

## FEATURE

**Talk about it**

It is an urban myth that we should be able to cope with stress since it comes with being a member of the profession. This is simply not true. It is sensible to pool resource and discuss how other colleagues manage in precisely the same way as we do with clinical challenges.

**Explore risk**

A large aspect of risk in broader business (non-healthcare) is based on managing consequences since many risks cannot be prevented. In our context it helps to outline what we will do in the event of the worst case scenario. Explore the risk and decide what you will do if it materialises. This gives you immediate control and we can approach the task with the confidence we require and patients expect.

**Keep consequences in perspective**

When we work in a small space and on small things it can be difficult to keep the big picture in mind. Many of the causes of stress, in the bigger picture, appear less significant than when close up.

**Accept that we have limitations**

We screen continuously and diligently in dentistry with the intention of identifying all cases requiring treatment, whether it's caries, periodontal disease or cancer. If we miss something on a screening that is a real disappointment and is never deliberate. It is essential to remember you did not create the caries, the periodontal disease or the cancer.

**Listen to your patients**

There is a physiological and emotional person in your dental chair and their input will have an impact on your outcome. That is every patient's right and we should not feel anxious or responsible for dictating their

## WHY AM I FEELING STRESSED?

In our final look into stress, News Editor David Westgarth asks co-author of the stress series Brid Hendron what can people do if they feel stressed, and Brid tells us why in many ways stress is just like periodontal disease



**'If you feel you are out of your depth or can't seem to make headway take advice and ask for help'**

choices or behaviour even when we feel we know better. This means you may have to compromise on the possible treatment and be satisfied with the agreed treatment.

**If you hate where you work**

Even though your energy may be low, sit down and ask yourself how would life be different if I worked somewhere else? What critical ingredients are required for me to feel valued? If I found those ingredients how would that feel? Would that change be worthy of compromise or sacrifice – perhaps lower pay, travelling further, working different hours or studying to extend my scope of practice? We often perceive these 'compromises' as a step backward. In fact, on the contrary, we are regaining our balance in order to propel forward.

Brid Hendron is a qualified dentist and communication coach. Brid provides customised training for healthcare professionals and their teams to optimise performance and eliminate stress in person and by webinar. She is a qualified NLP trainer and provides one-on-one life and business coaching for all dental professionals.

**Knowledge builds confidence. Ignorance breeds fear**

The current pace of change dictates situations arise when we simply may not know enough. This could be answering a patient query, adapting to a change in technique, adhering to new guidelines (eg bisphosphonates) or indeed responding to a background change in regulation, or legislation. This lack of knowledge leaves us feeling exposed, inadequately equipped or even under threat. Actively identifying 'gaps' and taking steps to narrow these is extremely empowering and while effort is required it pays dividends. This is in stark contrast to the futile stress we experience when we decide to navigate around these gaps and pray we don't fall in.

In many ways stress is like periodontal disease:

- Some people are more susceptible than others
- It is easier prevented than cured
- Early intervention pays huge dividends
- It can escalate or exacerbate if peripheral factors change
- It requires constant maintenance (assisted or unassisted)
- If it cannot be contained by a standard approach you may need specialist help
- Other people might recognise symptoms and diagnose it before you do, so it pays to listen!

If you feel you are out of your depth or can't seem to make headway take advice and ask for help. We are uniquely advantaged in a profession such as ours as we are surrounded by individuals who care as a vocation. There are always calmer waters ahead.