

## Remember your ‘why’

Since the start of the pandemic, the world of dentistry has been turned upside down. From having to work in uncomfortable PPE, to watching huge backlogs of appointments building up because of fallow time and a shortage of dentists thanks to Brexit, problems with recruitment and retention, it seems as if it's been difficult to catch a break.

It's hardly surprising, then, that there are many dental teams who are completely burnt out. Team members have struggled for so long that they are exhausted and demoralised. The shortage of dentists, both NHS and private, has caused a deluge of patients desperate to be seen, resulting in some unpleasant and upsetting encounters for staff working on the front desk on occasion.

It seems to me, all these pressures and negative influences have resulted in many dentists losing sight of their purpose and forgetting the value of the work they do. That's why I think it's time to revisit why you do what you do. Practice Plan's YouHub,<sup>1</sup> for example, can help you to regain some control and clarity over what is it you, as dental teams, do every day.

I have been around dentistry for nearly 25 years now and it never ceases to amaze me how many dentists forget to value what they do. They forget what their training enables them to achieve. For this reason, quite often over recent years I have felt compelled to take action, especially when I am with young dentists and practice team members. I remind them 'you have skills that make me feel envious.'

Once they have recovered from their surprise at being addressed in that way, I go on to explain what I mean. Dentists and dental teams can heal people of pain. Pain that is sometimes excruciating. Through the skills they have in restorative or cosmetic dentistry, they can have a life changing effect upon someone's self-confidence. And yet, so many dentists and their teams need reminding of this. Everyone needs a 'why', but sometimes they need reminding of just what their 'why' is.



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A key trend I noticed in 2022 was how and where consumers chose to spend their money after the previous three years of misery and uncertainty. My prediction is that 2023, despite galloping inflation and a cost-of-living squeeze, is likely to see people, yet again, choosing to spend their money on what is important to them and on what makes them feel better. They will prioritise things that contribute to their wellbeing, including things that make them feel positively, and more confident about their appearance.

Despite the squeeze on disposable income, I have seen no decline in the

demand for cosmetic procedures. If improving the way they look and feel is a priority to them, then people are continuing to go ahead with cosmetic dental plans. And this is predicted to be the case over the next few years.

Against this backdrop, there is a case for arguing that there has never been a better time to be a dentist. Your skills are in demand and there is no shortage of patients who are grateful to be able to get an appointment with you. Perhaps it's time to allow yourselves a moment of pride and take heart from the good you can do for others. Your actions can have long lasting positive effects.

If you need further reminders of what a fulfilling profession dentistry can be, or if you would like some support with wellbeing, Practice Plan's website and the aforementioned hub are good places to start. We all need a little support sometimes and there's no shame in that.

**G. Nelson, Practice Plan, via email**

### Reference

1. YouHub. Available online at: <https://www.practiceplan.co.uk/youhub/> (accessed May 2023).