

A WORD FROM THE BDA PRESIDENT

By **Elizabeth Kay**, BDA President

If I may, I want to talk to you about stress.

The most stressed I have ever been was when I was a third-year dental student, struggling with exams, trying to manage relationships, constantly worrying about accommodation, battling to live on very little money, trying to have a social life, and at the same time attempting to navigate the massive changes which were happening to myself and to the world around me, at a pace that was frightening.

‘But stress, and this is really what I want to share with you, is a motivator as long as it doesn’t overwhelm you. It enables you to do, cope with, and achieve things that you never thought possible.’

The only other time stress almost got the better of me was when I was the Inaugural Dean of Peninsula Dental School setting up the first new dental school for a generation against a *very* tight timetable. Honestly, it was crazy – it was just like that scene in *Wallace and Gromit’s* ‘Wrong Trousers’ where Gromit is laying down train tracks in order for their speeding train to have rails to run on! You can only imagine my sigh of relief as the students walked into their brand-new buildings, literally, as the concrete was drying! But stress, and this is really what I want to share with you, is a motivator as long as it doesn’t overwhelm you. It enables you to do, cope with, and achieve things that you never thought possible. So, no matter how difficult things might seem, always remember that you are going through the stress of being a dental student because you are going to join the best, the most amazing and most fabulous profession! The profession you will join (and you *will* succeed, no matter what you think) will make you so proud.



And you should be proud, because there is no other career, no other arena, no other area of professional practice, no other workplace which requires a set of skills so eclectic, demanding and which requires such intellect and knowledge, as dentistry. There simply is nothing else like it.

Dentistry is about technical skill, but it is technical skill which works withing tolerances of micrometres, not centimetres, which is extraordinary. We utilise those skills while dealing with the emotions, neuroses, vanities, and social mores which are connected to mouths and teeth. While doing this we still need to be fantastically pleasant and caring to people, whilst also being a manager *and* having skills in business, HR, and planning – and we do *all* of this while working in a tiny, dark, wet, slimy cave... also called a mouth. How many other professions have people with skills as deep, difficult, and as diverse as those in dentistry? None!

It is crucial to find ways to manage your stress. Keep going – no matter how tricky things seem because they *will* get easier, and most of all, be proud of yourselves. You are amazing, and are joining a very, very special profession! ■

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