

## Advice to My Son or Daughter Graduating from Dental School



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When you graduate from dental school there is much more to think about than “where can I get an associateship”. It is important to remember that dentistry is also a business and good business practices are very important. Consider the following:

- It is important to find a good associateship even if there is no hope of buying into the practice or buying the practice. Pitfalls would be signing an overly aggressive non-competition contract that is going to eliminate owning a practice in the same community if that’s the community where you would want to practice down the road.
- Find an associateship that will give you broad experience. Broad experience can also be obtained by joining study groups or taking additional courses. Working in under serviced communities can also give you the experience you need and the cost of living should be lower.
- Before you purchase a practice you have to feel comfortable with all the various phases of dentistry. That relates to both techniques and speed. Once you own a practice it is more difficult to take a week off to attend additional courses because the overhead continues. Dentists with greater depths of dental education are more successful in their careers.
- Live within your means. The flashy car should not be high on your list of needs. Get your school debts to a controllable level. You do not want your school debt to limit the purchase of a practice when you are ready to purchase. New start-up practices have problems of low cash flow.
- Find an accountant – one with a number of dentists as clients – who will help get you started, set you up with sound accounting principles and conservative spending habits. Many dentists do not live within their means and find out too late what they should have done when they started their practice.

- Use an experienced lawyer who has a number of dentists as clients before entering into any material contract – whether an associateship, a lease or the purchase of a practice.
- Try to find a mentor dentist as the principal in your associateship practice – one who would give you advice and direction to avoid as many pitfalls as possible.
- Treat each patient as if they were family. Recommend procedures you would give to a family member. First, show that you care. The rewards will follow.
- Don't judge yourself by what others say that they can do. There are all kinds of exaggeration of accomplishments. Be true to yourself and by constantly improving your techniques through continuing education you will arrive at a position of confidence in all your accomplishments.
- Marry the right spouse, who will be supportive in your career. This will account for more than 90 per cent of your joy or sadness in your life. It is more important than money or fame.

So there it is. Experience tells us that life in general, and the practice of dentistry in particular, isn't always simple. But by following the above basic guidelines – augmented of course with good common sense – your chances of being rewarded both spiritually and materially with a lifetime of happiness and accomplishment will be greatly enhanced.

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