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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

A Brief Reflection on Those Who Have Made a Difference

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Yesterday, Richard Boyatzis of Case Western, who is a well-known researcher in organizational behavior, psychology, and cognitive science, presented a fascinating talk about leadership and emotional intelligence. He talked about positive emotional states, and the powerful effect those states can have in moving us ahead toward personal growth and organizational improvement.

During the presentation, we were asked to do an exercise in which we shared with a partner a story of a leader who was memorable and meaningful to us—someone whose presence in our life was important. It was a simple but powerful exercise, because it evoked memories of experiences long ago that profoundly influenced the course of our lives. I described to my partner the mentorship I received in my first job—when I worked as Assistant to the Dean of the School of Education at SUNY New Paltz. I was 24 years old, fresh out of my master's degree, didn't have much work experience, but was eager to work hard. Right from the start, the Dean treated me like a colleague. He asked my opinion on policy issues, shared information with me, and asked me to represent him at meetings on and off campus. His actions made me feel important, included, and valued. His faith in me gave me faith in myself and a belief that I could accomplish all that I set out to do. He inculcated in me the value of paying it forward, and I knew that this was something that I could do for someone later in my career.

I experienced the power of this kind of leadership a few years later after having been promoted to a position in the Human Resources Department at my college. In that position, I had the opportunity to work closely with our college President, a very formal and formidable woman. Despite the disparity in our ages and in our positions, mine rather low in the hierarchy and hers very high, she displayed trust and belief in me. She supported my pursuit of my PhD, encouraged me to persist, and made me feel that it was important to her that I succeed. I remember well the day my office

mates celebrated the awarding of my PhD. The President came down to my office to congratulate me, hugged me, and told me how proud she was. Unforgettable!

When I made my transition from administration to academia, I found the same support and mentorship from the colleagues and friends I have made at the Eastern Academy of Management (EAM). At my first meeting in New Haven, I was encouraged to seek a track chair position. People showed faith and confidence in me right from the start. Since then, I have had the help and support of dozens of EAM members, advising and guiding me with my research, encouraging me to take on increasing levels of leadership, and supporting me in my tenure and promotion processes.

I have been lucky to be able to help and mentor others as my career has progressed. Serving as co-editor for *OMJ* has given me the opportunity to help others reach their goals. Working together with our reviewers and editorial staff, we have been able to give authors and presenters enough help to push them over the finish line for tenure and promotion. We've helped them to expand the reach of their intellectual contributions globally. Through all of this I've felt the joy of helping others as others have helped me.

At each EAM meeting, I witness the same type of mentorship and support. The encouragement provided to a colleague or the confidence shown in someone else's potential success will not be forgotten. These are the positive emotional attractors that Dr. Boyatzis talks about—the compassion that charges us up to forge ahead and pursue our dreams.

I believe that this is the value of EAM. Whether you are mentoring or being mentored, encouraging or being encouraged, EAM is the place you go each year to recharge and remember the value of being there to bring someone else along. And as we learn each year, bringing others forward elevates us in ways that will resonate with us forever.