

Be a harried hygienist no more

Anna Middleton explores the need for dental hygienists and therapists feeling out of sorts to look at their motivating factors and what makes them happy, to get the most from this fulfilling and wonderful profession



Anna Middleton

Founder of London Hygienist



Everything combined keeps me motivated and focused.

Grasp opportunities

My dad always told me: 'Find a job you love and you'll never work again'. Being a hygienist and business owner has given me freedom, independence, balance and happiness. Every day is amazing.

I meet a lot of patients who have previously had bad experiences at a dental practice, so I love trying to flip it and give them a positive encounter, filled with lots of motivation and encouragement. Seeing my patients smile after their appointment – and knowing they are happy – is a great feeling.

It is true, however, that not everyone is working in ideal conditions, whether that be due to, for example, appointment time constraints or a lack of support from their team. I have left jobs in the past due to being unhappy and I felt I wasn't able to do my job properly or safely.

I understand leaving just isn't always an option for some, but I do truly believe happiness is a choice; you can change and find balance.

When I first qualified, the reality of practising was a shock to the system. I did a fair bit of practice-hopping and struggled to settle in anywhere. I became tired and unhappy very quickly – I almost decided to throw in the towel.

However, when I left university, I branded myself as 'London Hygienist', but initially didn't do anything with it. Then I had an epiphany to turn my work into a brand and a business. I told myself, 'I'm already self-employed, so why not make it count?' and I haven't looked back since!

Being a hygienist has given me a flexible profession that I truly adore. Now, I run my own business and I am a guided biofilm therapy (GBT) ambassador for EMS – amongst other things – and no two days are the same.

Look after yourself

To achieve that much sought-after balance, come up with some ideas that appeal to you and create a business plan (more on this below). You may think that finding that balance is easier said than done, but it's not as hard as it might seem from the outset.

For a long time, I was working hours I didn't enjoy, so I changed them. I do a mix of half days and full days now over a two-week rolling rota. This also gives me time to rest and do the things I enjoy as well as run my business.

Then I was determined to work smarter and to enjoy my work again. As an example of how I have done that, I started using EMS GBT, a minimally-invasive preventive treatment. A gentle, effective and safe state-of-the-art system, it consists of treatment protocols based on a patient's diagnosis and risk assessment. Patients are

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assessed and then disclosed. The patient is shown what has been disclosed and educated in how to manage their oral hygiene effectively at home. The biofilm, stains and early calculus are then gently removed with Airflow powder. Any remaining calculus can then be gently removed at the end.

I am getting much better results and seeing more patients. This is fantastic, as I am paid on percentage, so value a full diary. My body feels better for it too; no more sore wrists from hours of scaling!

Plan your future

As I just mentioned, I am paid on a percentage basis. And it is one thing to ask for more money but another to show you are worth it.

For instance, I started marketing and referring my own patients to the practice under direct access. After a period of time, I showed the principal my numbers and I was given a higher percentage on what I brought to the table. I now have a constant incentive and the value is seen by the principal, as the patients often then go on to become patients of the practice and have various treatments.

Carrying out whitening and other treatments is another great way to increase your profits. I know practices where, even if you don't carry out the treatments yourself, they will pay you a small referral fee when the dentist performs the treatment in question.

Always remember when asking for something – what is in it for them? Because that is what the principal wants to know.

A team approach

A great practice needs a great team, encompassing everyone in the workplace – 'team work makes the dream work!'

I work closely with all the staff at my practices. Everyone in the team deserves to be happy and supported.

Raising concerns and highlighting issues can be daunting, but part of working as a team is to have your voice heard.

If you have any concerns, my advice would be to present them alongside some suggested ways you believe these issues can be overcome or managed. Ask for timescales in which changes will take place and offer ways to make everyone involved in the team happier.

Failing that, remember your happiness is the most important thing in the world and keep your eyes peeled daily for a new role or practice in which you can shine. **D**

FOR FURTHER DETAILS about what EMS has to offer dental professionals in the UK, visit www.ems-dental.com.