Inside out
Glenys Bridges helps put confidence into practice

Having confidence in your daily working life will have positive effects on the dental team.

It is not surprising that others pick up on how we are feeling and respond to us on that basis. A huge amount of communication is through signals picked up subconsciously, from body language projected through how we move our body and walk. Not only does how we move and feel have an enormous effect on our inner confidence levels; it also influences what other people think of you.

Our state of mind is directly affects how we move and vice versa. As dental care professionals we need to design the image we want to project to patients and colleagues, at times this requires us to replace emotional body language with considered, cognitive actions and responses which can in fact lift your mood and make the image a reality.

Next time you are out walking and you are not in a hurry, lift your head and lengthen your spine. Lift your chin up and look ahead. Let your shoulders come back, and hold your stomach in. Let your arms swing naturally; and then notice how this affects your mood.

Since mood affects how we perceive our world and our responses affect how effective we are, it is important to maintain an upbeat, confident and positive outlook. Therefore, if you manage your internal mood throughout your working day this will have a positive impact on your wellbeing and confidence level.

Here are some suggestions about how to lift your mood and confidence levels at challenging times:

Because we all lead such hectic lives, we can be so busy ‘doing’ that we lose touch with how we are feeling. When you are in a less-than-positive mood, do something to transform it to give yourself the best possible chance of having a good day. Act sooner rather than later as, it is hard to retrieve the situation the longer it goes on and as it continues it will erode your confidence.

At the start each day, or before undertaking a particular activity, write down what you want to achieve from your day, this allows you to focus on positive outcomes.

If you feel low at the beginning of the day, look up and visualise how you are going to handle the day ahead. There is a technique used widely in NLP, Visualisation, in which you imagine yourself successfully managing events, or situations that are causing you concern. You will feel much more upbeat.

When life throws us challenges our inner critic can try to undermine us, if successful this will reduce our confidence and resourcefulness. At such times it is helpful to recall previous times when you have successfully managed similar challenges and identify the inner resources you used and remember how good your success felt, then bring those resources and feelings to the current situation.

It is very important to maintain your physical self at challenging times. Eat healthily, drink sensibly, start the day with a breakfast that sets you up for your day ahead and do everything possible to get a good night’s sleep.

When something knocks you back or your inner critic starts to undermine your confidence and your mood and you become overwhelmed by a negative emotion, you need to transform it. Watch out for physical changes in your body that indicate a change in your thoughts and feelings. The change could be a tensing of your shoulders or your neck, a head-ache, a sinking feeling in your stomach or some other physical change that indicates you are no longer in a confident, positive mood. Be aware of the physical signs that you are slipping into a less-than-positive state?

To quickly snap out of a negative mood or state of mind simply look up, this accesses your visual cortex, bringing two benefits. Firstly, it is almost impossible to experience a negative emotion while looking up and therefore it forces you to feel more positive. Secondly, when you look up and access your visual cortex it is much easier to visualise how you are going to handle things. This is very useful if you are starting to feel anxious, stressed, angry or under confident in a particular situation.

If possible, take time out and physically remove yourself from a situation that is making you feel negative or undermining your confidence, even if this means simply taking yourself off to the toilet. This can help you to dissociate and leave your negative emotions behind. If it is possible to go for a short walk, that will be even better.

It is essential that dental professionals maintain their professional skills and provide patients with the best possible dental care. Before we can offer the best care to our patients we need to care for ourselves and ensure the confidence we project outwardly is sourced from a genuine inner wellbeing.

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