

Preface

THERE'S NEVER BEEN a more pressing need for leadership training in healthcare. Our industry has a long history of transitioning unprepared people into leadership positions, and the problem has only intensified in recent years. Extreme burnout is rampant, and turnover at all levels has never been greater. These issues are resulting in unprecedented changes in leadership. For new or transitioning leaders to succeed, they must not only have the necessary aptitude, attitude, and ability but must also adopt a new approach to leadership. It is just as imperative for established leaders to rapidly evolve their leadership philosophy and style to thrive in this new environment with all of its challenges.

There's nothing remotely simple about the world we are navigating right now. At all levels, every leader—new, transitioning, or established—needs to find their footing in this new healthcare landscape. I don't pretend to have all the answers. But I know what has worked for the organizations I've led (and, just as importantly, what hasn't worked)—and I *definitely* know how it feels to be blindsided by a sudden leadership transition and healthcare transformation.

A mere two and a half years after I finished my training to be an emergency medicine physician—a time when I was focused on honing my clinical skills and delivering exceptional care—I was provided the unexpected opportunity to be the medical director of an emergency department. I accepted the offer, which I couldn't refuse. Another two and a half years later, I received a call from the CEO of the healthcare system on a Friday evening to join him for

dinner on Sunday. At the conclusion of dinner, he stated that the following morning he was going to appoint me to be the president and CEO of the hospital.

While the first promotion was daunting, the second one was truly terrifying. How was I qualified to run a hospital when I was still a relatively inexperienced medical director? Although I was fairly educated with a doctorate in medicine, a bachelor degree in biomedical engineering, and residency training in emergency medicine and was back in school to receive a master's degree in business administration, I was woefully ill-prepared. Not a single hour of my education provided even a hint of leadership training, which was evident in my approach, my failures, my inefficiency, and frankly, my lacking personal health and professional joy.

The precarious position in which I was placed, as well as my experiences in several subsequent senior leadership positions, have formed the backbone of this book. Today, it is rare to find leadership training in traditional educational tracks, including residencies and fellowships. Often, leadership is taught (if at all) as a set of tactical skills such as running a meeting, creating a dashboard, or completing an evaluation. However, the great majority of leadership skills are not tactical or discrete. For example, how does a leader inspire others, foster teamwork, and encourage innovation? It is difficult to effectively teach these critical skills in a lecture format because they are highly experiential. Even for the tactical skills, being good at them requires experience. Someone can learn how to logistically run a meeting, but are they able to engage others in the meeting to feel comfortable in candidly expressing their thoughts and challenging the most senior person in the room?

Unfortunately, many of these learning experiences about how to be a great leader come through failure and tough lessons. The opportunity to experience these lessons is not even guaranteed, and it is unknown when (or if) a leader will encounter them. This book was written to share lessons from failure so that you can avoid them and to share stories of success so that you can replicate them.

I firmly believe that one of a leader's most important responsibilities is not to create followers but rather to create other leaders. My goal in writing *Cracking the Healthcare Leadership Code* is to create other leaders, further develop the skills of current leaders, and give those who are already exceptional leaders a different perspective to consider or something new to try. My promise to leaders at every level is that there is something in this book that will catch your attention and, hopefully, shift your thinking in a way that changes you, those around you, and the entire culture for the better.

—Kevin Joseph, MD, MBA