



In the Tissues

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Back in the middle 70's, I remember my frustration with progressing slowly toward my preferred future. I cornered Dr. Pankey, who sensed my feelings and shared a story about one of his associate's "development in this work." When I asked how long it took this particular dentist, his response to me set me on my ear. "Fifteen years," he said.

Since the Institute was already functioning and on it's path, I asked what he realistically hoped its' influence would be on this timeline. His answer was, "It will probably shorten the process to two years." His reasoning was, "It not only takes time to get it on the shelf technically, but to get it in your tissues!"

This situation is all too common, and at all levels of the Continuum. Participants are unsettled with their progress, as I was. Often, my counsel is to "lighten up be gentle with yourself, your staff and your practice." In order to "get it in your

tissues" and let change flow gracefully into your life, it is important to "Know Yourself." In the C1 and C2 experience, we introduce you to learning about yourself through the social style matrix, while in C4 you spend time pursuing the "Know Yourself" aspect of Dr. Pankey's Cross of Dentistry through the use of the Kiersey/Bates questionnaire. This instrument allows us to look at our personal and professional "topology" and identify various "types" of individuals and how they deal with ever-constant change.

There are individual "types" who get excited with the ideas involving change, handling it appropriately from a psychological standpoint. Another group manifests the ability to deal with change with and through people. Yet another "type" rises to the challenge, gaining energy through the intentional creation of a "crisis" to which a response is made necessary. The final "type" is those that feel most comfortable when they can find "relief" from change, avoiding it or letting it pass by. Interestingly, my experience leads me to believe most dentists fall into this last "type" category – often referred to as "traditionalists" or "stabilizers."

A better understanding of our "type" gives us the ability to develop leadership qualities. An Individual who is willing and

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able to influence behavior, that of self and others is defined as a leader. The good news is that we are in charge of both the willing *and* the able part. The operative word, willing, has to do with attitude. The word able has to do with skill development.

As you come to understand yourself, you can use intentional learning and teach yourself to move out of your comfort zone and experience change as a benefit to your life and practice, not as a threat. Consequently, we need to find ways to measure our progress, make corrections and implement personal and organizational change. This behavior has direct impact on our patients, our staff, our families and ourselves.

Our expanding world of information and experience provides us the freedom to change and grow. Peter Drucker's words "Vision, Action, Understanding" are a framework for "getting it in your tissues."

We're permitted to act before we completely understand our vision. Identifying vision, purpose and philosophy of life and practice, as our young friend has discovered, is at times lonely, or can require an openness to new mentors, study mates, friends and experiences.

Envision it, Act on it, Understand it – and you'll find your "change quotient" accelerates.