

# Don't get frustrated!

**Laura Horton** advises how clinicians can provide useful feedback to dental nurses and end the day on a high note

**Laura Horton**

Owner, Horton Consulting



Every now and then practices run into murky water when the clinician is dissatisfied with the dental nurse during clinic.

In most cases, the clinician does not want to upset their nurse by informing them at the time about a dissatisfaction. Instead they hold it in. This either results in the nurse being unhappy as they believe the clinician is being 'moody', 'distant' or 'hard to get on with', or the clinician finally snapping after a period of time – be it a day, a week or a month later.

The other scenario is where the clinician goes to the lead nurse or practice manager to vent their frustrations for them to then handle with the nurse.

When any of this happens, it is not great for either party and long-term problems start to brew.

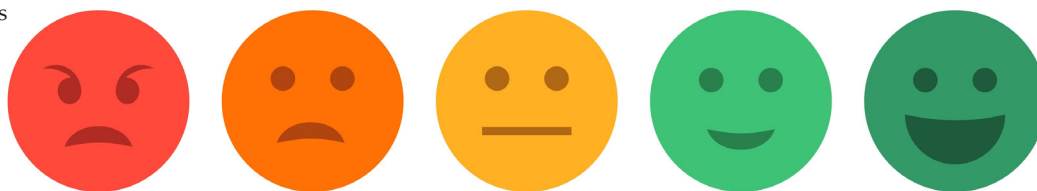
## Handle frustrations better

If you are unhappy, you need to be pointing things out as they happen. Dental nurses do not like to get things wrong, whether it is a set up or retraction technique. Big or small, they always want to get it right and support the clinician effectively throughout the day.

For an emotionally mature dental nurse, a quick point in the right direction will not phase them. If they are less experienced and not used to feedback and do react by becoming emotional, you may need further support when communicating with your nurse. However, using the system of 'pointing things out as you go' tends to cause less emotion anyway.

If, in a worst-case scenario, a nurse was to react by banging doors and being unpleasant, then you do need to go to the practice manager as soon as possible to have this dealt with. I can assure you this situation is a rare one, but seems to be the one that clinicians fear most and is the reason why they do not provide feedback as they go.

To avoid frustrations from



arising, follow my four top tips:

1. Always check the set up before you call the patient in, often things go wrong because the clinician has called the patient in without the nurse being ready
2. If you are with a patient and unhappy with a set up then you must say in front of them 'Laura, thanks for setting up X, can you please prepare Y for me instead?' This is a really nice way of asking for what you require in front of a patient. Make sure your tone of voice is jovial, then ensure you say thank you and, if possible, make eye contact with the nurse
3. At the end, when the patient leaves the room, you can then provide more detailed feedback to the nurse as to why you don't want X for that procedure you will only ever use Y
4. I would advise that clinicians keep a daily log on dissatisfactions, such as poor stock control, leaving you unsupported, poor techniques, etc. This way, repeated problems can be dealt with by the manager as it falls into capability management rather than a one off slip up. You also need to note down the great things they do, which I will discuss shortly.

Is it not advisable to say nothing all day, and then turn to the lead nurse or practice manager with a list of problems. Nurses should have heard the feedback direct from you – the clinician – and then if the concerns persist, they can be addressed further.

It is quite hurtful to a dental nurse to be pulled up by their lead nurse or practice manager to discuss concerns the clinician had with them. The standard question on hearing this is always: 'Why didn't he/she tell me? Why am I hearing this from you?'. This does not support the working relationship and leads to further breakdown.

## Laura's top tips for minimising frustration

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## Ending the day on a high

Clinicians are usually great at saying 'thank you' to their nurse at the end of the day. Whenever I ask teams about this, the nodding of heads as a confirmation is always strong. It's a ritual, part of your script is to say thanks; you would never leave without saying it. However, you can make it much more meaningful.

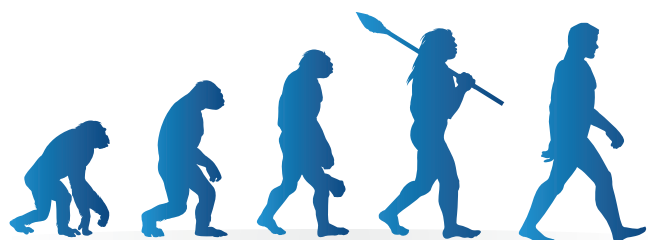
The best thing that you can do throughout the day is take notes about the excellent way your nurse has supported you. There will be many things throughout the day, just note a couple, for example:

- A difficult patient who your nurse had to have strong communication with to keep still, open wide, etc
- A nervous patient who they reassured throughout to help you both
- A great retraction with the mirror for the patient with the really strong tongue!

Then, at the end of the day, instead of just saying 'thanks', you can say: 'Laura, today was great, you really reassured that nervous patient and it made the appointment easier for all of us. And well done on the excellent retraction with the mirror for the patient with the really strong tongue. Thanks so much! I'll see you tomorrow, have a lovely evening.'

This will leave your nurse feeling wonderful. Going forward, if you do need to point something out, they won't be offended as they know you look for the good in them, too.

I encourage you to end every day on a high like this, it will mean that even if you have had a day where you have had to provide uncomfortable feedback, you will still finish on a positive note. **D**



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