



Communication Skills.

Fears become barriers. Hopes become reality

Cognitive strategies are the programmed processes that we apply to everyday situations and decision making. It is so easy to get caught up in negative thought processes, especially when experiencing high levels of stress. Negative thought processes worm into our brains and can become fears. These fears turn into barriers to clear objective thinking, squashing our hopes and tainting our experience of reality.

Maybe it's time to reframe what we're thinking about and give serious consideration to our cognitive strategies so that we can utilise them to great positive effect instead of becoming barriers to our forward growth. Let's dream big and actualize those dreams.

What kind of cognitive strategies are part of our daily bread and butter? Are they positive or negative, constructive or destructive? Do they impact us in the way that we would like to and help us move forward ?

we can feel shackled by the exhausting yoke of worries about things that we probably can't change much anyway.

Let's consider not allocating too much attention to things we can't change or where our impact might be minimal. Instead, let's focus our energies on the things that we enjoy and reap the most benefit from the constructive seeds that we can sow.

To be successful we first need to be able to recognise negative thought processes and then do something with them. These are the cognitive strategies we need to catch and utilise to untwist negative thoughts.

One of the areas I have worked at for many years is helping clinicians to integrate digital dental workflows into their every day practice. I have done it myself, lectured about it and talked at great length with teams about it. There are many negative thought processes I have observed in multiple team members' behaviours. Maybe it's time to address them and see how we might be able to improve the way we do things.

" Shoulda woulda coulda, " means I'm out of time
'Cause "Shoulda woulda coulda", can't change your mind
And I wonder, wonder, wonder what I'm gonna do
"Shoulda woulda coulda" are the last words of a fool

Source: [LyricFind](#); Songwriters: Beverly Knight / Craig Wiseman; Shoulda Woulda Coulda lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group



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1. Should statements

In the immortal words of Beverley Knight 'shoulda woulda coulda means you're out of time.' Maybe I should go digital or I should get a digital scanner. How about changing it to a could or a would? I could get a scanner or I would get a scanner if a condition is met. What are you worried about? What is holding you back? Everyone is opposed to change and all beginnings are the hardest. Consider your fears as they morph quickly into barriers.

2. All or nothing thinking

When I go digital will that be a complete digital shift turning my practice into a tronic (?) digital landscape? My practice is going to be completely digital. How's that going to affect me? I can't really conceive of that whole idea.

You don't have to consider things as all or nothing. You can go piecemeal and get a bit of digital kit. You can add successive elements as your digital skills and knowledge develops. That is the more common way to integrate digital workflows into a clinical environment. Start with a scanner and see how your everyday experience of yourself at work can be enhanced. That's what most practitioners do.

3. Mental filters

Do you remember your last job appraisal or feedback session? Most of the feedback was very positive, singing your praises and giving you that warm fuzzy feeling inside. However, suddenly, one negative comment got made that seemed to wipe out all of the positivity and bring you crashing down to earth. This can seem crushing to a lot of people; a little like sky diving down a ravine without a parachute, the only surety being that the ground is there to meet you when you unintentionally but inevitably make contact with it.

What did you concentrate on when you came out of the job appraisal? Obviously, that one negative thing. That's when mental filters come into play. Let's take a balanced view of positive and negative and not just focus on the negative. Also, the constant shift forms the dynamic equilibrium of our lifelong learning. Although negative feedback can seem destructive at the time, it can often form the basis for dynamic change. The danger of positive feedback is the reinforcement of carrying on doing what we were already good at, instead of embracing change. Negative comments can crush us or make us strive to do better. Seize the opportunity to turn what you might see as your Achilles heel, weak spot and turn it into one of your greatest strengths.

4. Catastrophizing

Catastrophizing defines the sequence of a chain of made up events that will lead to catastrophic results: a disaster is almost certain to occur. USB conflicts, driver updates and other minor glitches might seem major. What if this initial, largely innocent and innocuous event impacts patient care/ staff happiness or my team, the practice falls apart and patients leave to my competitors down the road?



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It is not unexpected to have teething issues when introducing digital equipment into a dental clinic (no pun intended). Anticipate and plan to review the little glitches with a scheduled contact from the equipment supplier. Plan some short staff meetings or training sessions and incorporate an IT review. Digital integration relies upon all the human elements that fit around the machine that goes beep and has lots of flashing lights. Always expect the unexpected from the fickle finger of fate- it doesn't mean the end of the world and can often get sorted out without too much fuss.

So let's reframe our experiences and paint them in a more realistic light. Try to identify any negative thoughts, catch and untwist them to help actualize and overcome barriers.

Are you happy with your fears becoming barriers?
I'd much prefer it if my hopes became reality.