

BUILDING A FULFILLING LIFE BY

Managing the Various Stages of Your Career

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“In the days of misty towers, distressed maidens, and stalwart knights, a young man, walking down a road, came upon a laborer fiercely pounding away at a stone with hammer and chisel. The lad asked the worker, who looked frustrated and angry, ‘What are you doing?’ The laborer answered in a pained voice, ‘I’m trying to shape this stone and it is backbreaking work.’

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“The youth continued his journey and soon came upon another man chipping away at a similar stone, who looked neither particularly angry nor happy. ‘What are you doing,’ he asked? ‘I’m shaping a stone for a building.’ The young man went on and before long came to a third worker chipping away at a stone, but this worker was singing happily as he worked. ‘What are you doing?’ The worker smiled and replied, ‘I’m building a cathedral.’”¹

This version of the old story that many of us have heard was printed in *Fortune* magazine in the year I graduated from dental school. As I began reflecting on what to theme this issue of the *Journal of the California Dental Association*, this story came to mind. We enter into the great profession of dentistry from backgrounds that represent great diversity. However, most of us chose this calling because we wanted to make a difference in the lives of others in our communities by improving their health. We wanted to be a part of building that cathedral. We also wanted to live fulfilled and happy lives.

During difficult times such as these, when external forces place significant pressures on so many in our communities, it is easy to lose sight of personal and professional goals. By the end of January, some of the headlines included CNNMoney.com claiming that “The Dow Jones industrial average and Standard & Poor’s 500 finished their worst January ever Friday as investors eyed abysmal reports on economic growth and quarterly earnings.”² There were more than 100,000 job cuts in just one week.³ At the time of this writing, our own great state of California was struggling with having to issue IOUs for tax refunds. “Suffering from both a \$15 billion budget deficit

and a multimillion dollar cash shortfall, California is days away from not having enough money to cover all of its bills.”⁴

This is a perfect time to stop and reflect again on our goals and what we are doing to be fulfilled both personally and professionally. When the authors featured in this issue of the *Journal* came together, we wanted to ensure each article held something of interest to our entire membership. We have loosely paralleled the great work of our association in developing the stages of practice as a result of the Mind of the Dentist surveys completed a few years ago. Each article will address the topic as it would relate

to the four main stages from beginning a career, starting a practice, enriching one’s career, and preparing for retirement.

This issue starts with a reflection on leadership by Drs. Terry Hoover, Nava Fathi, and Patrick Ferrillo. They will look at leadership activities and opportunities as they would relate to the various stages of practice and how these activities can be leveraged to enhance personal and professional satisfaction.

Next, Drs. Ruchi Nijjar and Fred Fendler discuss insurance coverage to protect the dentist through the four stages of a dental career. This is not meant as a recommendation of specific products but

a general discussion of how to make decisions on solutions that will help one reach their personal and professional goals.

The third article by Dr. Parag Kachalia evaluates investing for one’s future and how to meet his or her financial goals. There are some sound management ideas that can be implemented with the help of the appropriate advisers to help the dentist focus on what they want to do in their career and life.

The fourth article by Dr. Craig Yarborough looks at the three Ts of giving. This discussion will provide some ideas on how to give back to the communities and profession that have given dentists so much.

Finally, with all of the pressures of our personal and professional lives, the issue’s authors felt it would be appropriate to end with a discussion of life balance that Dr. Cindy Lyon and I have included. This will prove even more essential in the current times where there may be more stress and pressure in certain aspects of our lives.

I want to thank the other authors for their willingness to share their thoughts and time with us. We hope you will be able to pull one little pearl from each of these discussions to help you move closer to building a fulfilling life by managing the various stages of your career.

Enjoy. ■■■■

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