

The Four Simple Steps to Reverse Aging

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Let's face it—prosthodontics is physical, emotional, and sometimes spiritual labor. Many times it can be hard labor. This labor can be considered stressful and have irreparable circumstances if the proper compensation techniques are not employed over the course of your career.

In the last decade we have seen many of our coaching clients mature into their 60s, 70s, and even one into his 80s. They usually fall into two categories:

Category 1: Tired, beat up, out of shape, overweight; systemic health challenges; vacations are an escape from their practices; prosthodontics is a means to an end; they are looking forward to transitioning out of their practice in the foreseeable future.

Category 2: Excited, happy, peaceful, healthy, vibrant; vacations are a chance to rest and come back refueled; very optimistic about the future of prosthodontics; fulfilled; feel a sense of significance in how dentistry helps those they serve, and never want to quit.

I find observing a prosthodontist in either one of these categories one of the “most fascinating elements” of coaching.

I am sure if you came on a field trip with me, you would find this fascinating too, but what you would find more fascinating than separating dentists into each category are the “obvious” and incredibly apparent reasons “why” they fall into either one of the categories.

We have made it a lifetime study to study those who are successful, healthy, and happy. We have also made it a lifetime study to study those who have regrets, are unhealthy, and unhappy.

I am overcome with curiosity when I meet with people who are working well into their 60s, 70s, or 80s who still have a great passion for work and the vitality to do it well. My question is always the same.

Here is the question I ask:

“Dr. Incredible, what's the secret to staying so young?”

I have received a lot of good advice in the last 20 years of observing dentists. The healthiest ones I have met always tell me a variation of the four following things. We call them the “Four Simple Steps to Reverse (or slow) Aging.”

1. Do 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise every workday

“Physical energy is the fundamental source of fuel, and it affects our ability to manage our emotions, sustain concentration, think creatively, and sustain commitment. Leaders [dentists] make a fundamental mistake when they assume that they can overlook

the physical dimension of energy and still expect those who work for them to perform at their best,” state Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz (authors of *The Power of Full Engagement*).

This is critical to understand when it comes to your future and how you view prosthodontics.

Every dentist's biggest excuse is “I don't have time for exercise.” The truth is that you cannot afford to make this mistake. It is too costly.

The most vital and happy dentists I have ever worked with have given themselves permission to take time to work out . . . no matter how busy their lives are. It becomes a sacred time that rarely gets compromised.

Take 30 minutes a day (preferably before the workday starts) and do 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise. In those 30 minutes, do two to three short efforts of 1-2 minutes in which you push yourself into a “slightly uncomfortable zone.” Over time, these short intervals will increase your cardiovascular health and greatly improve your ability to handle any increased stress at work or home.

A dentist in New York told me that his production increased over \$100,000 by making only one change in his practice. He said he started going to the gym in the mornings before work. What happened is that he felt better about himself, so his team and his patients responded enthusiastically to his confidence and energy, resulting in a dramatic improvement to the overall health of his practice.

Remember, how you see yourself has a great deal with how the world sees you. So let them see a better you.

2. Do 30 minutes of weights or strength training every workday

“Strength training is every bit as important as cardiovascular training in part because loss of physical strength is so connected to the markers of aging with reduced energy capacity,” continue Loehr and Schwartz. “On average we lose nearly one-half pound of muscle mass per year after the age of forty in the absence of strength training.”

On top of it, University of Michigan scientists found that men who completed three total body strength workouts a week for 2 months lowered their diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number) by an average of eight points. That is enough to reduce the risk of stroke by 40% and heart attack by 15%.

So make sure you complement your cardio with some strength training. Try to work on a different muscle group 4-5 times a week. You'll feel more alert, focused, strong, and energized as a result.

Don't believe me . . . give it a try.

3. Eat right 90% of the time

Food can be a “joyful pleasure” or a “drug,” depending on the relationship we have with it. I absolutely love pizza, but what I have learned as I get older is that I cannot have it several times a week.

As we get older, our metabolisms slow down and we cannot consume or burn the calories we once did. The trick is to eat small portions more often throughout the day. We really should eat six to eight tiny meals a day. The normal human only really needs 1800 to 2800 calories a day to live a healthy life. Nowadays with portion sizes the way they are, we can easily hit that mark with one meal.

A wonderful, healthy dentist in his 60s told me this, “We really make it much harder than it can be. We have three major meals in a day and 7 days in a week. That equals 21 major meals in a week. I just try to eat healthy 90% of the time, which means two meals a week, I really have fun.” This is great advice.

Since hearing that advice, my wife and I have tried to save our two fun meals for Friday and Saturday nights. Friday night we have pizza with the kids, and Saturday night, my wife and I have fun on our “date night.” Being disciplined during the week helps us enjoy the fun meals without the guilt.

4. “Earn your shower” instead of “taking one.”

Try this experiment for the next month. Every time you get in the shower, ask yourself this question, “Have I earned this

shower or am I taking this shower?” After you answer that question, examine how you feel.

Taking a shower requires no risk, no work, and no challenge. Earning a shower is rewarding, energizing, and refreshing.

From now on try to earn your shower every morning. I promise . . . it will change your life. It will positively affect everyone in your life.

A life in prosthodontics can be an amazing, fun, and healthy ride if the right disciplines are employed. On the other hand, it can be a long, continuous, tiring battle if you don’t embrace the proper disciplines to enjoy it.

My hope is that you make the right choice and decide to never quit.

My very best to you and your family,

Kirk Behrendt
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 ACT Dental Practice Coaching

“stop TRYING. . .and start TRAINING!”

Kirk Behrendt is the Director of ACT Dental Practice Coaching (www.actdental.com). He has lectured all over the United States to major meetings and study clubs. He has extensive experience in practice profitability, team building, leadership, and dental practice marketing/branding. Kirk and his team are primarily focused on positively impacting the future of dentistry one practice at a time. You can reach him at 800-851-8186 or email him at kirk@actdental.com

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