

REKINDLING THE FIRE



OR, HOW NOT TO BECOME AN IMPAIRED DENTIST

WIZARD OF ID BY PARKER AND HART



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WHO WANTS TO BE A DENTIST?

- WHO IS A HAPPY DENTIST?
- WHO IS IMPAIRED?
- WHO IS UNHAPPY AND POTENTIALLY IMPAIRED?
- CAN YOU REKINDLE THE FIRE?

IS THERE A PERSONALITY PROFILE?

Joffe, 1996:

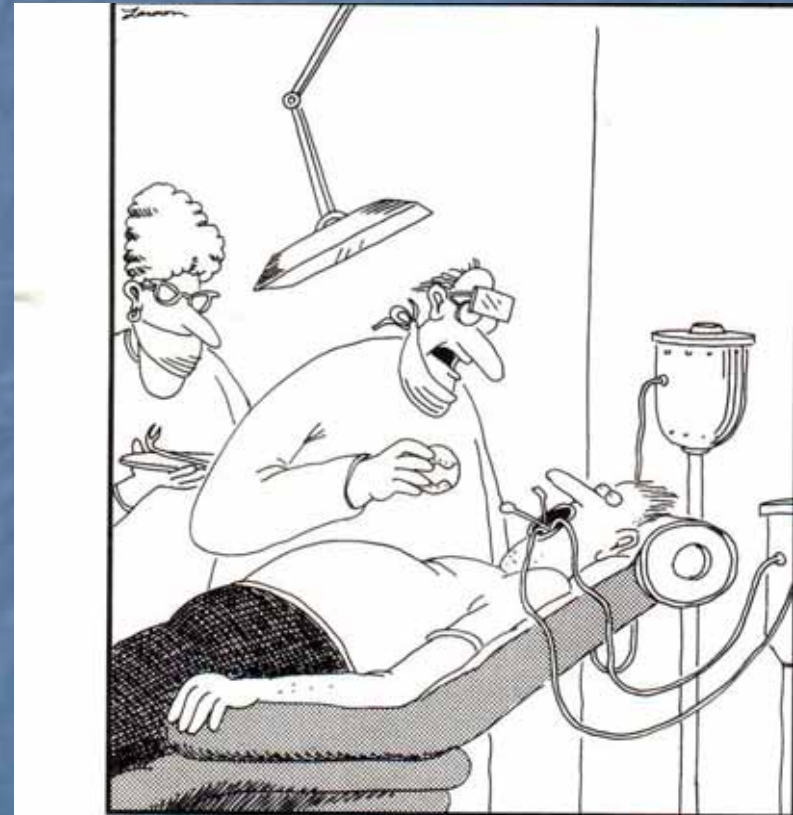
Not a homogeneous population, but share common characteristics:

Type A persons

Crave for achievement and recognition

Tendency for hostility and aggression

Sense of time urgency and impatience



"Now open even wider, Mr. Stevens. ...
Just out of curiosity, we're going to see if we
can also cram in this tennis ball"

CONSEQUENTLY.....

- Dentistry attracts compulsive personalities with unrealistic expectations who strive for unattainable standards of excellence.
- The cost: They put aside needs for leisure, intimacy and family and become around the clock achievement machines.
- But, most achieve their goals



"I am not a workaholic. I just work to relax."

ETHICAL OCCUPATIONS

MORGAN POLL SURVEY

	Occupations	2006/7
		%
1	Nurses	91
2	Pharmacists	85
3	Doctors	81
4	School teachers	78
5	Engineers	71
6	Dentists	69
7	Supreme Court judges	68
8	High Court judges, Uni lecturers	67

SOCIAL ISSUES, AND HOW DENTISTS COPE

Suicide: Low incidence. 10 dentists in 100,000 population at risk. Alexander RE 2001

Divorce: Reported to be low. Actual figure not quoted AmDA Bureau of Statistics 1977

Depression: 950 American dentists surveyed, 560 responses. 50 self reported depression, 7 receiving treatment Mathias 2005

- Alcohol abuse:65.3% of dentists [113] in N.E. of USA responded to survey
- 2.7% reported seeking treatment
- National average; Males:9%, Females 5%
- Marijuana:8.8%
- Cocaine: Nil
- Major opiates:0.9%
- Anxiolytics:2.7%
- Inhalants: Nil
- Kenna G A & Wood MD 2005

DENTISTS PERCEIVE THEY HAVE A HIGH INCIDENCE OF STRESS

O'SHEA ET AL
1984

- 977 Dentists surveyed at 1982 Am D A Congress
- 75% thought dentistry was more stressful than other occupations
- 25 stressors identified, 6 were most frequently quoted

HOW STRESSFUL?%

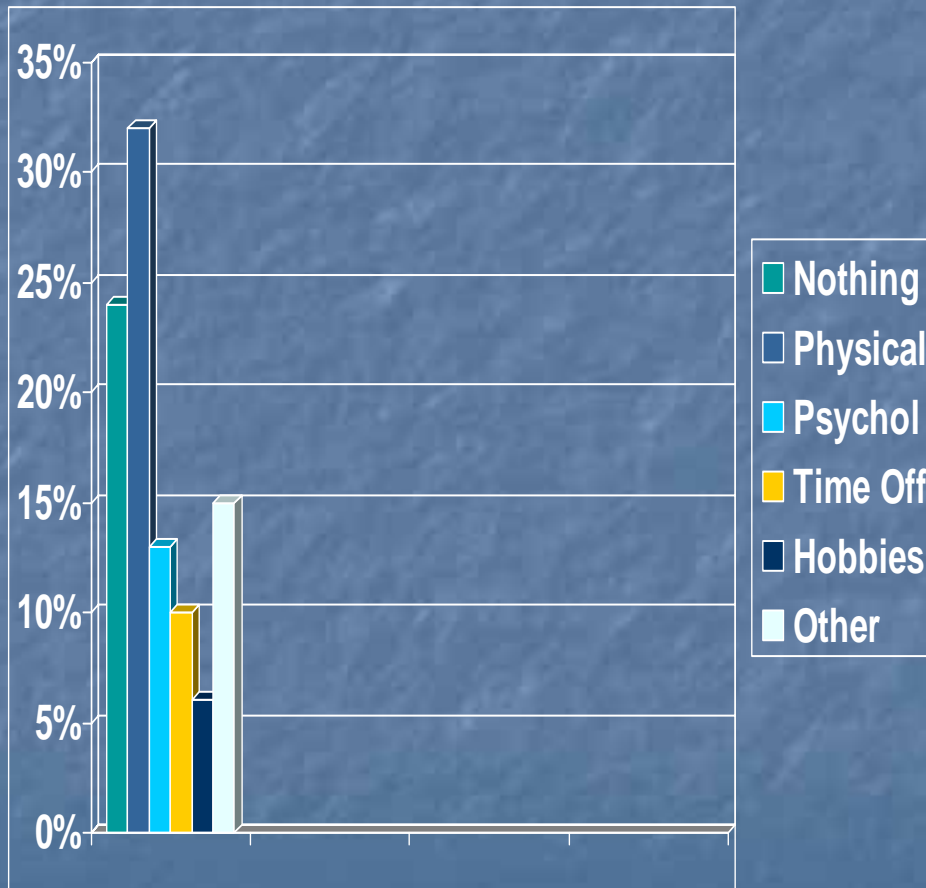
Possible stressors	Not at all	A little	A fair amount	Very much
Falling behind schedule	13	36	35	16
Striving for technical perfection	10	41	36	13
Causing pain	15	43	30	12
Anxiety in patients	10	50	33	8
Patients late or missing appointments	15	44	29	12
Patients uncooperative in chair	16	46	26	13

Stress Incidence

- What is stress?
- “When the demands of situation exceed the perceived ability of the person to cope.” Lazarus R & Folkman S 1984

HOW DID THEY COPE ?

O'SHEA ET AL 1984



- "THESE COPING MECHANISMS PROVIDE NO BETTER SOLUTION THAN THOSE WHO DO NOTHING"

ARE WE COPING, ARE WE HAPPY?

- ACCEPT THAT OUR STRESSORS CAN'T BE CONTROLLED, BUT CAN BE CONTAINED
- CAN GET ON WITH OUR LIVES WITHOUT SUCCOMBING TO DEPRESSION, ALCOHOLISM, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, OR ADULTERY
- BUT, ARE WE HAPPY WITH OUR LOT?

THE IMPAIRED DENTIST

- Dental Practice Act 2001: “Any physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder that detrimentally affects or is likely to detrimentally affect the person’s physical or mental capacity to practise dentistry”

The unhappy, potentially impaired dentist

- Over 50, productivity declining
- Wrong career choice
- Unfulfilled career expectations
- Solo practitioner, little day to day contact with peers
- Staff in different age group &/or demographic
- Similar issues with patient profile

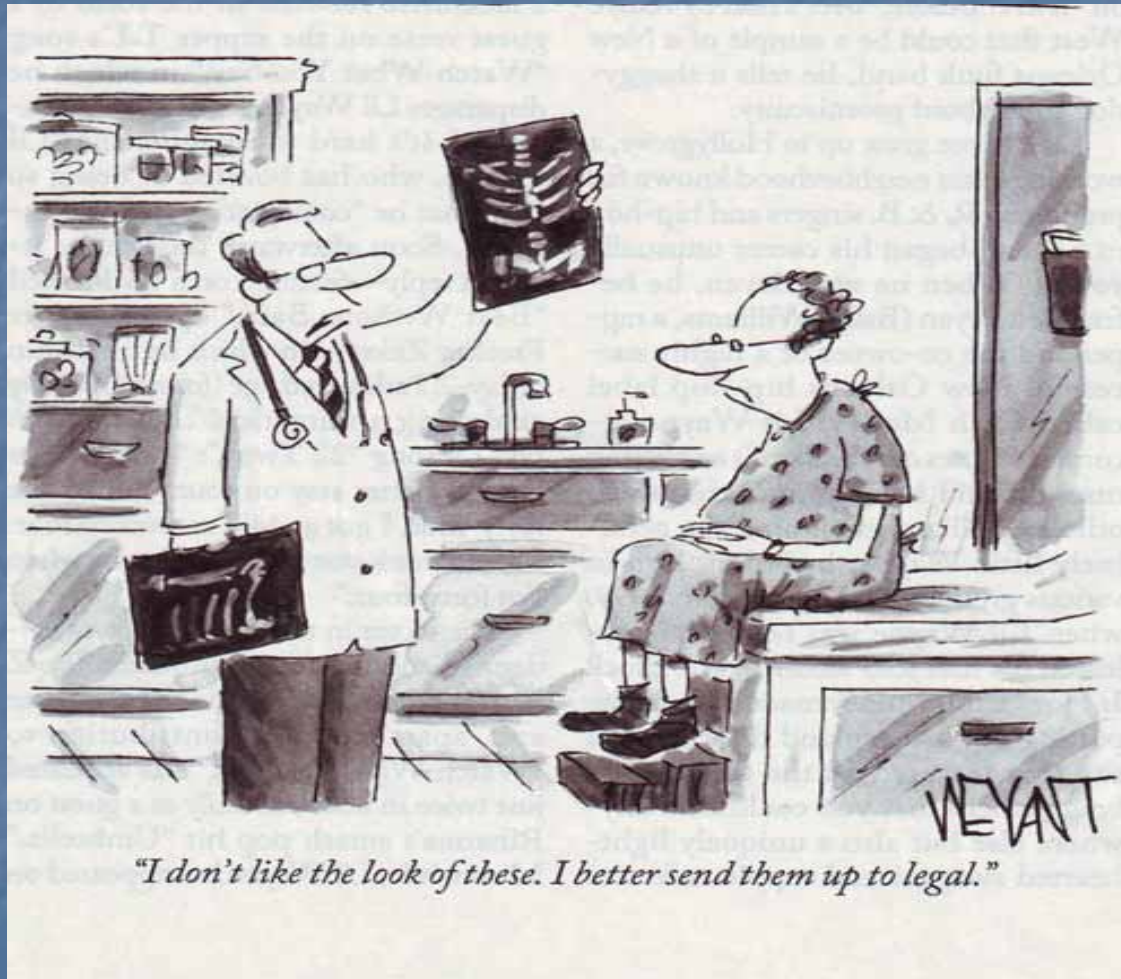
- No regular contact with fellow professionals
- Practises in the Dark Ages: "it has always worked for me"
- Can't afford to retire. No financial planning, too many "Tax effective schemes"



- Losing contact with friends/social network [Clarno 1986]
- Kids left home
- Divorced/widowed/less than supportive marriage [Christen 1986]
- No current hobbies or recreational pursuits



WHAT MEDICAL CHECKUP ?



THE RISKS OF STAYING UNHAPPY

- Depression Mathias 1986
- Alcoholism, substance abuse Clarno 1986
- Catastrophic medical event, leading to permanent impairment or death Christen 1986



DON'T BE AFRAID TO SEEK HELP, TALK TO A MIND THERAPIST



- DOCTORS HEALTH ADVISORY SERVICE, IT IS THERE FOR US

ALWAYS LOOK AT THE BRIGHT
SIDE OF LIFE



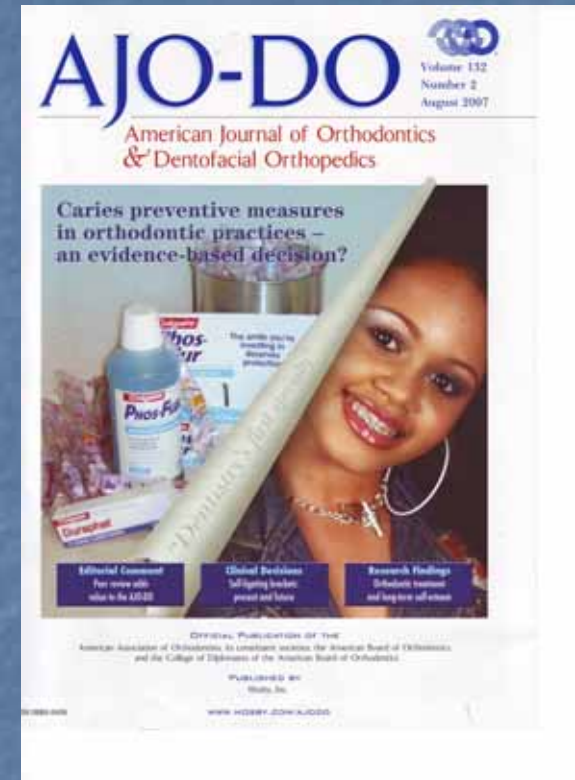
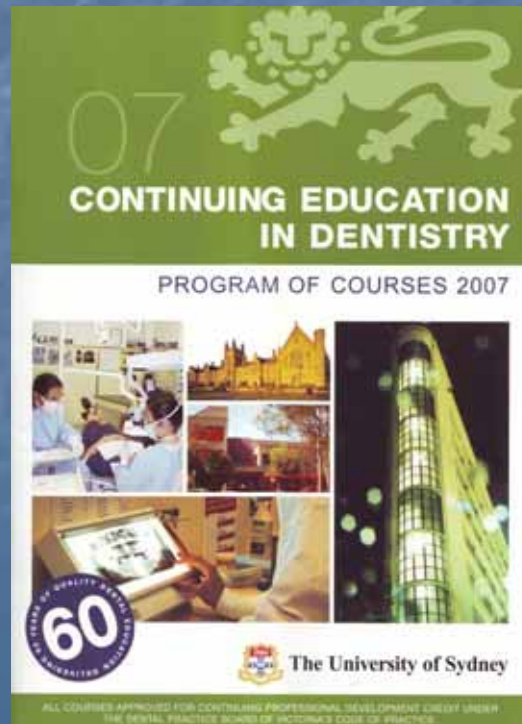
REDIRECT YOUR CAREER

- Health administration
- Move to another small business
- Move to a practice that allows you to work with a different patient demographic or professional environment



SEE IT AS A POSITIVE TO STAY UP TO DATE

- CONTINUING ED COURSES
- SUBSCRIBE TO 2 JOURNALS
- READ THEM



RE-ENGAGE WITH YOUR PEERS

- Local dental organisations
- Study groups
- Special interest groups
- Social Groups



UPDATE YOUR PRACTICE FACILITY IN A RATIONAL WAY



- BUDGET FOR NEW TOYS

RECOGNISE YOUR PRACTICE STRESSORS MANAGE THEM ACTIVELY, NOT PASSIVELY



SET REASONABLE FINANCIAL GOALS FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

- Get a financial planner
- You are a health professional & probably not a financial genius



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To seek help is not an admission of failure

