A happy marriage versus a “working” marriage

By Gary Kadi

Ever wonder why in dentistry a high ration of spouses work together in the same office? I believe this may contribute to the high divorce rate among molar jockeys. Dentists have long been the brunt of suicide jokes, but in my travels, I have encountered a bigger plague facing practitioners — a propensity for divorce.

I reflected back on my current clients’ status and more than 85 percent have had dissolved marriages. Yikes! As a practice management specialist, doctors often come to me looking to ramp up income to compensate for the 50 percent of earnings they dished out to their lawyers. Hey, here’s a novel idea: let’s tackle the source of why dentists seem to have a progressive divorce rate.

The first step in transforming your relationship is to understand the fundamentals of both genders. Males and females typically have two very different fundamental needs. Let’s start with what women commonly want from men. Many women look for a man who’s fun, loving, and most importantly, certain. For the purpose of this article, we’ll dig a little deeper into the certainty trait. (If you’d like to hear more about what I feel men want from women, view my DVD, Why Your Spouse Hates You.)

Having a spouse who exhibits certainty is significant to many husbands and wives. Two primary areas of certainty are emotion and finance. Many spouses who don’t feel fulfilled emotionally and/or financially end up working alongside their significant other in the dental practice. When I entered into the dental consulting business 15 years ago, I was amazed by the amount of couples that work together. I owe many thanks to the countless spouses who had the courage to confide in me — their desire to obtain financial and emotional security and stability.

Certainty can be defined as freedom from doubt. How much doubt can a doctor possess when overwhelmed with monster debt, a business to run, a staff to manage, a spouse to please, and kids to spend time with? Of course I wouldn’t want to go on without mentioning the importance of finding time to enjoy life — taking a vacation, playing a round of golf, or completing a morning workout.

After a few years practicing dentistry, many doctors falter down a slow, slippery slope and through their actions, “train” their spouses — albeit unintentionally — not to trust or rely on them for the financial and emotional security they crave.

As a result, the spouse becomes part of the practice, taking reign over dental collections. In some instances they may resort to micro-managing the team to fill their void. A time may arise where the doctor feels like a failure. After spending all day working together, struggling to get through it, the husband and wife return home only to talk about the office even further, drink wine to ease the pain, or shower and retreat to different corners of the house.

Exhausted. Frustrated. Disconnect ed. It doesn’t have to be this way.

The healing starts with communicating with each other. Not only in passing, but actually sitting down together to talk and acknowledge what has been going on is no longer acceptable. It’s important to express to your spouse that you take a responsibility for providing financial stability. Although you may be the primary caretaker, you must voice that you need your spouse’s help.

Ask your spouse what it will take for him or her to feel financially secure. Believe it or not, many times this will be the first encounter where a couple sits down to declare how much is enough. In all my years of coaching couples, doctors and team members, I have found that the root of most financial challenges is that there’s never enough. Establish a financial scoreboard so that you know the game you’re playing. So often the light at the end of the tunnel is closer than you think.

To illustrate, conduct a personal budget that puts aside at least 15 percent for retirement and monthly debt. Make this percentage your desired net salary. Calculate your fixed office expense and add a 10 percent cushion — this becomes your new monthly goal. Divide your monthly goal by the total number of days worked per month. Establish your hygiene goal as 20-25 percent of your practice’s total production, creating your doctor DPO (Daily Primary Outcome by Position). Now determine the difference and begin designing a strategy that will get you there without a doubt. Remember, certainty is freedom from doubt. Where exhibiting complete certainty, everything will transform — your relationships, your peace of mind, your team, your patients, your freedom. Money doesn’t provide happiness, but it is something that you and your family deserve.

You are now heading toward the ultimate breakthrough: when the rubber dam meets the case acceptance road. I use some of the biggest and baddest systems for case acceptance. To illustrate, conduct a personal financial scoreboard so that you know the game you're playing. The ultimate source of changing your life and practice is knowing that you deserve love, wealth and success. By merely focusing in on this area of development, I have been lucky enough to support them from a point of mediocrity to doubling their productivity.