As we approach the end of the year, you may have already noticed a change in your scheduling at the office. Some of your patients may try to squeeze in that “extra work” to maximize health savings account funds while others may defer their treatment into the New Year. Given the economic status of the nation the past two years, many of our practices have been impacted in some regard. Has your practice aimed for goals and fallen short as the year draws to an end? Like many dental practices, some may feel there is little hope when patient’s employment may have been cut or insurance benefits decreased, both playing a large impact on the practice’s bottom line.

Learn how to motivate yourself and other dental team members. Many of us feel that we are at the whim of the day and the patients scheduled for that day. On a good day, when the pleasant/polite patients are scheduled, we will do well, and on a bad day, we will be unmotivated, will procrastinate and achieve little—particularly if the schedule contains patients who may need a little bit more energy from the dental team. Your day is yours to control, the schedule is flexible and you are at the whim of circumstance only in so much as you choose to respond to unanticipated situations. Planning ahead can provide security through contingency plans. For those issues that keep coming up, such as end of the day emergencies, see if there is an easy way to solve them permanently with blocked scheduling. Once you have reduced the unexpected as much as possible, you then can focus on and identify the next largest area of demotivation.

For many of us, particularly those new to self-improvement, emotions rule our workday. A mishap getting ready for the day can impact the rest of the day in more ways than we may realize. Motivation comes from knowing we have a task that will challenge us, is not insurmountable, and will provide a valuable outcome. By ensuring all of your major tasks fit into these categories, you will help to unleash the motivation found within your daily activities and, in turn, increase your productivity.

Be the best you can be in your profession and exude your confidence! Sometimes people may, deliberately or unintentionally, criticize you. It may be your employer or another team member, or perhaps your patient who may not fully understand your role as part of the team. Comments may be made about your phone demeanor, administrative skills, or your lack of self-confidence when meeting new people. These comments may hurt. Rather than focus on why the other person acted the way they did, focus on something else. Being a victim can never create a positive outcome because it creates feelings of vulnerability and being subject to the whims of others. If you are unhappy with what was criticized, take a critical look at yourself and decide if the time to adapt is now. By changing, you may motivate others to adapt their behavior as well.

Find the positive in everything. At this busy time of the year, it is very easy to get caught up in the stresses of preparing for the holidays along with the occurrences in the dental practice. Some may experience changes in employment, while others may not manage the stresses placed upon the dental team in order to meet production goals and patient requests. Remember to find the positive in every situation and to take time to recharge. Go for a walk on your lunch break or do something for yourself you may not normally do. You deserve it! Your positive attitude will be noticed and may motivate your patient or team member who may be having a bad day. Sometimes we just need another dental assistant as part of our support system who
can understand and commiserate, a benefit with membership within the ADAA—networking! Thank you to the members who continue with their professional membership each year. For those of you who may not yet be members, why not start the next year anew by joining the leaders of your profession? We have something for everyone!

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2017-2018 ADAA President