

Wednesday, October 9, 2013

Lessons Learned From Dentistry



Dr. Al Genis was lying in his patient chair in the operatory in which he had practiced for more than 40 years. I had worked with this energetic, respected community member for more than a decade when I joined and purchased his dental practice. His cancer-ridden body was exhausted, but his spirit was sparkling with enthusiasm. When I asked him what he would do differently in his career, he looked me dead in the eye and said, "Spend more time with my family."

Back in 1988, when I received my MAGD, there was only one other Master in the 9th District Dental Society in New York State. On a mission, I introduced myself to Phil Morse, MAGD, and asked him the same question. Without hesitation, Phil said, "Spend more time with my family." Thanks, Al and Phil.

Dr. Sam Unger taught me an important lesson on treatment planning. No matter what the case was about, he always started with, "If the patient..." I have found that there are many factors that go into a treatment plan. When it starts to get confusing, I remember that Sam taught me to always start with the patient's needs." Thanks, Sam.

Dr. John Chandler taught me that, in order to get my diet under control, I had to accept that the piece of meat I ate was no larger than the palm of my hand. It introduced me to a concept that I must have missed during my childhood: portions!" Thanks, John.

Dr. Nathan Satler taught me about chemical dependency. It is a disease in which only the person with the illness can choose to help themselves. No matter how good a dentist or relative or friend I was, it was not something I could help with until that person owned their addiction. Thanks, Nathan.

Dr. David Goodman taught me to think about the whole person, not just the mouth. My two-year GPR at Brookdale Hospital Medical Center, in a Brooklyn ghetto, was very humbling. Despite the complexity of the cases, David had a way of making knowledge of the whole patient part of the solution and not part of the problem, paving the way to successful patient care. Thanks, David.

Dr. Angelle Casagrande taught me how appropriate use of benzodiazepines could make treatment easier and healthier for patients and for health care practitioners. In my patient population, lorazepam is just what the doctor ordered. One of my very apprehensive patients actually threw his anxiety-free arms around me and declared, "I love you, man!" Thanks, Angelle!

For my 60th birthday, my then 18-year-old daughter had a suggestion as the best gift to myself. "Why don't you take a year and do nothing but work and see what it is you want to do with the rest of your life?" Thanks, Anna.

These are the most challenging times I have seen in my 35 years in private practice. The profession is evolving, and many are struggling to hang on. If you are finding yourself confused and bewildered on what to do with your career and life, downsizing worked well for us. In 1998, Dr. Don Mays taught me what was going to happen to the dental profession in the next fifteen years. We took his advice to heart. Downsizing and simplifying our lives has given us the life we always dreamed of. Thanks, Don.

Enjoy the journey,

Bob Oro, DMD, MAGD