

Preface

Audacious ideas come from the most unlikely sources. That is how the idea for this book came to be. Basking in the satisfaction of a seemingly well-delivered presentation for student pharmacists at the 2019 California Pharmacists Association Western Pharmacy Exchange and engaged in debrief, I suggested that we should write a book on that which we presented. I was mostly kidding around with my co-presenters. We were struck by the high level of engagement we observed on a Saturday afternoon in sunny Southern California, in response to a myriad of interrelated topics applied to developing leadership potential. The topics on their own were not necessarily new, and the need to develop leaders in pharmacy is NOT new! However, our effort included an amalgam of concepts and applications that permitted attendees to think about the topics—developing individually as a leader, setting SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound) goals, and developing a professional portfolio—on a deeper level to last a lifetime or at least the duration of their careers. Student pharmacists in attendance considered the origins of their leader beliefs and efforts to date, the type of leader they are today, how to practically utilize SMART goals, and why portfolios might be a benefit to their careers. Raising student pharmacist awareness on the utility of self-assessment and reflection skills for personal and professional development to cultivate career satisfaction and contentment rounded out the topics for our session.

So why not write a book, and why not raise the stakes to try to reach all pharmacy personnel and not only student pharmacists? How hard could it be? Well, we have worked hard to challenge “why” we strive toward fulfillment of our audacious goal to write a book. We satisfied ourselves that we were not simply “in love with the idea of writing a book” and instead are ready to do the hard work involved.

Seriously, how hard could it be to write a book? Well, it is challenging to say the least! Having much to say, staying focused and interesting, writing to engage the reader, and providing relevant, useful tools that can be applied today contribute to the challenge. Having the mindset of “how hard can it be” helps to mitigate our fears or any self-imposed limitations we might have so that we can move through them and on to

meeting our SMART goal of authorship with high levels of self-worth and self-compassion. You see, we are not merely educators who are espousing ideal, unrealistic information from the mountaintop. Instead, we are pharmacists who have diverse personal and professional experiences and who have been engaged members of the pharmacy profession.

In discussing our personal viewpoints and career trajectories with one another, we observed that we somehow seemed to know how to navigate and adjust during our careers (and lives), albeit messy at times. Somehow, we have known how to navigate life as professionals and have been able to successfully integrate work to varying degrees into our lives. However, the use of the word “somehow” suggests a spin at a roulette table at best, and that is not good enough. Can we promote conscious intention and offer practically applied tools to facilitate work–life integration? Wouldn’t it be terrific if there was a resource available to help us navigate professional life deliberately so that our lives could be more fully integrated and thus possibly enhanced? Wouldn’t it be terrific if there was a resource available to help readers determine where they are today and identify what they can do to move toward that which they aspire through a series of actionable steps?

We have evolved sufficiently to believe that we can benefit by being deliberate in our actions. We have considered what each of us can do to contribute to the advancement of our profession by offering ourselves in service to developing others. While we each happen to be employed by a college or school of pharmacy today, the breadth and depth of our experiences allow us to relate to colleagues and peers across the pharmacy profession and in a way that will allow for connection among us.

Last, we write this book as an acknowledgment of the hard work we have been putting into ourselves to be whole and complete professionals whose work is fully integrated into our lives. We are not trying to figure out how to sustain a professional life and separate personal life as that can be a cause of strife and stress. Being part of the pharmacy community—pharmacists, student pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians—is only one part of who we are. Our professional identity does not reside in its own, unique, self-contained lane. It bleeds into other aspects of our lives, just as other aspects of our lives show up in our professional lane.

Further, we are exercising and stretching ourselves. Each of us has a different set of life experiences and expectations for how our life unfolds.

In turn, we have found ways to see the value of engagement, though we might not have fully considered our decisions to participate in various activities and their consequence fully when we made them. Luckily, our decisions have worked out for us for the most part thus far. It is only now that we can see how we have been fortunate that all is working out, even if we only today recognize the value of what we have been doing upon retrospection and reflection.

We offer to you a window into which to peer to see each of us offer self-compassion for how we have arrived at where we are now. Our self-worth allows us to press forward and determine how our lives will continue to unfold in celebration, gratitude, and hopefulness for what lies ahead for us and for our profession. It is possible to think about adjusting—incremental changes that may alter the trajectory of your life toward greater happiness and a deeper sense of well-being—with the aid of a variety of tools that can be adopted into your day-to-day life to help you move ahead.

Change does not need to be disruptive and unmanageable. Your evolution can be thoughtful and systematic and controlled by you at a pace that works for you. I am reminded of an exercise at a leader development seminar where I was a facilitator. Student pharmacists participating were asked to review magazines, clip images representing important parts of their lives, and affix them on poster board to each form a personal collage for display. During the collage “gallery walk,” I recall seeing a tiny clipping of words placed at a bottom corner of one of the posters that read, “Growing inside a little at a time!” By writing this book, we believe we are doing our part to help our colleagues and peers be impactful in their lives, their patients’ lives, and the communities in which they live. We are helping others to grow inside a little at a time.

Arthur Ashe, tennis player and AIDS activist, said, “Start where you are; use what you have; do what you can.” That is what my colleagues and I endeavor to do.

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