



ORTHO 2

A Balanced Work Life

by **Carol Eaton**

I recently spent a few weeks in England and truly admired the work philosophy of many of the people I encountered: "Work hard, play hard". Which they seem to do so well, balanced with the average 6 week holiday time. One of my dear friends who works in radiology at a country hospital shared with me that the hospital was thinking of creating more of an American work environment; longer days and possibly extended hours over the weekends. Why would they want to do that when they seemed to be happier, less stressed, and committed to fully enjoying their daily lives and allotted six weeks of holiday time? In fact, statistics show that the happiest people in the world live in Northern Europe (England, Sweden, and Norway), Switzerland, and several countries within Africa. I kept thinking, here in North America, we need to create more of a work environment like theirs instead.

In my 40 years of work in the dental and orthodontic profession, I have never heard any doctor, hygienist, or team member tell me they wished they worked more hours or stated they were bored and had too much time on their hands. However, I constantly hear the opposite, "I never have time to get everything done", "I'm so stressed trying to keep up with all of my duties and responsibilities", "I'm overworked and under-appreciated", and a common one, "I'm burnt out with my job and find it less enjoyable."

With so many highly-skilled professionals in our field and the difficulty of replacing them, it's a shame to hear these phrases coming from dedicated team members and watching them go through the burnout transition. Although every job (that's why it is called a job vs. hobby or play) has its degree of stress. What we do in the world of orthodontics should afford us the ability to maintain more balance, implement fun in our daily routine, and provide true satisfaction of a job well done at the end of each day.

And who controls this atmosphere of a better balanced work environment, daily fun and laughter as we interact with patients, parents, and co-workers, and a restful night of sleep knowing that we made a difference in the role we played today? We do! With some invested time in planning our work week more effectively and committing to a fun work environment, we can achieve a better balanced work life and avoid job burnout.

Here's some helpful tips to get started:

1. Start everyday with an enthusiastic and positive morning huddle with the goal of making it a productive day complete with shared fun and support of each other. Say thank you to your doctor and team members at the end of each day knowing that together you have made a difference in people's lives.
2. Think like a triage nurse prioritizing your job skills throughout the day. Work in 15 minute increments to avoid wasting time. Ask yourself, "What's the best use of my time and talents in the next 15 minutes?"
3. Interact with your patients and parents during the day with fun motivational contests, trivia games/questions, and a true interest in their lives and activities. Don't make the day all about the braces and the wires, it's about the people.
4. Each job description in the office should have a daily "to be completed" list that can be followed in preparation for the next day. When this is completed, it's time to go home and replenish yourself for the next day. There will always be work waiting for you; spouses, children, and pets are not so easily set aside.
5. Avoid working a 5-day work week yet provide

Reprinted from

The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Ortho2
January 2016 - Volume 34 Issue 1

coverage (phone and comfort visits) and the perception that you are available Monday – Friday. Consider alternating your work week with Monday through Thursday one week and then Tuesday through Friday. Having a four day weekend every other week is great medicine for avoiding burnout and often times eliminates team members taking time off during patient days.

6. Invest the time and money to work with a management consultant proficient in doctor-time scheduling; they can help you work smarter and more efficient in shorter work days/weeks while still allowing for growth.
7. Schedule administrative time (non-patient hours) each week for team members to accomplish the support duties of the practice. You can make this a weekly goal or longer period of time bi-monthly. Keep in mind, some roles in the office require more downtime to accomplish their assigned duties (financial statements/reports, pending/recall phone calls, etc.).
8. Schedule monthly or every-other month team meetings with a minimum of two hours outside of the lunch block. Work together to discuss what is working well in your practice and what areas in your practice need to be fine-tuned. Occasionally, schedule additional training time for new technology, new protocols, etc.
9. Schedule quarterly team fun events or activities outside the office such as: bowling, miniature golf, ice or roller skating, attending a local play/musical together, taking a cooking class or painting class together, or attending a local

business seminar on enhanced communications, customer service, or dealing with difficult people. Don't forget to attend the annual Ortho2 Users Group Meeting as a team each year; a great opportunity to learn and grow together as you build your team camaraderie.

10. Plan a yearly team retreat; meet outside the office to review goals/reports of previous and current statuses and make new goals for the upcoming year. Choose a good business book as your theme for the year with each team member reading and reporting their input and suggestions.

I will be speaking at the upcoming Ortho2 Users Group Meeting in Las Vegas, NV. I encourage your team to come a day early or stay an extra day to discuss ways to implement balance in your daily work schedule. If you have time, schedule a fun evening of shared entertainment or a group tour of the Zappos Company who embodies fun in their work environment. For more information, you can contact me at caroleatonconsulting@gmail.com. ☺

About the Author



Carol Eaton is best known for her expertise in training treatment coordinators and streamlining the new patient process. She will be presenting a class at the 2016 Users Group Meeting in Las Vegas.