The Happy Dentist CHECKLIST





A step-by-step guide
to improve your mental and
relational health in dentistry

BY DR. KYLE STANLEY

THE HAPPY DENTIST CHECKLIST

One of the best places to reduce stress in dentistry is by managing your practice with your mental health in mind.
This guide is going to be short and helpful.

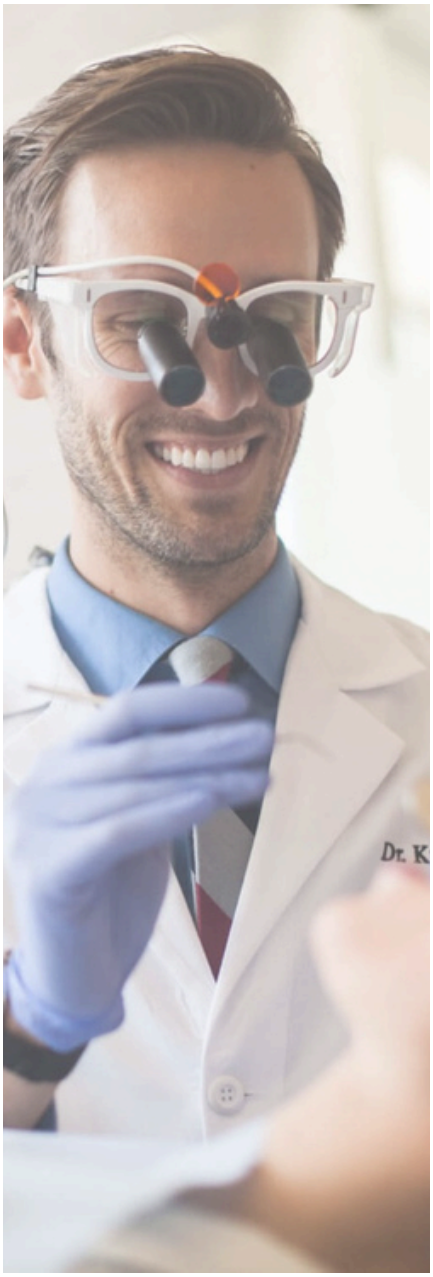


I've designed it to help you identify some tips that can reduce stress and burnout in your dental career.

There is no fluff in this baby!
Most dental professionals think the majority of their stress will come from clinical applications, however, after having thousands of doctors go through Light Side Academy, in-person workshops, and mentoring, what I realized is that 80% of the stress in our daily lives comes from practice management.

Below are the top 10 tips to be a happy dentist!

-Kyle



1. Dismiss patients early

One of the big mistakes I made in my practice was suffering from problem patients.
They drained the morale of my team and me, didn't want to pay for exams, didn't want to take required radiographs, and were rude to my team.

Every practice management guru talked about getting more and more new patients.
What I didn't realize was how much production we were LOSING by having these patients in our practice.

Every dentist needs to learn how to dismiss these patients ethically and legally.

> In Light Side Academy we use the "Patient Termination Letter Templates." I encourage you to start creating something similar to have on hand!

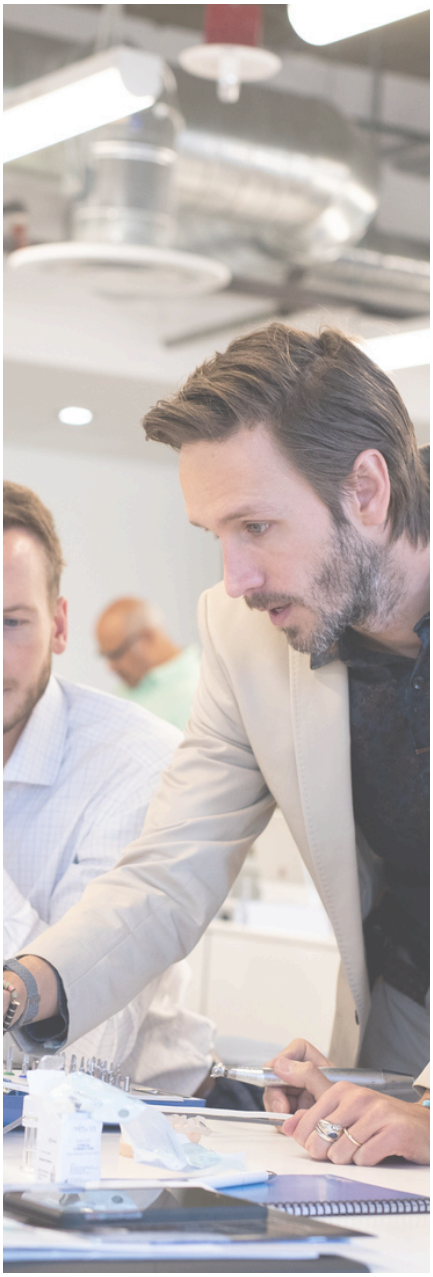
2. Emilinate Distractions

As dentists, we do a lot every day. From prepping teeth, reading radiographs, injecting patients, writing notes, presenting treatment, managing team members and even fixing the chairs when they break (You're not the only one!). This fragmented way of life can lead to burnout and anxiety.

There are a few simple things you can do to eliminate distractions like leaving your phone in your bag (tell your family to call the office if there is an emergency), telling your team to limit your distractions during the day and leave them for the end of the day or the morning huddle.

By being present, we can reduce our stress in dentistry!





3. Delegate when possible

At the beginning of my career, I wanted to control every step of the office.

I get it! We, dentists, are “detail-oriented.”

However, being able to delegate tasks can decrease the number of tasks we do every day and therefore reduce decision fatigue and burnout.

I now have my team printing and preparing my surgical guides, uploading my CBCTs and merging them with my STL files, preparing models for printing, etc.

> These were all tasks I had to master before I could teach my team but now are off of my daily list!

4. Overbook your time

Many surveys in dentistry show a major source of stress is running late.
The easy way that we avoid this in my office is by overbooking our time. Let's say it takes you 45 minutes to prep a restoration and 90% of the time you do it within that time, then book your prep time for 1 hour. This means that 90% of the time you may get an extra 15-minute break but for the 10% that you run over time, you won't be stressed out!
Having a more relaxed doctor will draw patients to you and increase your case acceptance and office morale.

5. Set true treatment Expectations

Early in my career, I was afraid to talk to patients about my fees, how long the procedure may take, and complications.
I wasn't confident in what I was charging.
This led to lower case-acceptance and angry patients.
This was a huge source of stress for me! For example, a patient may get an implant and think they get the final restoration the same day. When they find out it is multiple months later, they can become angry and bring stress to the entire team.

If you think it may take 2-3 tries to match a single central, make sure to tell the patient that or even overestimate!

By being confident with my time, fees, and possible complications, patients respected me, my case acceptance increased, and my patients were more prepared with true expectations.



6. If the previous 4 doctors couldn't make them happy, you won't either

We need to control our egos! I made this mistake so many times. I thought that since I was trained well by some amazing mentors, I could "fix" patients that had previous bad experiences with other doctors.

What I had to realize was that some patients claimed the previous dentist was the problem, but many times, it was the patient. Their personality, their punctuality, their ability to follow post-operative instructions, etc. If possible, try to contact the previous doctor(s) and get them on the phone to hear their side of the story.

7. Invest in your mental and relational health

As dentists, we think that most of our stress will come from clinical dentistry. This couldn't be further from the truth!

After mentoring hundreds of doctors from around the world, I realized that over 80% of the stress came from their mental and relational health. Learn daily habits that will make you a better dentist. Establish your purpose in life outside of dentistry. Understand how to talk to patients and staff members when crucial conversations are warranted.

By prioritizing these topics in your life, your practice will grow and you will have sustainable success in dentistry!

8. You're not selling, you are making an offer to improve their lives



I didn't get into dentistry to "sell". I wanted to help people.

This "sell" word caused me to be scared to talk to patients about treatment, especially the complicated and larger cases that I tended to treat in my practice.

One of my mentors told me "You aren't selling. You are making an offer to improve their lives."

This single phrase changed how I thought about case presentation. In dentistry, we can change lives by improving health AND esthetics!

> "You are making an offer to improve their lives.

9. Hire on personality and train on skills

I have worked with a lot of team members throughout my career. Old, young, experiences, new, nice, rude, etc. I've worked with them all!
What I realized was personality and work ethic was the most important trait. All of the dental knowledge could be learned over time. For example, I have had assistants that have 30+ years of experience with a bad attitude that I would gladly exchange for a new grad directly out of school that was happy to be there.

When you find the team members that are the right fit, they will highly decrease your stress in the practice.

10. Take time off

This may sound silly but you will not thrive if you work every day, all day. Some studies show that only 10% of dentists take any time off!

We are human, not dental robots and we need to recharge and serve our greater purpose outside of dentistry.
Start by making sure you take a lunch break every day. Build in time for stretching between patients. Take a day off per week if you can.

It may sound scary and think you will lose money but many Light Side Academy members report that they made MORE money after working LESS because they were more efficient and happier at their practice.

Next Steps

Now get to it! I trust that this was helpful and practical.

P.S. When you're ready, there are two ways you can get more cool stuff from me...

1. Follow me on Instagram where I post about mental health related topics in dentistry @drkylestanley

2. Register your interest for the next intake of Light Side Academy or Light Side Live, our 2-day in-person workshop. This program is designed to help you, as dental professionals, learn research-backed ways to decrease burnout and stress and have a sustainable thriving career in dentistry. It's pretty rad and it works. All of the links can be seen in the QR code below.



Dr. Kyle Stanley

Dr. Kyle Stanley is the most prominent advocate for mental wellness in dentistry and through his Light Side Academy has helped countless doctors around the world improve their mental and relational health.

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