

What's a Dentist to Do? The Sense of a Goose

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Fear factor. These words bring to mind the television series aired a couple of years ago which pitted contestants against each other while facing their deepest fears – fears of all kinds, from eating culinary concoctions of worm slurries to balancing on structures at heights unimaginable to racing cars at high speeds to ... well, you get the idea.

We all carry within us deep-seated fears – an emotional response to a particular threat or danger — and these are fears of all kinds, many of which are specific as a result of our experiences earlier in life. A fear of spiders. A fear of bees. A fear of the dark. Of course, according to an old German proverb, fear makes the wolf bigger than he is.

“Anxiety differs from fear in that it occurs without any external threat. Anxiety, also called solicitude, is a psychological and physiological state characterized by cognitive, somatic, emotional, and behavioral components which lead to feelings of fear, apprehension, or worry. One type of anxiety is called stranger or social anxiety. Anxiety when meeting or interacting with strangers is a common development in young people. However, in adults, an excessive fear of other people is called social anxiety. It can have the somatic components of sweating and blushing, a cognitive component of a belief that one may be judged negatively, and a behavioral component of avoiding particular situations. The essence of social anxiety

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is the expectation of a negative evaluation by others. There is often a desire to impress favorably coupled with a doubt about having the ability to do so.”¹

As dentists we are colleagues united in a common purpose. Collegiality connotes a respect for another's commitment to that common purpose. It refers to a sense of community whereby we as dentists can achieve more together than as individuals going it alone. It is more than just being cordial. It facilitates better communication between us regarding patient care. Collegiality transforms us from me to we. It's therapeutic. We become collaborators and “commissersators”.

It's helpful to know others are in the same boat. But we also come as a guest to another's table to learn how to treat our patients better.

And, of course, without collegiality the engine of dentistry

would not run. We as a profession are not only self-regulated but self-driven. The organization of dentistry relies on volunteers to move it along.

“Collegiality involves:

- 1) respecting the professional integrity of members of the group
- 2) undertaking activities with openness and fairness
- 3) discussing alternatives amongst peers
- 4) responding to concerns raised by colleagues in a spirit of truth and intellectual honesty
- 5) respecting minority views, and
- 6) recognizing that sometimes it is

necessary to differentiate between

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the many valid views and opinions held”²

Done as such, collegiality promotes and strengthens within us all a desire to engage ourselves in the profession for our common good. (Incidentally, our Top Dentists surveys and lists do NOT satisfy these requisites of collegiality.)

Consider the following and how it relates to us:

A Sense of a Goose

Next fall, when you see geese heading south for the winter, flying along in “V” formation, you might consider what science has discovered as to why they fly that way. As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in “V” formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

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People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going more quickly and easily, because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone — and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front.

If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those people who are headed the same way we are.

When the head goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point.

It is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs, whether with people or with geese flying south.

Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

What messages do we give when we honk from behind?

Finally — and this is important — when a goose gets sick or is wounded by gunshot, and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection.

They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies; and only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with their group.

If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other like that.

— Author Unknown³

And lastly, with the following piece by Nelson Mandela in his 1994 inaugural speech, I encourage each of you to be active in organized dentistry. Serve on a committee, join a study club, reach out. Not only be a fine dentist but also a fine colleague of those others who are in this fine profession with you.

Our Deepest Fear

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our Light, not our Darkness, that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you NOT to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the World.

There is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that other people won't feel unsure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God That is within us.

It is not just in some of us; It is in everyone.

As we let our own Light shine, we unconsciously

Give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear,

Our presence automatically liberates others.

— Nelson Mandela

From his 1994 inaugural speech⁴

References

1. Quoted from "Anxiety." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 27 Aug 2008, 15:02 UTC. 1 Sep 2008 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anxiety&oldid=234577888>>.
2. Quoted from "Collegiality Builds Engagement" Oct-Nov 2006 FEEDBACK by Paul Hudec, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Rader School of Business, Milwaukee School of Engineering, Milwaukee, Wis.
3. Quoted from *A Second Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul* by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, Health Communications Inc., Deerfield Beach, FL.
4. Quoted from *A Third Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul* by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, Health Communications Inc., Deerfield Beach, FL.