

YOUR PEARL TALK

Everything You Need to Know

Led by Dr. LaRee Johnson
Real Stories. Real Action. Real People.

Welcome, Speaker

You signed up to give a PEARL Talk — and that matters. Not because you are expected to have everything figured out, but because someone in that room is going through exactly what you went through, and they need to hear what you did about it.

This guide walks you through everything: how the day is structured, how to build your talk, how to stay within the 7-8 minute format, and what to do if you get nervous. Read it once all the way through, then come back to the talk-building section when you sit down to prepare.

The only rule: be specific. Nothing superficial. No generalities. The more concrete you are, the more your audience will take home.

Day at a Glance

Session 1 8:00 – 9:30am	Identity, Career & Inner Work — Wellness, burnout, body, balance
Morning Break 9:30 – 10:00am	Coffee, connection, stretch
Session 2 10:00 – 11:30am	Relationships, Motherhood & Family — Partnership, kids, friendships, community
Lunch 11:30am – 12:30pm	Sit down, eat something, talk to someone new
Session 3 12:30 – 2:00pm	Business, Leadership & Financial Wellness — Practice, money, leadership

Afternoon Break 2:00 – 2:30pm	Reset before the final session
Session 4 2:30 – 4:00pm	No Protocol for This — Real situations, real solutions

PEARL Talks happen within each session. Your talk will be assigned to the session that matches your topic. You will receive your exact time slot in advance.

The PEARL Talk Format

Every PEARL Talk follows the same three-part structure. Total time: 7 to 8 minutes. That is it. No slides required. No lengthy bio. Just you, your story, and the thing you want people to leave with.

Part 1: The Hook	<i>~90 seconds</i>	One sentence that names the challenge and makes the room lean in. Drop them into the moment.
Part 2: What I Did About It	<i>~5 minutes</i>	The specific actions, decisions, and systems. What worked. One thing that did not. Give them the real version, not the polished recap.
Part 3: Your Turn	<i>~90 seconds</i>	One concrete action the audience can take this week. Specific enough that they know exactly where to start on Monday.

Building Your Talk — Step by Step

Use the prompts below to build each part of your talk. You do not need a script — but you do need to know exactly what you are going to say in each section before you walk up. Write your answers out, then practice saying them out loud until it flows.

Step 1 — Pick Your Topic

Choose one topic. One moment. One system. One conversation. The biggest mistake speakers make is trying to cover too much. A 7-minute talk about one specific thing is far more powerful than a 7-minute overview of three things.

Ask yourself:

What is the one thing I know now that I wish someone had told me earlier?

What did I figure out the hard way that could save someone else time, money, or pain?

What moment in my career changed the way I work, lead, or live?

What system, script, or framework do I actually use that most people don't know about?

You can choose from the curated list of PEARL Talk topics provided, or create your own. If it is specific to your experience and useful to someone else, it belongs here.

Step 2 — Write Your Hook (~90 seconds)

Your hook is one to three sentences. Its only job is to make the room stop, pay attention, and recognize themselves in what you are saying. Name the challenge directly. Drop them into the moment.

Hook prompts — finish one of these sentences:

"The moment I knew something had to change was..."

"Nobody warned me that..."

"I spent [X years / months] doing it wrong before I figured out..."

"The thing I kept avoiding — and what finally happened when I stopped avoiding it — was..."

"I was [situation] when [specific thing happened] and I had no idea what to do next."

Strong hook example:

"I had been in practice for six years when I looked at my schedule one Tuesday morning and realized I had not eaten lunch in three weeks. Not busy-forgot-to-eat. I mean I had stopped scheduling it entirely, and nobody noticed because I never said anything."

Weak hook example:

"Today I want to talk about the importance of taking care of yourself as a clinician, which is something we all know we should do but sometimes forget."

The difference: one drops you into a real moment. The other announces a topic. Always go with the moment.

Step 3 — Build Your Middle (~5 minutes)

This is the core of your talk. You have five minutes to walk the audience through exactly what you did. Be specific. Give them the actual steps, the real numbers, the exact words you used, the thing that did not work the first time.

Structure your middle around three to four concrete points. For each one, answer:

- ◆ What specifically did I do? (Not 'I improved my schedule' — 'I blocked 12:00-12:30 every day and told my front desk it was a patient appointment so it would not get moved.')
- ◆ What was the result? Give a real outcome — time saved, money recovered, relationship repaired, habit maintained.
- ◆ What did not work, or what would I do differently? One honest thing. This is what makes a talk trustworthy.

Middle section prompts:

Walk me through exactly what you did, in the order you did it.

What specific tool, script, system, or framework did you use?

What number, timeline, or outcome can you give that makes this real?

What did you try first that did not work — and why?

What was the conversation you had to have, and what did you actually say?

Strong middle example:

"I started by pulling three months of overhead reports side by side. Our lab costs were running at 14% — the benchmark is 8-10%. I had no idea. I called our lab rep the next morning and asked for an itemized breakdown of every case we had sent in the past 90 days. Three of our most frequently used crown products had a cheaper equivalent we had never been offered. We switched two of them immediately. Lab costs dropped to 9.5% within 60 days. The third one we kept because the quality difference actually mattered for our younger patients. That is the part I would have missed if I had just cut across the board."

Weak middle example:

"I really focused on getting my overhead under control and started paying more attention to my numbers. It made a big difference and I feel much more confident now about the financial side of things."

One gives you something to act on. The other gives you a feeling. Always give them something to act on.

Step 4 — Close With Your Turn (~90 seconds)

End with one thing the audience can do this week. Not a list. Not a concept. One specific, concrete action that they can start on Monday.

Your Turn must pass this test:

Is it specific enough that someone could do it without asking a follow-up question?

Can it realistically be started within the next 7 days?

Is it one thing — not three things disguised as one?

Does it connect directly to the story you just told?

Strong close example:

"This week, pull your last three months of lab invoices and find your lab cost as a percentage of collections. If you do not know how to calculate it, I will write it on a notecard and leave it at the registration table. If that number is above 10%, call your lab rep before Friday and ask for an itemized breakdown. That is the first conversation I had, and it is where everything else started."

Weak close example:

"So I really encourage everyone to take a closer look at their financials and just be more intentional about understanding where their money is going. It is so important and I hope this was helpful."

Sample Topics — Pick One or Create Your Own

Below is a selection of PEARL Talk topics organized by session. These are starting points — not a complete list. If your story does not fit neatly into one of these titles, create your own. The only requirement is that it is specific, honest, and useful.

Session 1 — Identity, Career & Inner Work

- ◆ How I Almost Quit — and the One Change That Made Me Stay
- ◆ 3 Non-Negotiables That Protect My Energy Every Week
- ◆ The Boundary Script That Changed My Practice
- ◆ My Actual Workout System — and How I've Protected It for 5 Years
- ◆ My Sunday Meal Prep System — and Why It Changed My Clinical Days
- ◆ How I Made Lunch Non-Negotiable in My Practice
- ◆ How I Finally Fixed My Sleep — and What It Did to My Practice
- ◆ Recognizing Burnout Before It Breaks You — the Early Signs I Missed
- ◆ Building an Identity Beyond the White Coat
- ◆ What Therapy Actually Did for My Career — and How to Start
- ◆ How I Work Through Imposter Syndrome at the Chair — My Actual Toolkit
- ◆ What I'd Tell My First-Year Self — 3 Specific, Actionable Things

Session 2 — Relationships, Motherhood & Family

- ◆ How We Finally Divided Everything — the Real Negotiation
- ◆ The Conversation We Kept Avoiding — and How We Finally Had It
- ◆ The System I Built for the Mental Load — and How You Can Steal It
- ◆ The Logistics of a Working Mom Week — How It Actually Works
- ◆ Returning to Work After Maternity Leave — What I Wish I'd Known
- ◆ The Reframe That Ended My Mom Guilt Loop
- ◆ How I Set Limits With My Parents and In-Laws Without Blowing Up the Relationship
- ◆ The Friendships I Almost Let Die — and What I Did to Save Them
- ◆ Building Community When Your Schedule Leaves No Room for It
- ◆ How I Built My Village — and How to Build Yours

Session 3 — Business, Leadership & Financial Wellness

- ◆ The Financial Basics Every Practice Owner Should Know Cold
- ◆ What I Wish I Had Negotiated in My Associate Contract
- ◆ What the DSO Decision Actually Looks Like — How to Think It Through
- ◆ How I Learned to Delegate — and What It Cost Me Not to
- ◆ How I Finally Started Saving for Retirement — and What I Did First
- ◆ The Insurance Policies That Actually Matter — and the Ones I Wasted Money On
- ◆ How I Pay Off My Student Loans Without Putting My Life on Hold

- ◆ How I Budget for the Big Life Stuff — Vacations, Homes, and Things That Are Not Work
- ◆ How I Lead a Team That Is Not Mine to Own
- ◆ What Selling My Practice Actually Felt Like — and What Came Next

Session 4 — No Protocol for This

- ◆ When a Parent Loses It in Your Chair — How I Handle It Now
- ◆ When a Team Member Walks Out Mid-Day — What I Do in the Next 4 Hours
- ◆ The Difficult Team Member I Kept Too Long — and What It Cost Me
- ◆ When a Procedure Doesn't Go as Planned — What I Say and Do Next
- ◆ How I Respond When a Parent Threatens a Bad Review
- ◆ The Insurance Fight I Finally Learned to Win
- ◆ The Day I Made a Clinical Mistake — What I Said, What I Did, and How I Moved Forward
- ◆ The Policy I Rewrote After One Parent Changed Everything
- ◆ I Joined a DSO and It's Going Sideways — What I Did Next
- ◆ How I Handled Being Reported to the Board — and What I'd Tell Someone Going Through It Now

Timing, Logistics & What to Expect

Here is what the day looks like for you as a speaker, and what to expect when it is your turn.

Your Time Slot

- ◆ You will receive your assigned session and time slot in advance of the event.
- ◆ You will be introduced briefly by the session facilitator. No need to give a lengthy bio.
- ◆ A timekeeper will give you a visible signal at the 6-minute mark and again at 7 minutes. Aim to wrap up cleanly by 8 minutes.

Slides

- ◆ Slides are not required. Most PEARL Talks are more powerful without them.
- ◆ If you choose to use slides, keep them to 3-5 maximum.
- ◆ Submit any slides to Brooke Weinzierl at brooke@dentaltceproviders at least 2 weeks before the event. She will email you with a reminder!

What to Bring

- ◆ Your talk, practiced out loud at least three times.

If You Get Nervous

- ◆ Nervous means you care. That is a good sign.
- ◆ You are not performing — you are having a conversation with a room full of colleagues who are rooting for you.
- ◆ If you lose your place, pause, take a breath, and go back to your structure: Hook, What I Did, Your Turn. You always know where you are.
- ◆ The most memorable talks are the ones where the speaker was honest, not the ones where the speaker was perfect.

Real Stories. Real Action. Real People.

Thank you for being part of PEARL Talks.