



# Unlock Your True Potential

*By Lyn Carman*

Unlocking your potential - 4 levels of thinking

A powerful way to manage ourselves!

One thing that I notice after 30 years of working in this area as a Dental Hygienist, it is generally a self managed career. Many times we feel lonely, many times you wonder if there is more, and many times I know I have been called upon to manage my own emotions. And at the end of the day I think if you become a master of managing your emotional state you become a master of being an exceptional clinician – which is the topic of this article today.

If I had to suggest a key thing to take away from this article it would be;  
Do not let your emotions become the dictator of what you say and do!

Our emotional state will dictate the type of day we have. In order for us to experience progress and energy in our lives we must learn to delink our feelings to our actions. We think the feeling has to come first, before we take action, though, feelings come after the action. “Feeling like it” cannot be the decision maker.

For example have you ever been lying on your couch on a Saturday night, tired and you have a party to get to. The last thing you feel like doing is getting up and going to the party! You get up, you get ready and you go and you end up having a fabulous time – if we allowed our feelings to dictate what we do all the time we would be leading lives of boredom and frustration.

As an Oral Health Clinician, every day we need to bring enthusiasm, empathy, trust, playfulness, care and passion. It is up to us to manage our emotional state, which will dictate our experience.

There is specific skill in managing ones self emotionally. To help us understand there are 4 levels of thinking or 4 levels of experience.

#### Level 1

*Doing what feels good, IS good for me, IS good for others and IS good for the greater good.*

This is what we aim for, these are experiences and thinking we love, it feels good for us, for others and the greater good.. the quality of our career is ultimately determined by this level of thinking or experience. This is when we are in our flow, its fun, the patient is happy, the team is happy and business is good. This level is where our established skill set lives, we are already good at this.

How many Level 1 experiences you can collect is determined by how many Level 2 experiences you expose yourself to.

## Level 2

*Doing what does NOT feel good, IS good for me, IS good for others, and IS good for the greater good.*

At this level the thinking or experience is unfamiliar, we haven't done it before, it's perceived as difficult, or confronting. Experiences and thinking in this area are tough to start with. As a new graduate we are Level 2 thinking. This level is quite often overwhelming, we feel heavy responsibility, our heart rate rises, and we can be nervous or scared.

In this level we are doing the hard yards. Trying on new things, changing how the practice runs, learning a new skill, going to a workshop and introducing a new way of working.

This level of thinking is dictated by your goals, your outcomes, your reason, your WHY! This is where we have progress in our career and in life – progress makes us feel happy! All progress and all growth is immersed in Level 2 experiences, if you don't do Level 2 experiences you will stagnate and move towards Level 4. There are many times in our career when we are in Level 2, we are learning, things are changing for the good of others and the greater good and leading us to gather more Level 1 experiences.

## Level 3

*Doing what feels good but IS NOT good for you, IS NOT good for others, and IS NOT good for the greater good.*

In this level it is all about process driven action rather than of purpose driven action and is not linked to productive results.

This is when our action is determined by feeling, it is easy to do, it takes little effort, it is taking the shortest route possible and has the lowest standards. The experience or thinking in this level results in short term pleasure leading to long-term pain.

Is the action you are doing right now leading to a positive outcome or result? Is it leading to progress? Is not good for you, not good for others and not good for the greater good... but it feels good?

## Level 4

*Doing what DOES NOT feel good, NOT GOOD for others, NOT GOOD for the greater good.*

Procrastination and self-sabotage reside in Level 4 experiences and thinking. This occurs when we are not clear on purpose, not clear on an outcome and we have no goals.

Self-sabotage is when everything is going along fine and then you do something to stuff it up, this may create drama, or significance and we stop being bored for a while. We may be feeling a bit lazy, we may have lost interest and we may feel we need to quit

Procrastination allows a good feeling to stay intact. When you are procrastinating it means you don't get to experience the unfamiliar, it means you get to stick with what you already know. Procrastination means you get to avoid responsibility and play the game safe and that means for the short time you are feeling ok. This level of thinking is the main driver for both procrastination and self-sabotage.

Level 1 & 2 purpose driven thinking or experiences.

Level 3 & 4 process driven thinking or experiences, (these areas are not where you spend time, these can be delegated in most cases.)

If you have clear purpose in your career you will bounce between Level 1 & 2.

When you are about to quit, everything feels bad, you are playing safe, avoiding responsibility, you don't have goals, don't have a clear purpose or an outcome, you don't know why you are at work and after a while in this situation nothing feels good. It might have felt good for a while but not any more due to lack of progress.

At this point, to change from Level 4 we need to bounce to Level 2 and our skill set experience needs to improve or expand, we can increase our level of training, even within the practice or learn something new.

Immerse in level 2 experiences!

If all you have in your toolkit is a hammer then everything looks like a nail, though everything is not a nail. Challenge yourself with training, evolve and change to progress. Change what you are doing and more tools to your toolbox and see the possibilities.

Remember; emotions don't come to us, we go to them. The level of thinking we focus on, 1,2,3,or 4 will determine how we experience our emotions and which activities we immerse ourselves in, which will ultimately link to our purpose our WHY.

You cannot want something different and continue to do the same thing.

The 4 Levels of thinking provide the umbrella of self-management!

This journey is an inside job!

