

The 'C' word

Even the very word, "conflict," can summon up a dread and cause our emotions to knot up a feeling of worry and fear of us having to manage what can be a tricky situation in our practices.

It might be that some of your team have conflicting opinions on who is doing what role, often having different perceptions of whether someone is doing a good, or not so good, job. It might be conflicting views on a patient's care between clinicians.

Let's face it: there will always be conflict. It makes us human. We are forever in a changing landscape, within our practices and externally. What we need to try and do is to change our mindset, otherwise the chances are that conflicts we face, unless managed, will cause either yourself or other team members to walk away. After all, who needs that negativity in their life?

So often have I seen people try to shy away from conflict and, in my opinion, it just festers. Create a culture in your practice where your team understands how approaching conflict positively and openly can

make everyone's life and emotions much calmer.

I spend a lot of time training practice managers and owners about managing conflicts within their teams and, as well-equipped as I can make them, they can't do it alone. It is a team problem, a team effort and up to everyone to take responsibility in finding resolutions to their particular source of conflict. Recognise it, discuss it, sort it, and move on.

As managers, we are more likely to be involved in conflict than others in our teams, but it doesn't mean we are the constant referee. It may be better for others to navigate and mediate certain conflicts. Don't post yourself as the one who sorts it all out all the time!

Here are some simple tips on managing conflicts:

1. Encourage everyone to be calm. Learning to remove our emotions in a situation is so important. Find a time when everyone has had the opportunity to breathe and reflect on an incident, before navigating the conflict
2. Listen to everyone's perspectives and worries/concerns

3. Find the common ground. There will be some, even if it's to agree that the common goal is feeling happier in the workplace or going home less stressed. Find it, agree on it and, then, reverse engineer to find the source of the conflict. We must remember not to place blame on people. We look at systems that have caused conflict and work together on that
4. Accept that different people approach conflict differently. If someone is clearly upset (sometimes there'll be tears) and another person isn't, it doesn't mean it's affected one more than the other. (See point 1 in an ideal world, but don't disregard reactions and emotions. Just remain objective)

5. Explore solutions and agree that all parties take accountability and understand that conflicts are often not sorted after a single conversation. Approach it as an exploration to find a better way forward
6. Communicate clearly. Reflection, Reassurance, Resolution. If you don't understand what someone has said, question it and ask for

clarification. Repeat their answers to show understanding and then discuss how we may look at resolving the conflict

7. If a resolution is found, ensure you follow it up afterwards. Don't pop it in a box. It was outed, so let it remain in the open and serve as a reminder of how we can work together in a positive way for other conflicts that occur.

Talk to your team about self-management and how they can be a positive conductor when managing these situations. Learning how to manage conflict positively and productively certainly makes for a happier team, but we sometimes have to provide them with the skills to do this.

At school, when we were taught subjects, the most valuable lessons are where we have been taught how to learn. The rest should then be easy... right?! ■

About the author

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Spring conferences, shows, and surveys

Exhibition season has started in dentistry – this past month BADN had a stand and presented at both the North of England Show in Manchester, and Dental Showcase at ExCel, London.



Natalie Marucci and Joan Hatchard
at the NEBDN Spring Conference

In between these two Shows, BADN's sister organisation, NEBDN, held its Spring Conference in Birmingham. BADN Chairman Joan Hatchard and Panel of Representatives member Natalie Marucci were guests at the conference, along with the two winners of the Special Recognition Awards. The event covered Professionalism and Leadership, with some fantastic speakers from the GDC, BDA, JFH Law and an update from NEBDN.

Speakers included Kristen Bottrell of the GDC on professionalism and BDA President-elect John Milne on leadership.



BADN Chair Joan Hatchard and former
Chair Jane Dalgarno

The North of England Show was held on 11 March at Manchester Central, the former railway station. The BADN stand was manned by Treasurer Michelle Brand, our IT & Comms administrator Adam Skalski and me. Meanwhile, President Debra Worthington gave a presentation on the BADN Menopause Policy*.

Then it was off to London for Dental Showcase at ExCel – a much bigger show. Again, the stand was manned by Adam and me, helped out by BADN member Rebecca Silver (who also spoke in the Oral Health Theatre



Adam Skalski and Jenny Hollywood on
the BADN Stand at Dental Showcase

on Dental Nurse Progression) and Jenny Hollywood from Parliament Hill, providers of the BADN Rewards Scheme. President Debra gave the first presentation in the Oral Health Theatre on our Menopause Policy – which led to an influx of visitors to the stand for a copy of the Policy.

We had a special offer at the Show for not-yet-member dental nurses – £5 off the already lowered annual membership fee of £35, plus entry into a draw for a £50 gift voucher courtesy of Parliament Hill – and gave away our BADN linen bags to dental nurses who visited the stand, together with BADN key rings and trolley coins. There were a surprising number of dental nurses at the show, so by Saturday lunchtime, we'd given it all away!

There are an increasing number of dental exhibitions/shows these days and many are wondering if it is worth attending? Dental nurses in

particular are often ignored by the sales reps, who only want to talk to dentists or hygienists. BADN has just launched its survey, which aims to find out which shows dental nurses attend, why they attend (or why they don't), what they want to see at shows and how much influence they have on purchasing decisions.

The results of the survey will be shared with the organisers of all the shows, as well as with the British Dental Industry Association – the professional association for dental trade companies.

To give your views, please go to badn.org.uk/dentalshowsurvey – we look forward to hearing from you!

* Copies of the BADN Menopause Policy are available for download from our website: www.badn.org.uk; hard copy versions may be obtained by sending a large stamped self-addressed envelope to the BADN office with "Menopause" printed on the top left hand corner of the outer envelope.

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