

# Workplace Wellness



## Enhancing Dental Hygiene Wellness Through Recognition and Connection

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Oprah Winfrey is known the world over. There is something about her survival to thrival story, charisma, and unparalleled self-made success that has given her a relatability factor that few people ever reach. So, when Oprah says she's learned something from the more than 50,000 people she has interviewed in her career, we lean in and learn.

Oprah says there is one thing that every person asks at the end of an interview, no matter their fame or fortune, and it tells you everything about what people need most. They ask, "How did I do?" As dental hygienists strive to achieve a healthy workplace, this insight is crucial in helping them enhance their workplace wellness by recognizing and validating each other and other oral health care team members.



Dental hygienists balance patient care and administrative tasks under pressure. They create a safe space for their patients and show empathy to those who exhibit dental fear and anxiety. They often prioritize patients' well-being over their own. There's a reason burnout can be high among oral health professionals who carry the burden of never letting others down, who give and don't always get what they need in return. Simple gestures of appreciation, like a "thank you," can significantly boost morale and help prevent burnout. Creating a culture of recognition and value is essential for overall well-being.

To have robust mental health and well-being, we need meaningful connections across our lifespan. So, why do we think that some people don't need it? And why do we expect to be so self-sufficient that we don't always ask for or let ourselves accept support and acknowledgement from others?

### WHO NEEDS TO KNOW THEY MATTER TO OTHERS?

- Leaders from their staff
- Oral health care team members from each other
- Doctors and nurses from their patients
- Parents from their children (young children to teens to adults)
- Customer service professionals from their customers
- Flight attendants from their passengers

And vice versa. And the list goes on!

## CONNECTION IS ALWAYS THE ANSWER

Every person needs to matter to someone else. Everyone needs to give and receive love to survive and thrive. We must bring meaningful connections back or embed them deeper into the workplace. The easiest way to do this is to acknowledge.

Let's inspire each other to make the workplace a hub of meaningful connections:



Make eye contact



Smile



Compliment



Say "thank you"



Acknowledge



Express gratitude

It might be all the more critical when we (or a colleague) struggle to find positivity in the workplace.

- If someone is **negative**, look for their greatness **hidden behind the complaint** to acknowledge it before addressing the problem.
- If someone's **performance** is low, consider what might be **contributing to it** before resorting to correction or discipline.
- If someone is **disengaging**, invite reflections about why they choose to do the work they do and what makes it **meaningful to them**. It can remind them why they chose dental hygiene as a profession.

Assume that, if something isn't working, there's a reason. Always connect with the person as a human being first and foremost. This approach fosters empathy and understanding in the workplace.



## MAKING WORK LESS TRANSACTIONAL<sup>1</sup>

Working as a dental hygienist can be highly transactional. Dental hygienists see 8 to 10 patients a day, complete numerous assessments, turn over the operatory, and manage the sterilization centre. Sure, we all have to move towards business success, but that's a precarious house of cards if it's not built on a foundation of meaningful connection. People who feel cared about will care about their work.

Everyone matters, everyone's work matters, and everyone's impact matters. YOU matter. If you ever ask yourself, "Did I do okay?" know that it's normal. To ensure you know you and your work matter, find someone and tell them they are doing well, they matter to you, and their work makes a difference. One way to know you are doing okay is to acknowledge the contributions of others.

Imagine a world where we all genuinely and consistently affirm that in each other. Now, that is the world in which I want to live, love, and work. What about you?

### Reference

1. McVanel S. How to appreciate loyalty and service: The consequences of getting key rewards wrong. In: Greatness Magnified [Internet]. Article 358, February 16, 2024. Available from: [greatnessmagnified.com/how-to-appreciate-loyalty-and-service-the-consequences-of-getting-key-rewards-wrong/](https://greatnessmagnified.com/how-to-appreciate-loyalty-and-service-the-consequences-of-getting-key-rewards-wrong/)