Author Steve McDermott, in his book How to be a complete and utter failure in life, work and everything, asks the question: ‘Do you want to fail in everything you do and waste all your potential?’ There are some among us who don’t exactly want to fail, but spend an extraordinary amount of time wasting their potential (I am one). It is to us that this article is dedicated.

McDermott says it is so exactly the opposite of what you should do. This is of course exactly the opposite of those writers who say exactly what you should do. For example, he suggests that

1. You should not plan your prior to their potential (I am one). It is to us that this article is dedicated.

2. You should not have goals, because you do, you increase the possibility of meaningful coincidences occurring (this is similar to saying that the harder you work, the luckier you get).

3. You should not involve other people in what you do, unless you want to motivate your employees, increase their self-esteem and create an environment for them to enjoy their jobs.

4. You should not take advice from people you have never met or who are dead. The best way of achieving this is never to read biographies of people who have led successful lives.

5. Immediate action should be avoided – never do today what can be put off until tomorrow. McDermott illustrates this point by saying that the most painful household accident is stepping on an upturned electric plug in bare feet, or walking on a Lego brick.

6. You should avoid feedback on your actions. Not all feedback is constructive and if you are unfortunate enough to receive feedback, treat it as criticism and ignore it.

7. Practising continuous improvement is a bad idea which should be left to the Japanese and ignore it.

8. You should never change your beliefs: think what you’ve always thought – that way you’ll only learn what you already know; McDermott notes that, faced with the choice between changing one’s mind and proving there is no need to do so, almost everybody gets busy on the proof.

9. The overwhelming number of people who jump from a plane survive, but only if they are wearing parachutes. You should therefore wear a parachute at all times. (Literally translated, this means you should never take risks, do anything unusual, innovative or different. Hmm… wearing a parachute while you are driving is uncomfortable and unnecessary. The solution is to be prepared to try new things and ideas, but never without evaluating the risk.)

10. Don’t expand your comfort zone; if you really want to be a failure, then it’s really important to fear success. Only the mediocre will be constantly at their best, so why would you want to do better than that? Being successful will annoy your friends, so stay where you are!

In conclusion, Mr McDermott would like you to know that although people are different, all those who mass-ively underestimate share exactly the same strategies for failure. I am sure he is correct.

Ed Bonner runs a personal consultancy for dentists, with coaching for the entire dental team. He can be contacted on bonner.edwin@gmail.com or 07766 601 538.