



The stress mess — increasing productivity by reducing stress

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STRESS IS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE to any business.

A study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health found that stressed employees tend to be absent and late more often. Over time, stress also causes chronic health problems such as cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, and psychological disorders. Stress is contagious — affecting everyone from the office team to the patients. With the proper stress-reducing strategy, a busy dental office can be calmer and more productive.

At the Dallas Dental Spa, I have spent years trying to perfect methods of reducing stress for myself, my team, and our patients. Let me share a few of the ways we improve our office atmosphere:

1 *Don't be a pain in the neck.*

For the last 15 years, a full-time massage therapist has been part of my staff. She is a tremendous stress reliever. When we are running late, patients don't feel so stressed or impatient if they are getting a neck-and-shoulder massage while they wait. We also have a massage chair. The massage therapist really helps when we are giving injections. When patients receive a hand massage during this procedure, they calm down incredibly, and this relieves my stress too. My team members also take advantage of this service to relieve their daily aches and pains.

2 *Offer food for thought.* On Fridays we order groceries online to be delivered to the office every Monday. Our refrigerator is filled with cereal, milk, yogurt, juices, salads, and fruit. The staff munches all day long. Eating smaller meals during the day has proven to be easier on the digestive system. The healthy food is not only for the staff. We'll give patients a salad, sandwich, yogurt, or premade shake if they have a long procedure or if they take medication that might be rough on the stomach.

3 *Give them a break.* We make sure that everyone takes a break for lunch, but because we always have groceries on hand, the team often chooses not to run out and deal with traffic and crowds. Instead, they eat leisurely in the office.

4 *Let them dream.* Taking a nap during lunchtime in

the office is like a meditation session. Since all of my treatment rooms are enclosed, team members can feel free to chill out for a few minutes in a comfortable dental chair.

5 *Go digital!* The clock is the biggest source of stress in the dental office. The dentist is always on other people's time. Because of their busy schedules, you can't treat patients at your convenience, only at theirs. Many times, I feel the pressure to be in several places at once; in fact, I usually work on several patients at a time. For these reasons, digital imaging is a great stress reducer. It is a master at saving time and effort. Instant images let me get to work right away and keep my assistant by my side, not off in the darkroom developing film. In turn, patients spend less time

in the dental chair, which relieves more of their stress. Digital radiography gives me extra eyes in every room. Since images are displayed on a large computer monitor, I can look at X-rays in one room while the patient is in another. For the front office, managing the duplication of traditional film and photos was always time-consuming and stressful. Duplicated film often didn't come out clean, and we never knew for sure if it reached the referring dentist or the insurance

company in the mail. Digital imaging alleviates the stress and makes communication easier and more reliable. Sending images electronically is just so much better and faster.

Stress prevention is a continuous process. By offering these extra services and using digital technology, my patients know that I care about them, and my staff is happy about coming to work. Satisfied patients mean treatment acceptance and, consequently, increased productivity. For me, that's the best stress reliever of all. **DE**



From massage to digital technology — a better experience for patients and dental teams

Dr. Lorin Berland is an internationally acclaimed cosmetic dentist and one of the most published authorities in the professional dental and general media. Dr. Berland, a Fellow of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry, is the cocreator of the Lorin Library Smile Style Guide, www.denturewearers.com, and is the founder of Arts District Dentistry, a multidocor specialty practice in Dallas that pioneered the concept of spa dentistry. Dr. Berland was honored by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry with the 2008 Outstanding Contribution to the Art and Science of Cosmetic Dentistry Award.