

## Nurturing Happiness: A Route to Optimize Joy as a Dental Practitioner

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### Abstract

The pandemic COVID-19 has been affecting the lives of graduates, post-graduate students, and doctors in different ways. This situation has to be accepted, and we need to get used to the new normal way of practicing dentistry.

This article gives in brief nurturing happiness a route to optimize joy as a dental practitioner during the post-COVID pandemic.

**Keywords:** Dentistry; Happiness; Pandemic; Clinical Practice

### Introduction

How does one measure happiness? Is happiness the same as joy? Does success have a definition or limit? If so, is it success that is happiness? Many have said that we humans can never be happy with what we have and that grass always seems greener on the other side. It is precisely these thoughts and habits that lead to our greatest enemy, who, during these unpredictable and dark times since we have lost our freedom to the coronavirus, has been claiming the minds of so many of us dental surgeons. This enemy that has crept into our dental society goes by many popular names - burnout, fatigue, lethargy... are some among many others! Whichever form many of you might find yourselves facing, long story short, our minds work on an effort-reward system. "Without a favorable outcome, there can be no happiness". This is what we think, but research in psychology suggests the converse: happiness begets success. Furthermore, evidence suggests that good affect, which is a hallmark of pleasure, may be the source of many of the desirable attributes, resources, and achievements linked to happiness [1]. Through this article, although my attempts are futile yet, I hope to each of my fellow dental surgeons and leaders in this wonderful field of dentistry, to faculty and also to my students whom I have had the happiest moments mentoring and watching you achieve your dreams and of course to the ones out there who might deem this article a symbol of hope, I wish to share with you: Nurturing happiness to optimize joy in dentistry.

### As a leader/dentist in an institutional position of power

Leadership is ingrained in general dental practice regulatory advice and standards. As a result, having an evidence-based understanding of what leadership means in this context, as well as what additional work is needed to help physicians in the leadership domain, is critical [2]. All members of the dental team need leadership abilities, and this will only become more important as dentistry gets closer to a multidisciplinary team model of care that utilizes a talent mix [3]. Leaders in the dental practice, be it in a clinical setup with a small dental team or be it in an institutional setup with a larger working organization, it is important to foster or nurture happiness as this could create a healthy and more charismatic working environment. This feeling of happiness could vary from person to person, but some general factors include: a) to develop a feeling of healthy mutual dependency on each individual of the system, b) to keep each individual well-motivated, c) to develop an understanding that success is not for an individual but for the entire system, d) to increase productivity by regular meetings/discussions, e) paying heed to each member's opinions.

Once a happy and passionate work environment can be nurtured, productivity will increase, results will show, and this success will lead to joy.

### As a dental student

As a dental student in India, and with mounting pressure from family and other external sources, each day seems to have become a challenge. Newer standards of the education system, such as grading, scales and the multiple exams, have fostered a misconception where a student is made to indirectly feel that marks correlate to success and, to a point, even to one's self-worth as a whole. These bring a gloomy outlook to dental education and demotivates both students and mentors who are now facing a larger challenge to help develop emotional intelligence in their students. Emotional intelligence was favorably connected with gender and good lifestyle behaviors, which improved these students' academic achievement. These data show that dental students' emotional intelligence may require more attention [4]. For a student, it is imperative, that alongside his/her academic goals, one must also try to develop the following, which will help them lifelong as both a dental surgeon and as a human being: a) knowledge can never be taken from you and will stay your greatest weapon, so be ever hungry to gain knowledge in whatever field it may be that might help your overall growth as a dental practitioner, b) take time to reflect on the things and people you are grateful for as gratitude sows the seeds to humility and staying humble will help you grow strong relationships and develop a clearer mind which is free of the many evils you will encounter in your days to come, c) stay positive and try to look for humor in life as a cool, calm and relaxed mind is known to be able to make better impromptu decisions which a dental surgeon must be able to, d) look to be a leader and a teacher to your peers around you, but at the same time do so with grace and not a pompous attitude. Be willing to share, and do not be selfish. Birds of the same feather flock together, so choose your friends wisely, e) Stay involved in the community, but refuse to get entangled in other's loop of negativity that you might encounter. A negative person will always find a pessimistic approach to anything, do not try to change such a person; try not to be that person to others, yourself.

Most dental surgeons entered the profession with great joy. Because joy is a natural condition that all humans aspire to regain, dental surgeons can take control of their happiness as much as possible and intentionally move towards it [5]. If it is the coronavirus pandemic that has set a shadow of uncertainty in our magnificent careers as dental surgeons, I urge each one of my fellow members of the dental fraternity to take all efforts to continually keep "nurturing happiness" within yourselves in order to increase your productivity and "optimize your joy as a dental practitioner". It is not when times are easy that we face challenges, but it is when these challenges appear that our best efforts count. Our best weapon now is to search for that happiness, that spark... to keep us going and not fall victim to the tragedy, that is, 'burnout' in dentistry.

To conclude, nurturing happiness: a route to optimize joy as a dental practitioner is possible for each one of us by being positive, love the work that we do and follow all the protocols as per guidelines so that we do not have any fear which disturbs us and we can work no more for work when we all like it, work becomes sheer enjoyment. Good quality work gives us good results and enhances joy multifold.

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