

# Mirror Image

## Committing to Yourself

**W**e have written numerous articles about exceptional customer service and enhancing patient care. This is not a new and revolutionary topic, yet it is the core of our day-to-day struggle in the dental business—or in any business. This subject always will be the most difficult challenge we face. Whether you are a team member or the leader of a team, caring for other people well and with compassion requires you to give a piece of yourself. We bring our viewpoints, experiences, and all of the resulting judgments of our past to work with us each day. What we think and believe about ourselves and those with whom we interact is reflective of the service we provide. Your work is a projection of who you are as a person, not just as a dentist or dental team member.

Simply stated, what you tell yourself will become your truth. When your co-workers walk in the door, who do you see? When you look in the mirror, is the person looking back at you the kind of person you would choose to listen to your concerns without judgment? We all need help facing the fears or emotional issues that keep us from doing the positive things for ourselves that

we sometimes don't have the energy or desire to face. We have a responsibility to those we serve, those with whom we serve, and, most importantly, to ourselves, to become better human beings each day. Without this commitment, you simply cannot improve the services you provide to your patients.

### Studying yourself

Being an excellent dental practitioner requires significant, ongoing study to maintain clinical skills and stay abreast of new technologies. Unfortunately, when you become stretched, you often neglect the study of the one aspect of your practice that matters most—you! Remember: The first thing your patient buys is you! When is the last time you attended a course that made you think differently about how to be a better person? What do you read and study? Do you actively engage your mind in creating behaviors that will give you the positive and compassionate attitude of a true listener and leader?

In previous articles, we have written extensively about listening and questioning skills. These skills are at the heart of being successful. In his book *What Got You Here Won't Get You There!*, Marshall

Goldsmith writes, "The ability to make a person feel that, when you're with that person, he or she is the most important (and only) person in the room is the skill that separates the great from the near-great." It's true: It's a skill that will define and separate you from the masses. This is not a new and exciting revelation. However, how many of the people in your life have developed this ability?

If we know this skill is so important, why don't we all do this well all day, every day? Unfortunately, it's one of the hardest life skills to develop because it takes such energy and focus. It's a mental discipline that you have to practice. It takes time to build your ability to concentrate on other people and their needs.



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Pay close attention to what you tell yourself. Our guess is that the person to whom you listen best is you. Think of the negative judgments and assumptions you sometimes make regarding other people as "junk food for the brain." These judgments might feel good at first, but in the end the resulting anger and guilt aren't worth it. When you are with someone, give yourself the freedom to care about listening to their needs before even considering telling them about your judgments or opinions.

#### Share your values

As a leader of your practice, think about "growing" other people, rather than just getting them to do the things you want them to do. Know your core values, and share them with your team often. Let your team see you incorporate your values into your behavior—even when it is difficult to do so.

What we think and believe about ourselves and those with whom we interact is the very beginning of the service we provide. Regardless of the direction toward which you are moving in your practice philosophy or which new clinical service you are incorporating, start at the beginning. Be a better you, each and every day. It's the true key to success. ♦



Lorraine Guth is a professional speaker and consultant, as well as president of Motivations by Mouth. She conducts management consultations for dentists in both the United States and Canada to improve communication with patients and team members and to improve treatment compliance. She can be reached at 636.257.2066 or at [www.motivationsbymouth.com](http://www.motivationsbymouth.com).

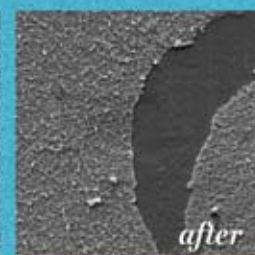
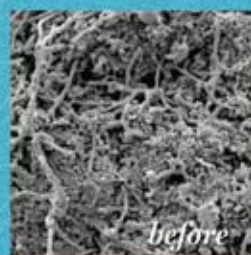


Don Deems, DDS, FAGD, known as The Dentist's Coach<sup>®</sup>, is a professional business coach. His most current book, co-authored with Ken Blanchard and Stephen Covey, is entitled *Roadmap to Success: America's Top Intellectual Minds Map Out Successful Business Strategies*. He can be reached at 501.663.9903 or through his Web site at [www.drdondeems.com](http://www.drdondeems.com).

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