



10 HAPPINESS HACKS FOR ORTHODONTISTS

by Dr. Dustin S. Burleson

INTRODUCTION

Although I normally discredit the orthodontist who tells me he “just wants to be happy in life,” there are so many unhappy orthodontists right now that I thought I would share the common traits I see in my best clients – the happy and happily-wealthy ones. If you’re not happy with your life or your practice right now, you’re not alone, but don’t forget – being happy is a choice and it’s a goal that is absolutely within reach for you. The things you need to do to in order to make it happen are not rocket science. They are simply little things that when put into motion create a powerful energy that can be life-changing. After all, you only have one life. Do you really want to spend it being frustrated and miserable? I didn’t think so.

Armed with the right information and tools, nothing can stop the orthodontist on a mission to be happier and to serve more people – someone with a BIG vision for life. Wouldn’t you love to help more people, deliver more value and wake up happy to go to work each day? That’s what I thought.

So, without further ado, here are the 10 happiness hacks for orthodontists...





Surround Yourself with the Best People.

1

Sometimes, people are intimidated to be around those who are much more successful than they are. But those are the very people with whom you should be surrounding yourself. I've read hundreds of management books and in my own MBA training the focus tends to center around three things: people, people, people.

Who you surround yourself with has an incredibly powerful ability to take you up or take you down. If you surround yourself with those who are highly successful and are good people, they will help raise your game to be the same. You don't even realize that this is happening, but it is. The old adage is that we are the sum of the five people we hang around with the most. If you surround yourself with those who are negative and never reaching their goals, or who may have no goals at all, then you will inevitably be held back as a result. But if you take the approach of surrounding yourself with the best people, you will find that you become more successful, too. Their attitude, positive way of thinking, and their belief in the ability to reach goals will infect you in a positive way.

Imagine the conversations that took place in the room where Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and Harvey Firestone gathered. They were all friends and spent a great deal of time together. Having a mastermind group that is made up of those who can help make

you more successful, even if it's only by providing positive thinking and show you some of the ropes to success, is a life hack that takes minimal effort and pays off in huge dividends. If you don't have people on this level who come to mind, seek them out. Find highly successful business groups that you can attend and other local business leaders you can meet up with. Whether it's on the golf course, board room, or a backyard barbecue, surrounding yourself with the best people works. You have heard the expression that it's about who you know. While that may not be completely true, there's a lot of truth to that statement.

The people you surround yourself with will make a huge difference in the level of success that you reach as an orthodontist.



potential



Learn How to Delegate.

2

More than one of the orthodontists I provided consulting to in the past thought they could do it all. I mean that literally. They believed they could open the doors to their practice and to make sure that everything was done just as they wanted. They tried to cover all aspects of the office, from marketing to reception and everything in between. As you can imagine, that's not ever going to be a success story.

While I realize that we orthodontists often have a tendency to want to handle everything on our own, I can assure you that it's not in your best interest to do so. The more things you try to pile on and take on, the less quality of each you will provide. Not to mention that you will become overworked and burned out before long, which takes you in the opposite direction you want to head.

Ronald Reagan hit the nail on the head when he said "Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere as long as the policy you've decided upon is being carried out." Brilliant advice that the most successful companies tend to follow.

To have a successful and happy practice, you have to have the best people working for you in every position. They need to be properly trained and they need to feel that you trust

them handling the aspects of their job. That's what Disney and Hilton do, and that's what every orthodontist should do, too. Keep in mind that research has shown that employees don't necessarily want more money on the job in order to become more engaged and satisfied. They want more responsibility and the ability to master a skill. Hire the best people, train them and give them the tools they need, and then give them some responsibilities and duties. Let them take care of things as you back off and handle other aspects of the practice.

When you can master learning to let go and delegate to those on your team, you will experience a whole new level of happiness. And your practice will become more successful as a result.





Set BIG Goals.

3

What professional athlete would get excited for a manager or team owner who set the goal of just finishing in the top of the league? What church leader would be compelling if he just wanted to not lose as many members as last year? How excited would you be if your financial advisor told you he just wanted to minimize your losses this year?

While these may sound extreme reading them, they are often exactly what is happening with the orthodontists I hear from. They aim to play it safe, barely reach for more, and do nothing to rock the boat.

Without a doubt, I can tell you that when you have the right people on the bus, they don't want to grow just 2 or 3 percent this year. They will never aim that low, and neither should you. Andrew Carnegie said it best when he said "People who are unable to motivate themselves must be content with mediocrity, no matter how impressive their other talents." You may be the best damn orthodontist in a 500-mile radius of your office, but if you don't set big goals, and I mean big ones, then you will settle for the mediocrity that will come your way.

I don't know an orthodontist out there who is happy with mediocrity, even if they are doing things that are keeping them there. Since you are reading about how to be happier I

assume you are not comfortable with mediocrity, so aim higher. Set huge goals. The bigger goals you set, the more success you will attain. Don't let fears hold you back. Ever. Take the goals you made for the last year and times them by 10, go that big or bigger. Once you have those goals you have to have the right mindset. You absolutely must believe that those goals are attainable and maintain a positive attitude. We can make things happen, but we have to believe in them first and that all comes right from your mind. Your thoughts are everything and are more powerful than you realize, so make sure you have positive and ambitious ones.

**Having ambition is a major key to reaching higher levels of success and achieving your goals.
Be ambitious. Always.**





Eat Right, Sleep and Get Exercise

4

You may be thinking that you already know this one, so you don't want to give it much thought. But do you really know how much doing these things can impact your level of happiness in life?

Taking strides to be healthier in life is going to transcend happiness throughout your life. When you feel good about yourself you will feel more confident, you will be more outgoing and want to interact with people more and be better at it. You will have more energy to work toward your goals and your attitude will be better.

Consider how you would feel if you were 50 pounds overweight and didn't exercise regularly. There's a good chance that you would be tired a lot, not have good self confidence, and it would most likely interfere with getting proper sleep. We can do better than that and we must in order to live a happy life. No excuses.

If you want to be a happy orthodontist, it is time to kick the bad habits and excuses to the curb and get serious about taking care of yourself.

Exercising is a great stress reliever, and being able to keep stress levels at bay is a great step toward being happy, too. Whether it's biking, running, swimming, or something else, make

exercise a routine part of your life so you can reap the physical and mental benefits that result.

Eating healthy fuels our body with the nutrition we need to be healthy and energetic. Many people overlook how important getting proper sleep is, but if you want to be happy you have to make it a priority.

This is the only body you have, so make sure taking care of it is a priority. You will feel better, look better, be more confident, think more clearly, and be a heck of a lot happier if you eat right, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly.





Take Time to Be Alone.

5

This is probably going to run counter to what you have always heard. But ask yourself how happy it has made you along the way.

Most orthodontists are charismatic, have an extensive network of friends and peers and rarely have lunch alone. In fact, there is even a book called “Never Eat Alone,” which basically tells you to always be “on” all of the time.

This is kind of like leaving the light on all of the time, which I can tell you is a great way to burn yourself out. Whether you are an extrovert or an introvert, it is crucial that you spend some time alone. This gives you some down time, provides you with time to reflect, and gives your brain the ability to reboot.

There are other good psychological benefits of spending some time alone, too. These include improving your concentration and productivity, giving you a chance to discover what our inner voice is trying to tell you, and giving you the time you need in order to do some deep and meaningful thinking.

You may also use that time just to simply clear your mind and think about nothing, which will also help to reboot your brain and keep you feeling less stress. We need people in our lives and need to surround ourselves with the best ones, but we absolutely need to spend some time alone. We need to stop being “on” all of the time so that we can reflect more and just clear our minds.

Make a goal to spend at least one lunch per week all alone, so that it’s just you and your thoughts (and healthy food). Notice the difference it makes in how you feel and the way it makes you happier.





Be Picky.

6

I'd like to start out by prefacing that to say be very picky. If you are the type of person who says "yes" to every opportunity or activity that comes your way, it's a recipe for being mediocre at a lot of things.

Avoid being distracted from your core business, its marketing, and how you set your plans for growth in motion. The best companies in the world know their core competencies and avoid anything that tempts them to take their eye off the ball.

This doesn't mean that you have to say no to everything that comes your way and you can't do things that you enjoy or that excite you, but you have to start being really picky about the ones you take on.

Picture a plate. The more you add to that plate, the less of any one item you can have, simply because you will run out of room. We only have so much room on our plate (or time in our day), so if you add more and more things, it means something else has to go to compensate for it. Those things that go could very well be what you need to reach your practice goals.

How happy will it make you to not reach your goals, but to have been pulled off course six times within a few months? My guess is not too good. Happiness comes from staying the course, not stressing yourself out by taking on more and more, and reaching your goals.

Learn how to politely decline and not get involved so that you can be happier with what you have and what you are working on right in front of you. The more we say yes to people, the more we say no to ourselves and the more stress we create in our lives.

Stress is a happiness killer, which is something we don't need or want. Say no, stay the course, and enjoy the happiness you feel as a result.





Grow with Intention.

7

If you are like a lot of orthodontists and entrepreneurs, you are waiting for something to happen. But waiting gets you nowhere. Nothing truly exceptional ever happens by accident.

Expecting it to happen year after year with consistent growth is akin to expecting you're going to hit the lottery again and again. You have to be more clever and realistic than that. Who you surround yourself with, which mentors you choose, what you read, and how you motivate your team all start with intent. You won't stumble into one of my mastermind groups by accident. You have to apply and be accepted into the group. You won't mistakenly become a good leader and motivator of people. You have to work at it intentionally. Every successful person and business out there has had to grow with intention.

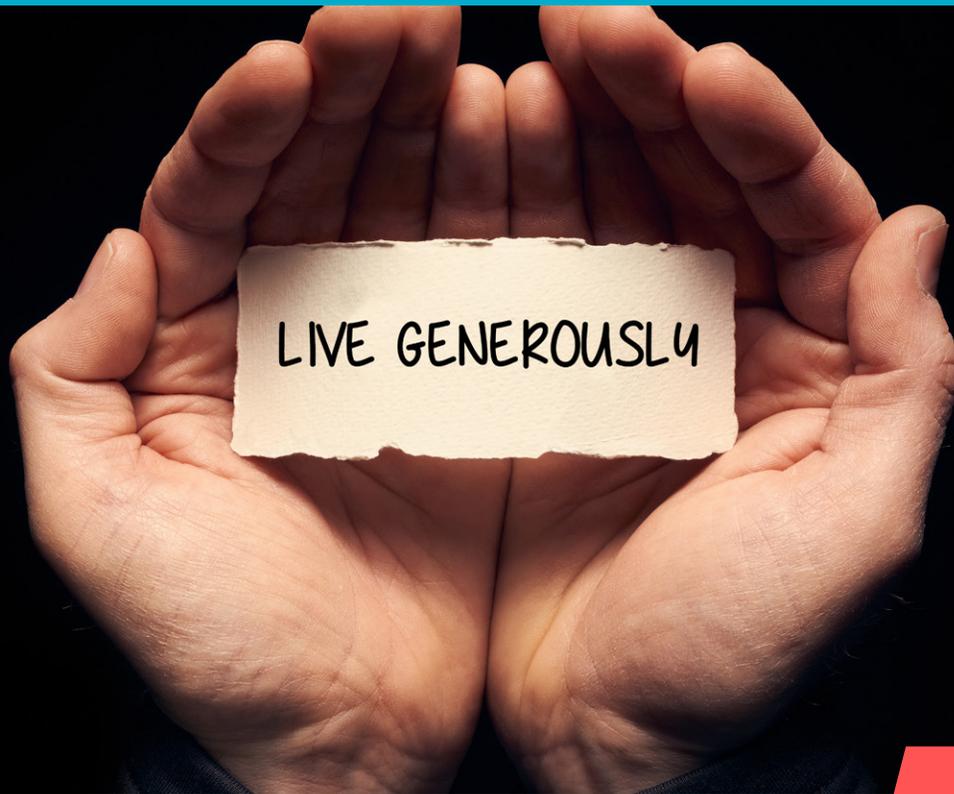
Things don't just happen, even if it looks like they may from the outside. Believe me, there are people meeting in boardrooms and at golf courses sharing their intentions and putting the wheels in motion to make things happen that lead to the growth that you see. What you see on the outside is merely a reflection of the work that has been done on the inside.

And that work has been done with full intention. If you are not growing your practice with intention, then there's a good chance it's not really growing much or any at all. If you want

to have a more successful practice and be happier with what you are doing, you have to have intentions. Make decisions, put things into action, and see things through until the growth begins to be more visible on the outside.

The more you begin to live your life with intention and see the growth that results, the happier you will become. Don't wait for things to happen, make them happen.





8

Live Generously.

Where you practice is not “your” turf. You don’t own your entire town and even if you did, you won’t own it in 100 years. Humans are the only species that pretend like we own things. Koala bears don’t take out mortgages on their trees. Lions don’t lease the tundra with equity deals. So stop taking it so seriously when a new orthodontist opens up in “your” area.

For all we know, it’s about to be “her” area in 10 years. Instead, take the things that others view as “silly” and treat them very, very seriously. Things like marketing, sales training, positioning, and your celebrity, authority and trusted expert status – all things that others have treated as silly or non-essential, I’ve taken very, very seriously. While they get their panties in a wad over their “turf” or their “area” and protecting it, or while they take AcceleDent and 3D Cone Beam very seriously, I’ve treated it as silly. Instead, I’ve focused on the things that aren’t on their radar and I’m starting all of their new patients in the process. It might be considered “bragging” if I didn’t share all of my secrets in plain sight. I hold seminars and webinars, write books and publish newsletters with ALL of my secrets for ALL to see. It’s part of my generous vision of life. The more I share, the more my mind opens up to see the next new thing that will grow my business.

Compare and contrast this with how most orthodontists behave. If they have something that’s working well, they want to hide it from the world. When they hire and train their

employees, they are afraid that investing too much time and money into new talent will only set them up for disappointment later. They ask, "What if I train them and they leave?" The better question is, "What if you don't and they stay?" Pay bonuses with a generous heart. Of course it's your money, but they helped you earn it. Open yourself to charity with a generous mind. You're not taking it with you when you die.

Instead of fighting the waves in your life, I suggest you surf them. Generous living embraces all of this, even when your friends, family and peers think you're crazy. Settle lawsuits with a warm heart. You don't know what possessed someone to sue you or dig after your pockets with a frivolous lawsuit. Unless you can get the case dismissed quickly, I suggest you settle before you make your attorneys rich. If you have a problem you can settle with a check, you don't have a problem. Why waste years of your life and unnecessary anxiety when you can save that energy for when it really matters. A kid with a terminal diagnosis, a tragic accident and loss of life, those are real problems.

**A money problem is not a real problem.
You just need to put yourself in the position to solve
those "problems" quickly so you can be present and
energetic for the real problems in life.**





Look Forward Without Burning Bridges.

9

I know, it may be tempting at times to burn some bridges, but I have always thought it was a poor idea to do so. You never know when you will want to go back over that bridge at a later time, because you never know where things may take you and whose paths you may cross.

Even if you will never come in contact with the person again, it's better for your own happiness to not burn the bridge. Peacefully walk away. There's nothing wrong with walking away from relationships, whether business or private ones, that don't serve us or are detrimental to us.

When we walk away without burning those bridges, we will not carry with us the psychological weight that comes with having burned the bridge. You will find that you are happier when you simply and peacefully move on from relationships that you no longer want to be associated with. You will find in life that you will be a happier person if you are building bridges, rather than burning them.

Take every opportunity to be polite, kind, and professional with everyone you come in contact with. This doesn't mean you need to go to lunch with them, especially if they are not the best people or those you should surround yourself with.

Just be kind and keep moving forward. You never know what networking or paths you will cross in the future and this will help you avoid sticky situations and keep you happier.



Let it go



Laugh, Forgive and Forget.

10

When people hold onto anger, they think they are hurting the other person, when in reality they also hurting themselves.

There's no way that staying mad at someone will ever help make you happy. What it does do is make you have more stress and anxiety. If there are things you have been holding onto it's time to forgive and forget. It's time to purposefully lift the weight off of your chest and choose to make yourself happier as a result of having done so.

The happiest people never hold grudges. They communicate, they forgive and forget, and they move on in a healthy manner. It's essential for you and the other person you are angry or upset with.

Every time you start to hold anger remind yourself that you will be hurting yourself by doing so and ask yourself if it's worth giving up some of your happiness to do so.

Also, laughing is so important. Laughing is not only good medicine, but it keeps us happy and feeling good. Look for the humor in situations that may otherwise cause stress and strain. Being able to laugh is going to put a smile on your face, and that leads to happiness. Become the type of person who lets things roll off of their back and keeps on moving forward.

Don't get caught up with letting things weigh you down. That will never lead to happiness, it will only take away from it.



IN CONCLUSION

Happiness is something we all want, as orthodontists and in our private lives. Yet we do things daily that lead to us being unhappy. Happiness is also a choice. We have to decide that we want it and then to live with the intention of doing things every day that will lead us in the direction of happiness, rather than away from it. When you are happy you will be more successful, feel better about life, and have a better outlook on all that transpires. We only get one chance on this planet, so let's do all we can to be successful and as happy as we can be.

As orthodontists, you come in contact with many people, and they notice whether or not you are a happy person. They are going to be more inclined to refer someone who is happy and has a positive attitude. So not only will you feel better psychologically by taking measures to ensure your happiness, but it will help you get more referrals, too. You will be more pleasant to work with, work around, refer people to, and will be more accepted into the successful groups you aim to get into. Don't just let these "life hacks" pass you by. Put them into action so that a year from now you are one of the happiest orthodontists on the planet.

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Dr. Dustin S. Burleson is a speaker, teacher, author and business strategist for thousands of doctors located in 28 countries throughout the world. He writes and edits four newsletters monthly, is the director of the Rheam Foundation for Cleft & Craniofacial Orthodontics and operates a large multi-doctor, multi-clinic orthodontic and pediatric dental practice in Kansas City, Missouri.

He is a champion of the private practitioner and has a long track record of helping orthodontists transform their practices and increase their impact on their families, employees, communities and the profession of orthodontics. His orthodontic marketing campaigns have generated over \$425 million in revenue for his clients and privately-held practices.

When he is not working, you can find him on his sailboat, jumping out of airplanes, or racing exotic cars through the desert. In a tightly-contested vote, he was recently named Best Dad in the World by two-thirds of his children.



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