Dr. Scanlan used to love coming into his practice. He was a new practice owner and was excited about building the practice, working with his team and providing patient care. Now, in his mid-30s, he feels frustrated. The practice is busier, and he’s earning a good living, but the days are stressful. His team too often seems to be working against him—instead of with him.

Meanwhile, a question kept running through his mind, ‘Is this constant state of tension, stress and chaos all I have to look forward to for the next 25-30 years? There has to be a better way.’ And there is. Say ‘No’ to unnecessary stress.

Levin Group has helped many doctors in a similar situation as Dr. Scanlan’s. In fact, it is a far too common occurrence. Once they establish their careers, dentists often get caught on what I call the ‘practice treadmill.’ Lasting anywhere from 10 to 20 years, this period is where many dentists spend the majority of their careers—going to the practice, seeing patients, putting out fires, and coming in the next day for more of the same.

After years on the treadmill, dentists begin to wonder why the practice isn’t growing. The problem is that once you are on the treadmill, you are working so hard just to keep up with the daily demands of dentistry that you have very little interest.

Getting off the treadmill is much easier than you think. Here’s how Dr. Scanlan gets off the treadmill and takes his practice back:

1. Eliminate and Delegate
2. Implement Documented Systems
3. Train the Team
4. Use Advisors

1. Eliminate and Delegate
Many dentists do too much in the practice. Instead of empowering their teams, dentists hold on to far too many duties. Take an inventory of everything you do in the practice. Eliminate those things that are not directly related to patient care or leading the practice. Delegate all tasks that you are not required by law or state board regulations to perform.

Although each task in the office has different levels of difficulty, proper training will help team members perform these functions.

2. Implement documented systems
Documented systems can reduce stress and allow dentists to focus on providing exceptional patient care—not administrative matters. A goal in establishing documented systems is to create the highest possible levels of efficiency. Creating step-by-step guidelines for every operation in the practice is critical to success.

3. Train the Team
Training your staff is not something that can be effectively accomplished in the 10 to 20 minutes between patient appointments. To ensure that team members fully understand their roles, time must be set aside away from patients. Morning meetings and monthly staff meetings are good opportunities for the doctor to provide focused training.

4. Use advisors
Dentists who get off the treadmill usually develop a support team of advisors. Seeking the counsel of experts to strengthen certain areas of the practice can be a highly effective method to attain greater success. When that happens, doctors experience greater enjoyment and revitalised energy.

Get off the treadmill
Dr. Roger P. Levin, DDS is founder and chief executive officer of Levin Group, Inc., a leading dental practice management consulting firm. For more than 20 years, Levin Group has helped thousands of general dentists and specialists increase their satisfaction with practicing dentistry. Levin Group may be reached at (800) 888.0750.0000.