

# Go beyond ticking boxes this year



**Joanne Brindley**<sup>1</sup> encourages you to stop and consider what your future vision of practice looks like.

**N**ow that the New Year has begun, there is an opportunity for us to reflect on the past year and to consider the future.

In its simplest form we can do this using Borton's<sup>1</sup> three stem questions:

What have I achieved?

So what did I do to achieve this?

Now what do I want my future practice to look like?

The use of reflection to consider how we envisage our ideal future practice can be called *prospective reflection*. Prospective reflection has been described by Alsop and Ryan<sup>2</sup> as the type of activity we undertake when viewing a holiday brochure, when we take time to visualise what our holiday location may be like, the type of people we will meet and the opportunities that may present themselves. The winter vacation period is an ideal time for us to relax and refocus on our lives and to take time to consider what we want the forthcoming year to look like. It is an optimum moment to take a step back to consider what we need to do to empower ourselves to become a better version of ourselves. A moment when opposed to just looking ahead to planning our own summer breaks, we can visualise and plan how our career pathways might be...

By planning a career pathway, I do not mean that we should just consider a singular perspective, but to think about how we can support ourselves and others. For example, if

you have been having back problems, why not consider taking up a new class: Pilates, yoga, or a core strengthening class?

If your workplace relationships have been struggling, maybe now is the time to consider group activities that will build team relationships and make the team stronger. Perhaps a book club? Or a monthly bake (where each team member takes it in turn to bring a treat along for everyone to share)? You could even go for a short power-walk once a week, to get everyone away from the surgery and provide everyone with an opportunity to see some daylight (which is particularly helpful when the daylight hours are short).

For those more experienced staff maybe a spot of informal (or formal) mentorship may help you to share your experiences with other members of the team, enriching both your mentee's life with the added benefit that it can help to enrich your own pride and enhance the patient experience.

If you would like to learn a new skill, considering a course in an alternative therapy can be a useful enhancement to the entire practice. This can become a unique selling point that you can use to raise the profile of your workplace or practice.

Perhaps you have always had a burning desire to improve the aesthetics of your anterior composite restorations or you have a colleague who would like to go on an extended duties course. If making a large commitment seems too much, how about setting up a CPD fund that, with a small contribution every month, will enable you to go on a course that may change your current practice?

By taking the time to visualise a prospective

view of not just your own practice, but also how you can help others to achieve their potential, you will enable the development of the dental team that surrounds you and ultimately enhance the patient experience.

Reflection can often be viewed in a negative light, just looking back on past mistakes, unpacking what went wrong and how to avoid reoccurrence in the future. I strongly believe that this should not be the case, that we should encourage a reflective culture to develop that is borne out of a need to nurture enquiry and insight generated as a direct result of a positive commitment to undertake reflection by all members of the team. The process of reflection and being brave enough to share our experiences and vision of the future aids in the proactive resolution of future problems by sharing new perspectives on a situation. This sharing of ideas facilitates involvement of all members of the dental team, generating a collaborative approach to personal development planning that extends far beyond just ticking continuing professional development boxes. Take time to stop and consider:

What does your future vision of practice look like?

How are you going to achieve this?

1. Borton T. *Reach, touch and teach*. London: Hutchinson, 1970.
2. Alsop A, Ryan S. *Making the most of fieldwork education: a practical approach*. San Diego: Singular Publishing Group Inc, 1996.

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