

The Leaders Library: A Professional Development Virtual Book Club for EM Educators and Leaders

By Steven Polevoi MD, on behalf of the SAEM Education Committee

The Leaders Library is a “closed, asynchronous, pop-up, virtual community discussion of mainstream books which have direct relevance to healthcare clinicians, educators, and leaders.” The series features a rotating group of internationally renowned facilitators discussing books with participants on the real-time messaging platform Slack.

Launched in 2019 by ALiEM (Academic Life in Emergency Medicine), the series features a rotating group of internationally renowned facilitators and is led by Dr. Dina Wallin, assistant clinical professor of emergency

medicine and pediatrics at the University of California San Francisco. In addition to her role as the series editor, Dr. Wallin is also a co-member of the SAEM Education Committee, and a colleague of mine.

Having served as both medical director and quality director in our department for many years I was intrigued by the series. Wanting to gain experience with Slack and curious about how the asynchronous process would work, I signed up for and was accepted to participate in the third installment of the series.

The book chosen for discussion was [The Coffee Bean: A Simple Lesson to Create Positive Change](#), by Jon Gordon and Damon West. A Google review of the book indicated that it was a brief read and seemed to have a message that would lend itself to focused conversation with others.

A primary theme of the book is stepping back and considering how we interact with the environment in which we live. In short, do we allow the environment to influence us in a negative way or do we harness our strengths and influence the environment for the good? Those of us who think





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about medical education realize how important this concept of critical reflection is to learning and growth.

I read the book and then began a discussion with my family in the midst of the COVID-19 quarantine. While on long walks around our city we engaged in spirited talks about the inspiring message of *The Coffee Bean*, so when the time arrived for the official meeting, I was primed for discussion.

Two days were devoted to the asynchronous portion of the event, with one hour designated on the second day for a live meet up on Zoom. I found Slack relatively easy to use and appreciated the simple prompts that the facilitators posed to get the conversation going.

The meeting included participants from all over the country and even a few from out of the country, which added to the richness of the discussion.

What was most remarkable to me was the degree of comfort participants had in sharing intensely personal experiences as leaders in their respective systems. Powerful connections were made in only an hour on Zoom. Participants posed a number of possible explanations for this connectivity and closeness, including like-mindedness, medical education focus, and humility in all having experienced the ups and downs of our various leadership roles.

In retrospect, I am pleased to have experienced this process and highly

recommend other members of SAEM with leadership interests to join in future events. The asynchrony works well for us in emergency medicine and the intimate, yet geographically diverse group of participants lends itself to in-depth conversations that are truly relevant to our work and personal lives. ▶

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Steven Polevoi is a clinical professor of emergency medicine in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. He is a member of the SAEM Education Committee.