

# Simple team building is on the cards!



The Mind Flossing Toolkit comprises a deck of cards specifically designed to nurture greater wellbeing and resilience for the whole dental team. Here, creator **Mahrukh Khwaja**<sup>1</sup> – AKA Mind Ninja – offers invaluable insight into how they could work for you.

## Author information

<sup>1</sup>Dr Mahrukh Khwaja is founder and CEO of Mind Ninja, a wellbeing start-up providing resilience and wellbeing training to dental professionals so they can thrive in any environment. Mind Ninja provides workshops, programmes and coaching. Mahrukh has worked with a diverse range of organisations, including King's College London, the BDA, Acteon, Oxford NHS, Dentinal Tubules, BARD and Tipton Training. She has written the mental health chapter for Shaz Memon's book, *Instagram for dentists* and is due to publish a book on wellbeing for dental professionals next year with Wiley-Blackwell. Mahrukh is a dentist, with over 11 years of clinical experience, a positive psychologist, an accredited mindfulness teacher and holds a Master's in Applied Positive Psychology. [www.mind-ninja.co.uk](http://www.mind-ninja.co.uk)

**A** labour of love over the past year, the Mind Flossing Toolkit is designed specifically for the dental team as a deck of cards to nurture greater wellbeing and resilience.

The Toolkit offers the opportunity to explore wellbeing under the umbrella of mindfulness and self-compassion, including team resilience, gratitude, optimism, character strengths, values and meaning.

The benefits of using these cards include:

- Increased self-awareness
- Emotional literacy
- Emotional regulation
- More effective communication
- Improved relationships
- Better engagement at work.

## Is a friend in need?

You might wonder why it is so important to have something designed for the dental team. The sad truth is that, over the years, it has been well established that working in dentistry is stressful, with a BDA survey very sadly revealing a high level of stress and

burnout amongst a survey of more than 2,000 UK dentists, 17.6% of whom admitted they had seriously thought about suicide.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, last year a survey of dental students revealed that 35% of students displayed perfectionistic traits, and this correlated with psychological distress and maladaptive coping strategies.<sup>2</sup>

The cards are evidence-based, drawing together many psychological strands in an effective way. What's more, the content and illustrations for every card have been carefully chosen and curated with dental professionals in mind and are representative of the whole team.

## Connecting with cards

Understanding that positive energy between team members is so incredibly important for wellbeing and professional success, I have picked a few of my favourite team-boosting cards to share with *BDJ Team* readers. ...

I love this card (see Fig. 1) because it focuses on creating a culture of kindness and compassion at work, through fostering gratitude with our colleagues. It offers practical ways teams can implement ways to create a positive work culture.



Fig. 1 Card: Creating a culture of gratitude at work

Practices are busy focused on managing patients, meeting targets, keeping stock in check, staying up to date with CPD etc. The most resilient and happiest dental workspaces put emphasis on creating cultures that support one another and allow each member to thrive.

Gratitude can do this through helping to buffer against stressors, navigate challenges with greater ease and optimism and be a workspace we want to be in every day.

Our relationships with our work colleagues are very much impacted by the way we

communicate with them. This card (see Fig. 2) focuses on just that: fostering deep listening using mindfulness in order to build positive, trusting relationships.

We often spend a lot of time thinking of how to respond to each other rather than giving the other person the chance to say everything they would like to express.

This card (see Fig. 3) talks us through how to develop the skill of listening with compassion and curiosity rather than distraction or judgement.

I was inspired to create this card from my



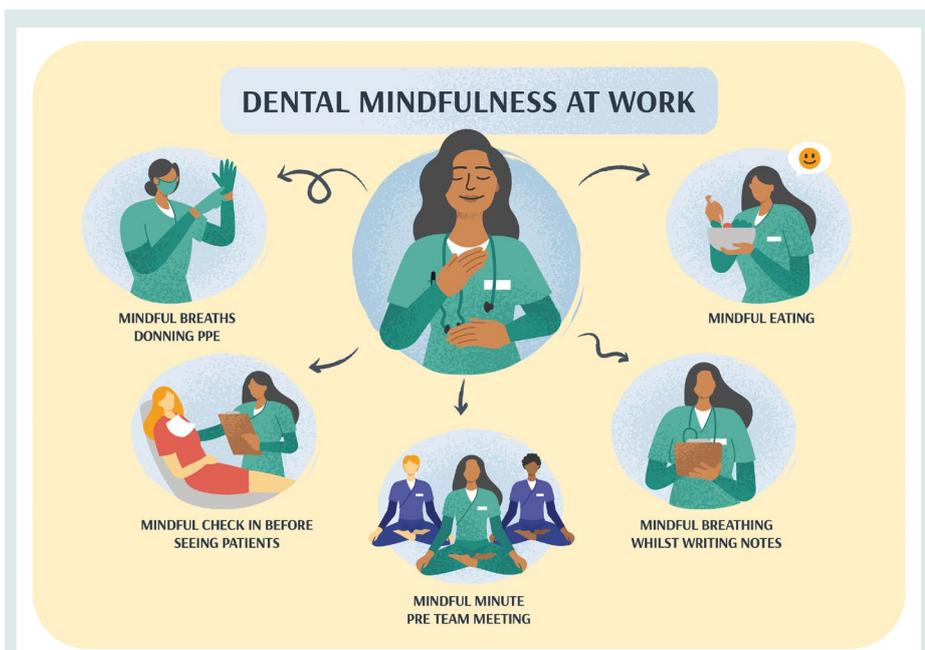
Fig. 2 Card: Deep listening

*'This card talks us through how to develop the skill of listening for compassion...'*

experiences teaching mindfulness in dental practices. The principal of the practice would ask me how they could integrate mindfulness practices into their busy days.

This card gives some suggestions, from taking a mindful minute in a team meeting to mindful deep breaths whilst donning PPE or writing notes, or a mindful check in prior to seeing patients. With my nurse, we schedule in little mindfulness breaks.

I love aromatherapy, and so we often place



### MINDFULNESS WITHIN THE DENTAL PRACTICE

As a dental professional struggling to find time to practice mindfulness, you'll be pleased to know that mindfulness can indeed be practised at work!

Try these examples and integrate mindfulness throughout your clinical day:

- **Mindfulness breaths whilst donning PPE** : slow down and take a couple of mindful breaths as you wear your PPE.
- **Mindful check in before seeing each patient** : ask yourself how do you feel in your body, what emotions are you feeling and do you need a break before you bring your next patient into the surgery.
- **Mindful minute pre team meeting** : take a mindful 1 minute as a team together before starting the agenda for a team meeting. This is a great way to settle yourself and bring back focus to a meeting.
- **Mindful breathing whilst writing notes.**
- **Mindful eating lunch.**

### CELEBRATING TEAM STRENGTHS

Leaning into team strengths are instrumental in fostering engaged and happy workplaces. By playing team strengths, we increase team trust and team resilience.

Try this team strengths meditation:

1. Take a comfortable seated position and close your eyes.
2. Bring your awareness to your body. Notice how your feet feel against the ground. Note how your spine feels supported against the chair.
3. Now bring your awareness to the breath.
4. Take 3 deep breaths in and out. Note the sounds your breath make and the sensations of breathing.
5. Consider the strengths of each team member. How do their strengths improve patient care? How do the strengths complement the team?
6. Consider the positives of having different strengths in your team.
7. Now reflect on your strengths at work. How do your strengths help you feel more engaged at work?
8. Bring your awareness back to your breath and when you're ready, slowly open your eyes.

Fig. 4 Card: Celebrating team strengths

Fig. 3 Card: Mindfulness within the dental practice

a few drops of lavender on our hands and take three deep mindful breaths. It's an amazing way to invite focus, relaxation and energy.

This card (see Fig. 4) is focused on a very important aspect of increasing engagement and enjoyment at work, using our strengths!

It details a strengths-based meditation that we can do with the team. Reminding ourselves of the positive qualities of our team members helps teams develop trust. When we also focus on how our strengths contribute to the team and patient care, we

feel more engaged at work, more productive and happier.

Aside from using this card for this meditation, teams can also use it to spark a conversation around team strengths. Use the prompts 5, 6 and 7 and go around the team sharing your thoughts.

#### Show you care

I would love to see people supporting one another other, checking in on each other's emotional wellbeing.

So, in celebration of their friendship and to promote all round happiness at work, why not purchase the cards for a dental colleague or your whole team, to show how much you care?

For further information and to purchase The Mind Flossing Toolkit, visit [www.mind-ninja.co.uk/shop](http://www.mind-ninja.co.uk/shop).

#### References

1. Collin V, Toon M, O'Selmo E, Whitehead P. A survey of stress, burnout and well-being in UK dentists. *Br Dent J* 2019; **226**: 40–49.
2. Collin V, O'Selmo E, Whitehead P. Stress, psychological distress, burnout and perfectionism in UK dental students. *Br Dent J* 2020; **229**: 605–614.

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