



Take the Stress Out of Practicing Dentistry

A Guide to Help You Reduce Stress
In Your Practice As Well As Make You And
Your Team More Efficient.

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Feeling overwhelmed and even a little worn out? If the daily stressors of practicing dentistry are getting to you, it might be time to make some changes. Here are tips, including investing in the right technology such as cloud-based practice management, that are designed to help you reduce stress in your practice as well as make you and your team more efficient.

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Overwhelmed With Your Practice?



You love practicing dentistry, but there's no doubt you've chosen a stressful career. If you're not diagnosing or treating patients, you're dealing with the business side of running a dental practice. You have to lead your team, deal with IT issues, figure how to best store and backup patient information, manage practice overhead expenses—the list just goes on and on.

Yes, running a dental practice can be overwhelming, but there are ways to reduce the daily stressors that come with the job. So take a deep breath and read on for advice designed to help you reduce stress and renew your love for dentistry. Finding the right tools and technology—such as cloud-based practice management to CAD/CAM systems to cone beam CT scanner—can enhance the care you provide and make you and your team members more efficient. This will not only make your days less stressful and your practice run more smoothly, but you'll have more time to focus on what you love most: providing the best patient care possible.



Helpful Habits

10 habits that will help you reduce stress

1. Exercise every day.
2. Talk with family and friends.
3. Remember to laugh.
4. Embrace the things you're able to change.
5. Give up bad habits, such as drinking too much and smoking.
6. Slow down.
7. Use a to-do list to help get yourself organized.
8. Get six to eight hours of sleep each night.
9. Give back to your community.
10. Try not to worry.

Source: The American Heart Association

Stress: Keeping Your Practice Efficient



Your practice management system should make you more efficient, not be a source of stress. It should help you boost productivity and your bottom line.

A smart, workflow-based user experience is key to making your practice more efficient and increasing revenues. Dentrix Ascend's "natural user interface," or NUI, for example, makes it easy for your team members to quickly understand and complete tasks and responsibilities. Once they login, they automatically see the information they need, and the software naturally guides them through their everyday workflow—making them more efficient and more productive.

The system also features a "Goals, Problems Solutions" approach to business, giving you a real-time perspective of practice goals. Every team member receives a list of specific activities they need to complete to help reach those goals, helping the practice run smoother. For even more guidance, the business tool helps you identify, as well as overcome, any obstacles that are keeping you from a more robust bottom line. It gives you clear direction, which helps you grow your practice while also reducing your stress level.



4 Ways to Deal with Stress

1. **Stop the negative self-talk.** No matter how overwhelmed you're feeling, stay positive. One way is through positive self-talk. Say things like "I can do this" or "This will all work out."
2. **Find your emergency stress stoppers.** You can use an emergency stress stopper to help calm yourself down in stressful situations. These include counting to 10 before you speak, taking three to five deep breaths or going for a short walk.
3. **Do something that makes you happy.** Take time out to do something you enjoy. Try to spend at least 15 minutes every day doing something that makes you smile.
4. **Take the time to relax.** True relaxation can help reduce tension in your mind and body. Yoga, meditation and tai chi are great forms of relaxation you can try.

Source: The American Heart Association

Stress: Keeping Patient Information Secure



While it's important to protect patient information and make sure you're meeting regulatory requirements, it isn't something you should have to worry about every day. Your practice management system should help provide that security for you.

Cloud-based platforms can help keep your data protected. The data security is monitored by trained experts to keep patient data safe. There are even security audits to identify possible system weaknesses.

Only you and the team members you authorize are given access to patient information through this system, and advanced networking and storage technology make it easier for you to meet regulatory requirements. Cloud-based practice management can help protect your patients and your business, while giving you secure access to your data.

There's a lot you have to think about when it comes to running your practice; what might happen if the wrong person gains access to your patient information shouldn't be one of them.



Secure Solutions

Losing or exposing patient information can put your practice out of business—leading to one of the most stressful situations you've ever faced. Cloud-based solutions such as Dentrix Ascend help protect you from various threats, including:

- Unauthorized release
- Lost productivity
- Virus and malware infection
- Backup failures

Stress: Scheduling Patients Treatment



Your patients are busy people, so even if they understand the importance of going forward with the treatment you recommend, finding the time to schedule that treatment might prove difficult—especially if they need to schedule multiple appointments.

Offering same-day dentistry makes it easier for patients to go forward with treatment, and is one reason dentists should consider investing in CAD/CAM technology, said Dr. Edmond Suh, owner of Supremia Dentistry in North Carolina. You don't have the stress of relying on a third party to deliver your restorations.

“Because we have full control of the entire restoration protocol in office, there's no worries about timeline or delivery from the lab,” Dr. Suh said. “We don't have to wait two or three weeks for the restoration. Patients can walk out of our office with their restoration in about an hour and a half.”

Dr. James Stein, who practices in Boston, also likes that CAD/CAM technology allows him to provide his patients with a higher level of care, without them having to come to the office for multiple appointments.

“We're doing most of the process from start to finish in our office, as opposed to farming it out to a dental lab,” Dr. Stein said. “We're able to control each step of the procedure and give the patient a higher level of esthetics.”



How Patient Fears Can Cause You Stress

Many patients who visit your practice are anxious, even fearful, and don't want to be sitting in that chair. Their stress and anxiety can affect you, said Ben Bernstein, a clinical psychologist and a performance coach who has worked with dentists and their teams for years. But if you stay calm and focused you can actually help patients relieve some of that anxiety.

Bernstein recommends regulating your breath to stay calm. Holding your breath can actually lead to stress, but many dentists do this because they're mirroring an anxious patient. He also suggests staying grounded as you work. Make sure you can feel your feet on the ground and the ground supporting you, and you'll feel calmer and more focused.

Another tip? Try relaxing your eyes occasionally, Bernstein said. As you're working, take a moment to look away from the patient's mouth. Look at something else in the room or outside the window. Just this small movement will help calm you down if you're feeling stressed.

Stress: Communicating With Patients



Effectively communicating with patients is vital to your practice's success—yet it's something most dentists struggle with. Poor patient communication will lead to extra stress for both you and your team members, and is sure to cost your practice money.

If you don't confirm appointments in advance, you likely deal with costly cancellations and no-shows more often than you should. And if you're not reaching out to past due patients to get them scheduled, you're losing money and these patients to other practices.

Your practice management system should handle patient communication for you, making it not only less stressful, but more effective. Dentrix Ascend's Task Automation Management Intelligence takes over the process and runs repetitive tasks, such as sending appointment reminders and reaching out to past due patients, in the background.

Patients are the lifeblood of your practice, but if you don't have good communication, you might lose them to the practice down the street. The right practice management system can help make patient communication seamless, helping you grow your patient base and your bottom line.



Namaste

Take the time to regroup between patients. Rather than running from patient to patient, take a moment to yourself.

Ben Bernstein, a clinical psychologist and a performance coach who has worked with dentists and their teams for years, recommends closing your eyes and taking a few rounds of deep breaths. This will help you relieve stress and keep you fresh for your next patient.

Stress: Diagnosing Difficult Cases



As a dentist, you've probably seen your share of difficult cases. Sometimes, looking at a 2D x-ray simply isn't enough for a proper diagnosis. That's where cone beam technology can save a lot of time and frustration, Dr. Suh said.

The high-quality images CT scans provide can help you properly diagnose patients, Dr. Suh said, and show you a lot of information that simply isn't in a 2D x-ray. These scans give you more confidence in your diagnosis and help you create a more detailed treatment plan.

Dr. Stein also uses this technology and says it's changed the way he practices dentistry.

"We have so much more information immediately at our fingertips that when we're performing complicated procedures the guesswork has been eliminated," Dr. Stein said. "With digital dentistry you get immediate feedback through the intraoral digital impressions, and having the ability to CAD/CAM mill your restorations in the office allows you to make instant corrections when you notice something isn't up to the standard you want."

CBCT x-rays combined with intraoral digital impressions enable Dr. Stein to make a much more sophisticated, accurate plan for placing implants and developing guides to use during the surgery. This greatly reduces the chance of error.



Don't Ignore Your Stress

"Finding ways to reduce stress is important," said Ben Bernstein, a clinical psychologist and a performance coach who has worked with dentists and their teams for years, because it can affect how you perform dentistry as well as the mood among your team members. Dentists have a stressful job, and not dealing with stress on the inside could lead to conflict in your office and unhappy team members. It may even cost you patients who can sense the stress and would prefer a more relaxing environment.

"I have found dentists mask their stress by having an exterior that looks cool, calm and collected," Bernstein said. "They need to learn to calm down from the inside while dealing with patients who are stressed out. They're performing microsurgery. They need a high degree of calm, confident, focused work."

Stress: Accessing Patient Information



Sometimes, you need to access patient information at home after hours, or when you're traveling to and from trade shows or continuing education courses. Not being able to get the information when you need it can be stressful, and may even delay patients from moving forward with treatment.

Cloud-based practice management systems give you the flexibility you need, making it possible to access anything in your practice management software from anywhere, at any time. All you need is a browser, and you can get to your information from any computer, whether it's a Mac, a PC, a laptop, desktop or an iPad.

This can also reduce stress for dentists who own multiple practices. You can move from office to office without maintaining separate practice management systems or replicating patient files. And it gives your staff the ability to work remotely, and for you to offer variable work hours.

Collaborating with other team members, in your own practice or even specialists, can also lead to stress. It can be difficult to communicate if you don't have access to the same files. With cloud-based systems, everyone involved in treatment planning can look at the file at the same time as you, and even enter information into that file.



Did You Know?

55% of cloud users listed efficiency as the biggest benefit of moving to the cloud.

Source: CDW's 2013 State of the Cloud Report

Stress: Backing Up Patient Information



System failures are common, whether they're caused by not storing and maintaining equipment properly, a bad network cable or a host of other factors that can lead to crashes.

After a system failure, practices lose their data 40 to 60 percent of the time. These are usually practices that thought they were successfully backing it up.

Why? Most dentists rely on manual or incomplete backup processes that are simply destined to fail, for any number of reasons.

Cloud-based practice management systems such as Dentrax Ascend eliminate this problem and the stress that comes with it. Every server, hard drive and other major hardware component in the data center is backed up immediately, and a staff of IT professionals monitors and validates all backups. That means your data is always complete and up-to-date, without you or your team members needing to do a thing. Whether someone spills coffee on a computer or a bad hard drive causes your system to crash, you'll be able to recover and access your information right away.

If your information is stored in the cloud, system crashes won't disrupt your day, and you'll always have access to everything you need to run your practice.



Show Gratitude

“To help reduce stress levels in your practice, show team members your appreciation,” said Ben Bernstein, a clinical psychologist and a performance coach who has worked with dentists and their teams for years. Some of the most successful dentists make a habit of expressing gratitude to their team members. This shows them you value their work, which will motivate them to do even better. Your team members will be happier, and that will come through in the way they interact with patients.

Stress: Training Team Members



Any time you incorporate new technology into your practice, the thought of training your team how to use it can be stressful. You'll have to take them away from their daily tasks, costing you time and money, and there's sure to be a learning curve while they adjust to the new technology.

No matter how stressful you think the process is, you have to take the time to train your team members. If you don't, it will only lead to more stress and cost you more money in the long run.

The key is surrounding yourself with top-notch team members who are passionate about what they do, Dr. Suh said. They should be fully capable and "firing on all cylinders." Look for people who will flourish in the dental setting with the proper training, and then provide them with that training. If you hire highly qualified team members you know you can trust, you'll find training them isn't that much of a headache. And if you have an efficient, properly trained team behind you, you'll have a lot fewer stressful situations to deal with throughout your work day.



Smart Investments

It's important to invest in technologies that are easy to use. Dentrrix Ascend, for example, features a clean, elegant and intuitive user interface that helps novice users quickly become experts. This not only reduces the costs associated with training your team, it helps improve practice productivity and efficiency.

Stress: Handling IT Issues



The last thing any dentist wants to do is deal with IT headaches. But chances are you don't have any IT professionals on staff, so if there's a problem you usually have to deal with it.

If you can't figure out what the problem is, you have to bring in an IT specialist. Not only is that expensive, but you have to wait for the specialist to fit you in to his or her schedule. This down time costs your practice money.

Cloud-based practice management systems help reduce these IT headaches. You need less equipment to store data—reducing IT costs associated with acquiring and maintaining hardware. They're powered by fast, stable data centers, and supported by experts who continually make improvements.

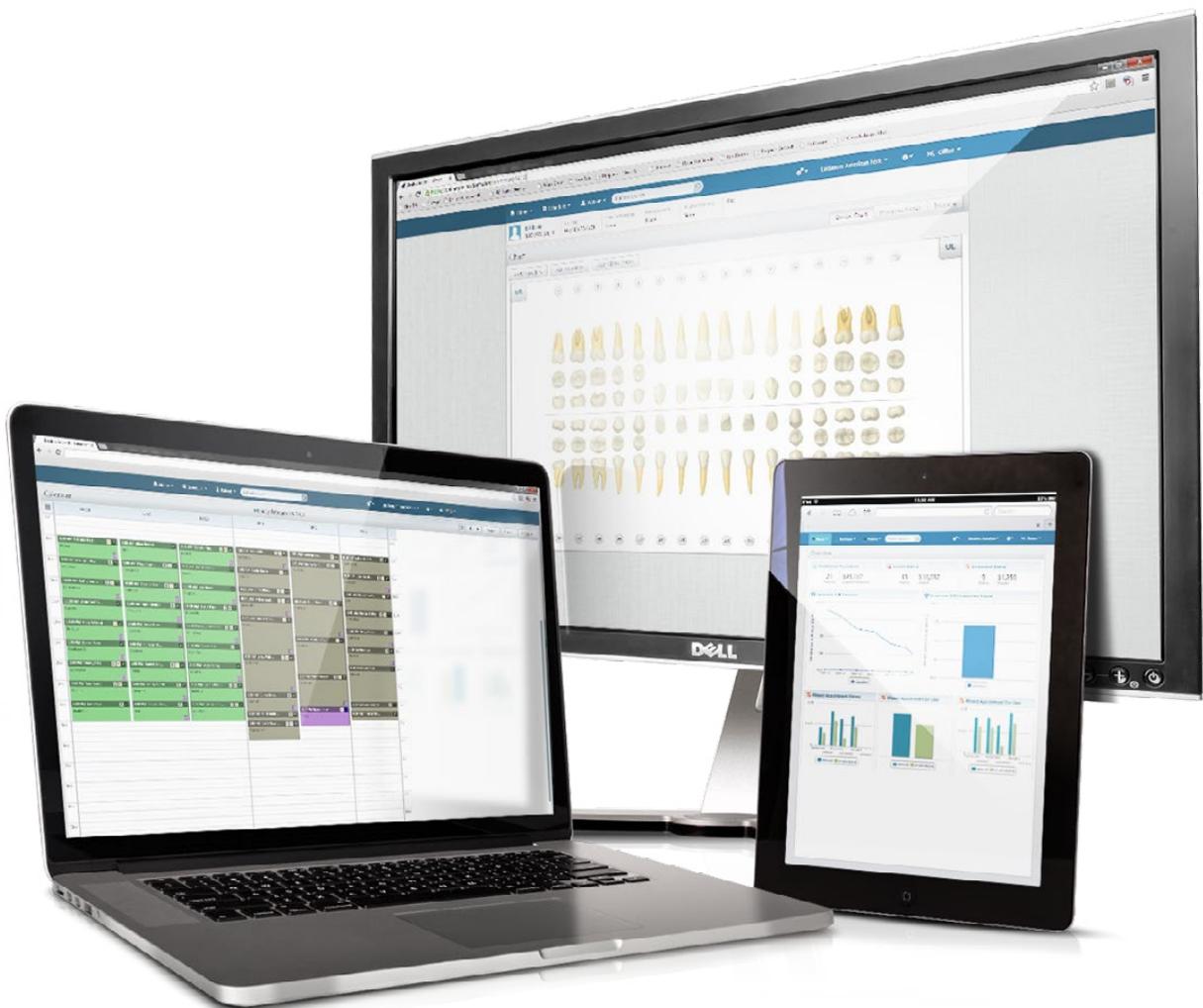
This solution helps you reduce costs, as well as reduce the time and money you spend updating your software. Instead of downloading, upgrading or installing software every time there's a change, all you have to do is login. This reduces your stress level, giving you more time to spend educating and treating your patients.



Did You Know?

When you run your practice management system from the cloud, you don't have to worry about software licenses or costs associated with infrastructure maintenance and upgrades. You only pay for what you use. Most cloud-based systems, such as Dentrrix Ascend, are pay as you go, meaning you don't have to put up a lot of money up front. Instead you pay a monthly fee.

The Right Technology Can Reduce Your Stress



While practicing dentistry can be stressful, it doesn't have to be. If you're feeling burnt out and overwhelmed, it might be time to think about investing in technologies that are designed to make you more efficient, as well as manage or even eliminate the more stressful aspects of running a dental practice. Cloud-based practice management, CAD/CAM and cone beam technology are all examples of technologies that reduce stress from your life, allowing you to focus on the reason you became a dentist in the first place: to treat patients.

“If you’re looking to grow your practice, and you want to be on the forefront of innovation and you want to be as progressive as possible in dentistry today and up to speed on what’s out there, go with a cloud-based system.”

~ Dr. Eric Osmolinski DMD