

# What's a Dentist to Do? Keeping Your Balance

Please e-mail us at [twinchurchill@aol.com](mailto:twinchurchill@aol.com) or fax us at (763)475-2784. We look forward to hearing from you not only regarding this article, but also if you have any ethical dilemmas you would like to present to the membership. Perhaps we can help you decide what to do.

## Jack L. Churchill, D.D.S.\*

I am 53 years of age, 28 of which have been in the field of dentistry. Many of you are older and much wiser than I. Many are younger and, let us say, less tested. Each of us, as we course through our years in dentistry, experiences similar challenges but may respond to them differently. We are all individuals with our own perceptions of events and how to deal with them. We have different expectations of what dentistry should and should not be.

One example of this is in regard to advertising. Some of us believe that when it comes to advertising all gloves come off; that is, anything goes.

After all, we run a business — survival of the fittest, right? Others believe that as professionals we should advertise at a different level — taking the high road, so to speak, not professing superiority without substantiation. One view looks at the bottom line. The other looks at how we are perceived by the general population.

One view is more limited; the other may be altruistic. Whatever your view-

point, this typifies our differences.

However, we do all share one thing, and that is the career we have chosen. Career is defined by the *American College Dictionary* as “a general course of action or progress of a person through life, as in some profession, in some moral or intellectual action, etc.” Progress means proceeding to a higher stage. It means growth and development. It means continuous improvement. As we live out our careers in dentistry, we all hope our margins get tighter, our root canals have a better seal, our composites match the color of the tooth more closely, our bonding is stronger, etc. We also hope we manage situations more confidently — possibly a staff member's review, a patient's dissatisfaction with his/her porcelain veneers.

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means  
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Part of progressing in dentistry is also handling the emotional aspects of being a dentist; particularly, how to be at peace with the type of dentistry we do. We all must strive for excellence but yet accept falling short of the perfection we seek and truly never achieve. The demands of our profession are

colossal, particularly if you run your own practice. When I was in dental school, I never really appreciated how consuming those demands and responsibilities could be. We deal with these challenges and complexities of day-to-day life in dentistry in many different ways, yet we all share another thing — the need for BALANCE.

We need to forget about our practices

regularly and think about taking our husbands or wives out to dinner, going to our kids' ballgames, visiting our parents, exercising, learning how to play the guitar, joining the church choir, or, most importantly in my mind, praying and developing a closer relationship with God. Balance is the key. You “old timers” know this already. You “new kids on the block” — learn it as fast as you can. To demonstrate this balance, I'd like to share with you a piece which was written by Max Ehrmann in 1927. You may be familiar with it, but if so, it's worth another read. It's called *Desiderata*.

Go placidly amid the noise and haste,  
and remember what peace  
there may be in silence.

As far as possible, without surrender,  
be on good terms with all persons.  
Speak your truth quietly and clearly;  
and listen to others, even dull and  
ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons;  
they are vexations to the spirit.  
If you compare yourself with others,  
you may become vain and bitter;  
for always there will be greater  
and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy your achievements  
as well as your plans.

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# Ethics Committee

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Keep interested in your own career,  
however humble;  
it is a real possession in the changing  
fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your  
business affairs;  
for the world is full of trickery.  
But let this not blind you to what  
virtue there is;  
many persons strive for high ideals;  
and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself.  
Especially, do not feign affection.  
Neither be cynical about love  
for in the face of all aridity  
and disenchantment  
it is perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years,  
gracefully surrendering  
the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit  
to shield you in  
sudden misfortune.  
But do not distress yourself  
with imaginings.  
Many fears are born of fatigue  
and loneliness.  
Beyond a wholesome discipline,  
be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe,  
no less than the trees and the stars;  
you have a right to be here.  
And whether or not it is clear to you,  
no doubt the universe is unfolding  
as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God,  
whatever you conceive Him to be,  
and whatever your labors  
and aspirations,  
in the noisy confusion of life,  
keep peace with your soul.

With all its shams, drudgery,  
and broken dreams,  
it is still a beautiful world.

Strive to be happy. ■