The 7 Deadly Sins of Dentistry

The idea of the Seven Deadly Sins originated with early Christian theologians. Other religions and cultures were no strangers to the ideas of virtues and vices, of course—think of the Greeks and hubris—but the current lineup of “seven biggies” is generally credited to Pope Gregory I, who around A.D. 590 revised a century-old collection of eight sins, conflating some and adding one more to the mix.

As a dentist, how many of the seven would you be guilty of?

Pride
Failed dental work might not usually be the dentist’s fault, but if you refuse to warranty your work you’re likely to eventually end up in front of a Board of Dental Examiners or a judge. Are you too proud to admit when failed work is your fault? Do you refuse to refund the patient’s money, or refer the case to someone who can fix it?

Gluttony
Why do young dentists live in homes bigger than their parents’? You can’t have a pity party about graduating $350,000 in debt to become a dentist, then go out and get excited about buying a $350,000 house. That’s financially insane. Investor Warren Buffett lived for years in the same house he’s had since 1958, while some dentists with student loan debt already live in houses that are bigger than their parents’ and grandparents’ houses combined! Most dental speakers pander to you and tell you what you want to hear; I, on the other hand, want to tell you that you are a complete idiot.

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by Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, publisher, Dentaltown magazine
Greed

Dentists overdiagnose and overdo treatment plans because they want to do what’s best for their finances, not what’s best for their patients. They’d diagnose a $25,000 all-on-four case because they refuse to do an overdenture on implants.

Envy

Why are you so jealous of the guy next door? Instead of seeing your colleagues as competitors, with better practices and shinier CAD-CAMs, lasers or whatever, why don’t you think of them as mentors? Quit thinking in fear and scarcity and start thinking in hope, growth and abundance. Instead of being mad that Old Doc MacGregor up the street is 10 times better at endo than you, go knock on her door with a smile and ask her how she does it. She’ll likely see herself in you and want to help you, not slam the door and say, “Get out of town.” (And if she does say that, that’s just the wrong buddy thinking in fear and scarcity, and you need to delete that person from your life, today.) Find a mentor in your town. Get a homie. Participate more on the Dentaltown forums! You don’t have to be alone in dentistry.

Lust

An inappropriate office relationship causes nothing but trouble and costs you a fortune. And yet they happen more than they should. Cheating on a spouse or partner is a bad decision on its own—and that’s only compounded if you were to do so with a co-worker or someone who reports to you. There are more than 7.5 billion people on this planet. Don’t act like a Neanderthal.

Wrath

Lashing out about the state of dentistry but doing nothing but complaining about it is almost as productive as dentistry was in A.D. 590. Why don’t you do something about it? Go on Dentaltown.com and discuss those issues constructively with your colleagues. We’re all dental professionals, and we’re all in this together—and it’s not about us, it’s about our patients. It’s about Grandma coming in, too embarrassed to smile. It’s about treating mental health, not just dental health. It’s about wanting to know how you can deliver dentistry faster, easier, higher in quality and lower in cost, so you can serve the masses and honor our sovereign profession. Instead of being wrathful when your competitor up the street can give Grandma her smile back better than you can, why don’t you aspire to do the same? Take control of your practice and take charge instead of shouting and whining.

Sloth

Why would you take only the minimum continuing education requirements you need to renew your dental license, instead of taking the 100 to 300 hours of continuing education you need to renew your life? You should keep stoking your intellectual curiosity by taking every CE course you can find on Dentaltown, which has both print and CE courses available 24/7. And although they don’t qualify as continuing education, my Dentistry Uncensored with Howard Farran podcasts are full of information—I hear all the time from dentists who say they’ve learned so much from tuning in ... and they’re free at dentaltown.com/dentistryuncensored.

Stay hungry, my friends—and hustle. Work like no person has for 10 years, and live like no one has for the rest of your life. Develop an intense work ethic. Stay humble and listen to your staff, patients and mentors.