



IMAGE ONE

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Surgeries and X-Rays

DOCTORS DON'T PERFORM SURGERY ON A BROKEN BONE WITHOUT FIRST TAKING X-RAYS TO DIAGNOSE THE PROBLEM. SIMILARLY, STUDENTS MUST ALWAYS EXAMINE AND DIAGNOSE THEMSELVES BEFORE CHOOSING A CAREER. BEFORE YOU PRESCRIBE AN ACTION, LOOK INSIDE.

One of the saddest stories in American history took place when President James Garfield was shot, on July 2, 1881. The shooter was Charles Guiteau, a crazy man with a pistol in his pocket at a train station. He went on trial for the assassination of President Garfield months later. The pitiful part of the story is that President Garfield didn't die from the gunshot wound; his death was actually due to the misguided treatment of his physician, Dr. Willard Bliss.

Over an eleven-week period of time, Dr. Bliss dug through Garfield's body, searching for the bullet. During that time, Alexander Graham Bell showed up with a new metal detector he'd just created—suggesting that maybe it could help locate the stray bullet. In addition, Joseph Lister had just published his new theory on germs, encouraging doctors to sanitize their hands and instruments before operating on patients. Some of Dr. Bliss' medical team suggested he heed this theory, as it seemed to be saving lives around the world.

Unfortunately, Bliss didn't listen to these men. He limited Alexander Graham Bell's search to the right side of Garfield's back because he stubbornly assumed that's where the bullet was. He was wrong. It was on the left side, and they never found it. Further, Bliss felt Joseph Lister's theory about germs was ridiculous. Consequently, he ignorantly explored Garfield's body with dirty utensils and fingers, causing the infection to grow—and eventually kill the president. Essentially, it was Dr. Bliss, the very physician assigned to help Garfield recover, who mortally wounded his patient. As one journalist put it at the time, the physician gave new meaning to the term "Ignorance is bliss."

A Lesson for Us Today

Today, with modern technology and discoveries, doctors recognize the importance of an extensive examination before making a diagnosis. In fact, every patient deserves four outcomes at their doctor's office:

- *A Thorough Examination* (The doctor takes time to look you over)
- *An Accurate Diagnosis* (The doctor evaluates and draws a conclusion)
- *A Proper Prescription* (The doctor matches a solution to the problem)
- *The Best Treatment Available* (The doctor treats or operates on you)

It was tragic that Dr. Bliss didn't provide these four gifts to President Garfield. But let me tell you something that's equally sad. Many students fail to perform them in their own lives and on their future careers. These four items represent different skill sets—and all are needed. Examine. Diagnose. Prescribe. Act. I believe we must develop these skill sets, too, as we peer into the future.

Once you finish school, you will likely enter a full-time job. For many, it will be your first full-time job. My guess is, you don't just want a "job"—you want a career. You want to do something that matches your gifts and passions, a job that allows you to do something that really matters in the world. You want to invest your life in a challenge that energizes you, utilizes your talents and solves a problem.

In order to prepare for a fitting career, you'll have to go through the same steps a doctor does when he or she treats a patient. This Habitude is all about the process of taking X-rays and performing surgeries. The X-rays are about the examination and the diagnosis. The surgery is about the prescription and treatment. Let's apply these steps to your life and see if they'll help prepare you mentally for your upcoming career.

The Purpose of X-Rays

Seven out of every ten Americans will get an X-ray on some part of their body this year. Dentists use them to find cavities; doctors use them to find broken bones or problems in your chest. Before doctors ever perform an operation, they look at an X-ray to diagnose the patient's condition. The information from a diagnostic X-ray could save your life.

Similarly, you'll want to take time to look "inside" yourself, to see what's there. What are your talents? What are your passions? How about your acquired skills? Is there anything wrong? Are there any unhealthy attitudes or emotions you need to address? What do you need to fix?

Ray came on staff to serve as an intern in our office right out of college. He seemed likeable, and eager to be part of our team. After one short month, it became clear he was not ready for work. Although he was a nice guy, he had a poor work ethic, getting distracted with games on his phone and conversations with teammates. He pushed back on some of the guidelines we followed in our office. He wasn't willing to play "team ball" and cooperate on group projects, missed deadlines and wore clothes that weren't appropriate to serve guests who visited. Further, he began to leave for home an hour early each day, oblivious that he was the only one.

When Holly, our vice president confronted him on these behaviors, he just said he had to be his own person; he just wasn't an "eight-hour-a-day" sort of guy. Both Holly and I attempted to help Ray see the adjustments he had to make, but he just wasn't willing. Consequently, Ray got an early trip back home to mom and dad. What could've been a great experience following graduation turned into a flop.

Ray's story may seem like an exaggeration to you, but millions of young graduates face the same dilemma. They're not self-aware. They don't know their strengths and weaknesses. Many have delusions of grandeur about their careers. In a recent survey of corporate executives, fifty percent of employers could not fill job vacancies because recent graduates lack basic communication and leadership skills. In other words, the jobs are ready—the students aren't. According to the Association of Graduate Recruiters, the number has climbed since 2005. A large employer recently spoke with the Department of Education in Georgia. In essence, he said, "We are not asking graduates about their GPA or their SAT scores. We are hunting for soft skills, communication skills and leadership skills. And we are not finding them."

The Purpose of Surgeries

When a doctor operates on a patient, they actually put into practice what they've diagnosed. It's about more than books and knowledge and theories. The treatment matches the prescription. In the same way, you must act on what you find when you assess yourself. Quite often, students get this wrong. Forty percent say they chose the wrong major in college; the average student changes majors four times. Half of all students quit before they finish. Further, a 2012 university survey found that the top goals for teen students were:

- *To get rich*
- *To get famous*

It's time to get this right. Students must choose career goals that are challenging yet realistic. A great career is about finding your top strengths and putting them to work to solve a real problem in our world. But it all begins by acting on what you know.

Excellent careers require hard work. They rarely just happen. People usually don't fall into an amazing career without sacrifices, initiative and ambition, serving extra hours, developing a great attitude, having a strong work ethic and a hungry mind.

It's all about paying the price once you know what you want.

In 1921, a surgeon named Dr. Evan Kane learned this lesson. He believed he could perform surgery on a patient using only local anesthesia. (Up until then, doctors put patients to sleep even for minor operations.) When he took the idea to his New York hospital board, they decided to let Dr. Kane try this experimental surgery, but told him he'd have to find his own patient. He agreed. The stage was set.

Dr. Kane finally found a patient, and a time and place to perform his historic surgery. On that day, the room was filled with other doctors and nurses waiting to watch him operate. Dr. Kane performed an appendectomy with such great precision that he got a standing ovation from everyone in the room. It was a success.

The year was 1921. The surgeon was Dr. Evan Kane. And the patient that day... was also Dr. Evan Kane. He performed surgery on himself.

When it comes to our careers—you and I must do the same.

Think It Over, Write It Down

1. Why do you think students get confused about their career choice?

2. Which of the doctor's procedures is most challenging for you as you look into your future career? (Circle one.)

- a. *A thorough examination* (Looking at what's going on inside)
- b. *An accurate diagnosis* (Evaluating and drawing a conclusion)
- c. *A proper prescription* (Matching an action to what you discover)
- d. *The best treatment available* (Taking action steps in the right direction)

3. In your opinion, what's the most exciting part of launching your career?

4. When you think about working in your future career, what are your biggest concerns? What scares you the most? What might cause you to get stuck?

Evaluate Yourself

Below, begin a list of what's "inside" you that would factor into your career choice:

1. Your talents and strengths:

2. Your interests and passions:

3. Community problems that intrigue you:

4. Your past experience:

5. Industries that seem fascinating:

6. Desires that motivate you:

7. Connections you have in your network:

8. Courses or subjects you've taken:

9. What others have affirmed about you:

10. Opportunities in front of you:

Try It Out

Build out the list above on a sheet of paper. Take as much time as you need to respond to each of the ten categories. Expand it. This could be the beginning of an “X-ray” that can guide your discussions and choices as you consider a career. As you reflect on your answers, do you see any trends or patterns? Are there topics you’ve written down that come up more than once? Do you see common threads?

When you finish, sit down and talk it over with an adult who knows you. What do they agree with on your list? Do they have any additions to the list? Do they disagree with anything you listed? What advice do they have for you?

Now, what “treatment” makes sense? What steps should you take next?