

Managing change within your team: The Good, the bad and the awkward

As Practice Managers, or as someone managing a dental team, we have the pleasure of generally being the person who has to implement the changes to systems within our practices and teams...

To grow, we often need to change; and quite often it's not always the managers that bear the brunt of this change. So, how do we ensure that our team not only embrace change, but go on to promote a high-performance culture and continuous improvement?

Recognising personality types and politics within your team and presenting changes accordingly is a massive help. Not all of us react in the same way but we will often get there in the end, dependent upon good leadership techniques. It may just be that you need to adapt your style of leadership to get the required response.

Our teams are usually made up of four types:

- Persons who will initiate the change process

- Persons who will accept the proposed change
- Persons who will be indifferent to the proposed change
- Persons who will not accept the proposed change

Top Tips for change Management

1) Encourage and Promote Positivity and Flexibility – if you aren't positive, why should others be? Furthermore, be flexible to help and suggestions from your team when discussing the changes.

2) Enlist positive members of your team and help them to influence others that are maybe a little more resistant to the change

3) Be open – encourage your team to talk to you about their concerns or obstacles; it might even be something you haven't considered and could be valid

4) Look at your organisation chart and roles. Try to consider how the changes will affect different team members and be active in reflecting on what their resistance may be and why. Are your team going to be affected financially, physically (is their job harder?) or will the changes touch them from a 'hierarchy' perspective?

5) Embrace reality with productive actions and behaviours – ensure your team realise the benefits of the change – not just to the practice but for them individually too.

Most Importantly...

Remove obstacles and eliminate 'well poisoners' or 'Dementors' (for all the Harry Potter fans!)

Sounds harsh, I know, but after 20 years of building and growing two successful practices and now a team of 42, I haven't been without my fair share of these types

of employees. Much more dangerous than the greater spotted 'Matildas' (the waltz in, do their job and waltz out again type, who are generally harmless and will sometimes be spotted using initiative and surprising you with their attitude towards changes when nurtured and guided properly, and quietly warned about the well poisoners).

The well poisoners will often try their best to prevent change and ensure that others are not embracing change positively. Recognising that type of team member is crucial, and one to one management may be required to get them on board. In my opinion, it's sometimes a case of 'they are either on board for the journey or they need to get off the bus'.

Most of the team will be able to identify a well poisoner but new or younger team members often aren't so lucky and could be easily influenced to resist change. Again, recognition and removal of these negative barriers will help the wonderful changes happen. ■

About the author
Lisa Bainham is
President at ADAM.



Something to smile about: First Smiles 2019

We all know the health of our children should come first. However, despite this we are in the midst of a children's tooth decay crisis. Research has revealed that nine out of 10 hospital tooth extractions in those aged 0-5 are caused by entirely preventable tooth decay. Furthermore, tooth extractions remain the most common reason for hospital appointments in those aged 6-10, proving that we all need to work together to educate people better in terms of oral health.

A problem across the nation

Perhaps what is most worrying is that within this demographic, some areas of England are actually making no improvements or steadily getting worse. A recent news story revealed that in some areas of London, more than one million children go without seeing the dentist every year. This is leading to reversals in improvements of oral health in some London boroughs.

Whilst London cannot be held as a true representation of the whole country, this does mean that we have to consider – if the largest city in England with some of the best access to dentistry is experiencing these problems, are rural areas suffering more? It's likely that access to dentistry plays an important role in whether children have oral health conditions, and therefore we can assume that in more remote areas the problems are just as rife.

Why are children so vulnerable?

Children are one of the most vulnerable sectors of society in terms of oral health for many reasons. The first of these is that children simply don't understand the importance of maintaining their teeth, and may not have the coordination and development necessary in order to brush

their teeth properly at a young age.

This is very much within the role of parents to rectify, but professionals need to ensure that parents have the information available and that children are also aware of their oral health from a young age. Indeed, we are now at the stage that almost one in three children arrive at their first year of school with visible tooth decay. Eight or nine children in every class will have some tooth decay whilst at primary school, and this means that 3.3 million children aged up to fourteen are suffering unnecessarily per year. This is unacceptable.



An additional reason that children are so vulnerable to tooth decay is that a large proportion of childhood diets contain alarming amounts of sugar. Reports have revealed that children are eating almost twice the recommended amount of sugar per year, and this is having a significant effect on their oral health.

A third reason is that education regarding oral health in schools in some areas is sparse. A recent survey that assessed how well countries taught children about oral health found that the UK ranked lowest of all. Less than one in three children were taught about the importance of looking after their teeth (29 per cent) compared to other countries such as Brazil and India where the figure was considerably higher (91 per cent).

As such, it's important for professionals

to consider how they can make a difference for people in this vulnerable age group.

Making a difference

In order to help combat these rising tides of childhood tooth decay, the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT) created First Smiles – an initiative designed to help teach children about basic oral hygiene, encourage them to feel good about visiting the dentist and help them understand the importance of looking after their teeth on a daily basis.

Taking place on June 14th this year, this perennial event encourages dental professionals to identify any nearby schools or nurseries they can visit to give them the advice they need about tooth brushing, diet, and oral health to set them up for a better future.

First Smiles resource packs are available for practices that want to take part, and these include a sticker, a certificate, a reward chart and an information leaflet for parents.

How do I join in?

There are lots of ways that you can join in with First Smiles 2019. The first thing to do is to talk to your team and see if they have any ideas. You don't necessarily have to commit to making your visit on the 14th of June if this isn't feasible, but instead use it as an opportunity to reach out to nearby schools, nurseries and even parent toddler groups to see if any of them are interested in working together.

It's a good idea to keep anything you do present to children visually exciting and interactive. Tooth brushing demonstrations are a great idea, and you can create quizzes or games and implement other activities that are fun and exciting. It's also beneficial to give

them something lasting so that the day's lessons remain fresh in their minds. Can you find some sparkly tooth-shaped stickers for everyone? It is little touches like this that will help remind children of the information you have given them and make them enthusiastic to talk about it with their parents when they go home.

If you're struggling to find resources there are plenty available on Dental Buddy (www.dentalbuddy.org) and Educating Smiles (www.educatingsmiles.org), and if you're struggling to find schools that are willing to participate, you can always contact the BSDHT and we'll do our best to help to match you with a nursery or school in your local area.

Give them a good start

The importance of oral health education for children cannot be overstated. By doing your best to help teach children about how to look after their teeth, you can do your bit in lessening the amount of childhood tooth decay whilst also teaching them good habits so that they can maintain a happier, healthier smile throughout their lifetimes. So make sure you put children first by joining in with First Smiles 2019!

For more information about the BSDHT, please visit www.bsht.org.uk call 01788 575050 or email enquiries@bsht.org.uk ■



About the author
Julie Deverick is
BSDHT President.

