

## Guest Editorial

## Is Your EQ as Big as Your IQ?

Most patients evaluate a dentist by three standards: will it hurt, will the result be esthetically pleasing, and will treatment be timely and convenient? Each patient will evaluate these factors on an individual basis, but who will evaluate the quality of the dental result? What will the next dentist who sees this patient think of your treatment?

And who is the best dentist? Is it you? Is it one of your former teachers, a generalist, or a specialist? Which barometer should be used as a qualifier of the best service to a patient? The answer cannot be identified quantitatively, such as the most implants placed, the most three-dimensionally obturated root canals, or the office with a large staff that is best organized. Perhaps the best dentist is the one who succeeds in blending chairside treatment with an excellent technician to achieve functional and esthetic results. Or the dentist who confiscates free time by reading all the newest scientific journals. Or the individual who can successfully blend a professional and personal life.

The qualifications continue ad infinitum, and we all are tempted to add ourselves to the list. Therefore, I ask you again, "Who is the best? Is it you? If you aren't sure, at least agree with me that to be a success for yourself, for your patients, and for your office, the most important thing you can do is: *Don't Stop!*

*Don't stop* attending continuing education programs that expand your technical skills and your people skills.

*Don't stop* exchanging ideas with colleagues and friends and teachers.

*Don't stop* striving to be the very best dentist every time you treat a patient.

I therefore recognize the efforts of all dentists who construct a serious curriculum for continuing education and arduously pursue their end goals. Well-planned courses are made possible by outstanding research and clinical skills, as well as the pursuit of excellence on the part of dedicated individuals such as the speakers and yourself.

Coming together gives all of us the chance not only to enhance our personal knowledge, but also to increase our emotional quotient (EQ), or "the skill of understanding and accepting the feelings and thoughts of another person," identified by Goleman in his book, *Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1995).

How does this apply to dentistry? Your participation and support in the lives of your colleagues, family, and friends leads to a better emotional life. As you become a more caring, concerned, and involved individual, you also become a more caring, concerned, and involved dentist.

Do you listen? Of course you do! But do you really hear what the person is trying to tell you? Could it be that you are in dental tunnel vision and are thinking only of the problem caused by the number of microns of the gap instead of seeing the problems of your patient? Think of a family member. Wouldn't you first discuss general problems before you "fall" into the mouth?

Are you confident in the health of your patient? Do you set a good example in your own health and mouth care? Do you meet your own criteria? Every dental meeting that you attend can add to your dental EQ and/or IQ. Keep them in balance.

Let us not only nourish our dental IQ, but also care for the social and emotional component, which I like to call our "dental EQ." So I ask, is your EQ as big as your IQ?

Christian Lex, Dr Med Dent