Okay, so the set-up-to-fail syndrome. Research demonstrates that an employee's poor performance can be at least partially and sometimes largely blamed on that employee's boss. In other words, we are often the author of the failures of those who work for us. The set-up-to-fail syndrome describes how that happens, why it happens, and how to prevent it.

Now basically, the idea is there is—I don't know if all of you have ever heard of Pygmalion, it's sort of the precursor of *My Fair Lady*. Anyway, the Pygmalion effect is that basically people live up to great expectations. If you think they can succeed, they will. Alternatively, if you think that somebody is a weak employee, that person will live down to the manager's expectations. For the employee that you've got faith in, they own their own successes and the failures come from exogenous factors, it's not their fault, it's the marketplace, or

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the weather or whatever. But for a person who's been set up to fail, success is a lucky accident but they own their own failures.

Now how does this happen? A relationship kind of begins normally, or at least neutral to start. Then something happens. There's a trigger event or for some reason the boss distances themselves. Sometimes this happens because there's enough difference between the employee and the boss that there's just not a natural ease and comfort. So there's a distant that gets created.

When that happens, the employee senses it and starts to kind of tense up and not do so well. When that happens, the boss increases supervision and the subordinate withdraws or over promises. The boss interprets the outcomes as poor judgment and capability, limits the subordinate's discretion and withdraws even further. The subordinate feels boxed in, withdraws, acts out, or self protects. The boss gets frustrated, starts to really intensely oversee the person's work and assigns only routine tasks. Doesn't give the person any flexibility or freedom in terms of how they're going to conduct the task. And eventually, the subordinate shuts down or leaves.

Now what happens is that basically there's a bunch of studies that show that some bosses make decisions about who's in and who's out in as little as five days. Such decisions can be influenced by perceived performance, by reputation, by personal bias, or comfort level. Now, basically how do you avoid having this happen in the first place?

The way to intervene, if this has already started to happen, the way to intervene is for the boss to create a proper context for discussion. The boss and the subordinate agree to the symptoms of the problem. They inquire, using that inquiry process regarding the data, sort of what's going on, what have we seen happen, and so on. They develop a common

understanding of the causes and they agree on performance objectives and a desire to have the relationship move forward. They agree to communicate more openly.

If you want to prevent it from ever happening in the first place, and this is so key, it's basically to begin with very active involvement for all employees. Do not say to somebody, "Well if you have a problem, let me know." Who wants to look like a dummy when they're in a new job and come to their boss and say, "I have a problem." Nobody wants to do that. So they struggle on by themselves and they get way down a rabbit hole before you ever realize that they're struggling.

If on the other hand, you say to somebody, "Look, I'm going to give you this assignment. I'm going to ask you to do," whatever, say if it's a small routine, you might ask them to do five. If it's big and complicated, you might ask them to do one. "Then I want you to come back and see me with it because I probably will have left something out or forgotten to tell you something or told you something in a way that was confusing. The way I'll figure out how I made a mistake in my direction is by looking at the project with you. We'll go over it. I'll figure out what I haven't explained fully enough or well enough and then we'll have you do another one."

Being involved early in a systematic way sets expectations, sets priorities, and establishes communication patterns. The early guide is nonthreatening because it's not triggered by a performance shortcoming. Then you can gradually reduce involvement based on improved performance. If you start with active involvement and then withdraw it, it's so much better than the opposite which is to not start with it and then have to supervise more closely because than the person thinks, "Oh, I'm screwing up. I'm going to get fired."

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Now, how to manage yourself in terms of avoiding the set-up-to-fail syndrome. Challenge your own assumptions and attitudes about employees regularly. Resist the temptation to categorize employees in simplistic ways. Monitor your own reasoning and inferences. Go back to the data, that inquiry process again. Create an environment where employees can discuss their performance safely.

Now I realize that was kind of a rapid run through but I hope it at least gives you—there's a great article. This is based on an article called "The Set-Up-to-Fail Syndrome." It's in the *Harvard Business Review* back in March/April 1998. So I think they've also written a book about it. It's Manzoni and Barsoux, B-A-R-S-O-U-X. It's a great article and it's something that I see so often in my coaching practice. I would just encourage you to sort of raise this to a little bit higher level of attention because it's something that can be easily avoided if you think about it.

Allison: Okay.

Linda: And we are out of time.

Allison: Yes, we are. Well I love what you said because that's the employer taking responsibility and it's much less threatening.

Linda: Oh, absolutely.

Allison: It makes the whole thing just so much safer.

Linda: Exactly.

Allison: And I have a new employee I need to do that with.

Linda: Yeah, that's when to start. Start from the very beginning and then ease back with the active involvement and the person feels like they've built confidence rather than lost it.

Allison: Right. Okay, gosh, Linda, thank you so much. That was fabulous.

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Linda: It was a rapid run through.

Allison: Well you know the blessing in this is it's all recorded, so myself and anyone who's listening tonight, as well as the people who get the recordings, can listen to it again. And you know, get the pieces that they want. They can listen to it again.

Linda: If you don't mind, Allison, I think I'll ask people to run their questions through you so that you'll—for one thing, that will give you an idea of how I screwed up and how to give me better advice in the future.

            [Laughter]

Allison: Okay, I see you use your own teachings.

Linda: I try to live by them. Yes, I do.

Allison: Okay.

Linda: Well it was kind of you to invite me to join your merry band. I appreciate the patience of those who've actually lasted all the way to the end, however few in number you might be. I hope it was a little bit of help.

Allison: It was wonderful.

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