



How to love your problems, so you can solve them gracefully

By Julie Parker

Our working days are made up of situations that both run according to plan and are quite satisfying and those that are unplanned challenges that can be quite unsatisfying.

We feel satisfied when all the patients arrive for their appointments, each dentist runs to schedule and when all team members are delivering their best performances.

We become dissatisfied when we discover the lab work for a patient in the chair has not yet arrived or when a team member arrives 10 minutes late back from lunch.

Our experience of our working day is more enjoyable without feelings of dissatisfaction. But the dissatisfaction actually comes from within us, not from external situations.

Consider an example that is often repeated by Morty Lefkoe, creator of a series of psychological processes (The Lefkoe Method) that result in profound personal and organisational change. The situation given in the example is this.

Consider that you wake up in the morning. You look outside your bedroom window. It is raining and the heavy clouds indicate that it will be pouring all day. How do you feel about it? Probably pretty neutral. You decide to stay in doors for the day and the rain will not be a bother to you.

Now consider the same situation with the weather but this time, you are waking up on the morning of your wedding day. You have planned this wedding for three years and it is to be an outdoor wedding. Now, how do you feel about the rain? Devastated, right? How could this happen?! Not only will I be drenched but all the guests will be too!

Now consider the same scenario of waking on your wedding day to rain but you remember that you are getting married in a country where the culture believes that rain on your wedding day means you will enjoy a life-long marriage of joy and blessings. Now, you feel elated! You feel lucky that it is raining!

The rain never changed. Just the meaning you attached to the rain changed. And your resulting feelings you experienced went from neutral to distress to joy.

Changing your perspective on situations and events that would normally be frustrating to one where you embrace challenges and problems and love finding solutions will turn each and every day into a great source of happiness.

This changing of perspective is called “re-framing”. It is an amazing tool to have in your skills toolbox!

A step towards re-framing is altering your expectations. If you have the expectation that every day will run smoothly, I assure you, you will be disappointed. And deep inside you, you know from your own experiences that my assurance is an accurate one!

Instead, develop the understanding that problems and challenges and disappointments are SUPPOSED to occur.

That it is ONLY through tackling and solving problems that we develop skills and become masters of our roles. Adopting this understanding allows you to embrace your problems in a productive, joyful and energised manner.

Instead of resisting problems, your brilliant, creative mind is free to develop solutions and bring control back to the situation.

Let me share one of my favourite re-framing strategies that I used with my biggest frustration when I ran my dental practice.

My reaction to staff calling in sick was bordering on aggressive. I used to get frustrated, thinking about the impact it was to have on MY day.

I could see that this reaction would damage the strong relationships I was building with my team, so I wanted to do something about it. My re-frame of this scenario was to place the relationship I had with staff higher than the inconvenience of being short-staffed. I decided to react as if the person calling in sick was my sister, to whom I would be caring and compassionate, asking what I could do to help.

Due to my re-frame, I ceased to experience any dissatisfaction when staff called in sick. I had re-framed it to become an opportunity to further build trust and safety with my team.

Re-framing your experiences has a large influence on how you perceive, interpret and react to life. The control and choice are within you. And you don't have to wait to put this skill into practice.

So next time a challenging situation presents itself to you, tell yourself “I love this problem! I want to keep getting better in all my skills and know this will help me do that. Bring it on!”.

About the author

Julie Parker is a Dental Practice Management Consultant and Team Educator. At the age of 33, Julie became the first non-dentist to own a dental practice in Australia. Julie is Co-Founder of Julie Parker Practice Success and Co-Founder of Dental Business Mastery. Visit julieparkerpracticesuccess.com.au and dentalbusinessmastery.com.au to find how Julie can help your dental practice be more successful. You will find information about consulting programs, online courses, podcasts, free downloads and more.