

new dentist news

A man and a woman are shown practicing yoga. The man is in a side plank position, and the woman is in a lotus position. They are both wearing athletic wear. The background is a vibrant blue with yellow brushstrokes.

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8 ways to prioritize self-care every day

New dentists expound on the importance of wellness

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR NEW DENTISTS TO PAY ATTENTION TO WELLNESS?

BY JENNIFER GARVIN

According to the 2021 ADA Dentist Health and Well-Being Survey Report, younger dentists continue to be disproportionately affected by mental and emotional health concerns.

This age group was less likely to feel in control of their work environment, reported a higher level of stress at work and scored higher on a depression scale.

The New Dentist News recently spoke to two new dentists who are passionate about wellness on why they believe that prioritizing wellness makes them better dentists, improves productivity and helps them with their work-life balance.

Alex Barrera, D.D.S., a new dentist who practices at a community health center in

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'I feel like a new person'

Q&A WITH DR. ERINNE KENNEDY SHINES SPOTLIGHT ON BENEFITS OF THERAPY

BY MARY BETH VERSACI



Dr. Kennedy

The average length of time between developing mental health challenges and receiving treatment is 11 years, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and stigma may play a role in that delay.

Erinne Kennedy, D.M.D., sought out therapy when she felt burned out during dental school, and now, she is doing her part to help reduce the stigma dental students may feel in seeking support for their mental health.

As an assistant professor and the assistant dean for curriculum and integrated learning at Kansas City University's College of Dental Medicine, Dr. Kennedy helps to lead a program that promotes students' mental wellness and resilience from day one. She also shares information about her own therapy experience with students to help normalize therapy-related conversations.

Here Dr. Kennedy answers questions from the New Dentist News about her therapy journey. For the full Q&A, visit the New Dentist News webpage.

Q: Why did you choose to pursue therapy to address your mental wellness?

A: I approach my own health the same way that I approach treating my patients. I aim to provide holistic, comprehensive health care using

a collaborative team to my patients, and I seek the same team for myself. The missing link in my health care team was a therapist, and I knew that finding someone to help me address the mental, spiritual and psychological aspects of my health was the next step.

Q: How has going to therapy benefited both your personal and professional lives?

A: How has it not benefited my life? Not only is it one of the best decisions I have made, I feel like a new person. It has made both my personal and professional lives filled with more peace, balance and curiosity.

Q: Do you have any advice for new dentists who are experiencing mental health challenges and considering going to therapy?

A: My advice would be to just do it. I know that it can be a difficult decision to go to therapy, but I want each person who is considering going to therapy to realize that they are important, valued and needed by their family, friends and colleagues. I hope that they have the courage to go to therapy and carve out the time in their lives for self-care, so that they can have the career of their dreams.

For more resources related to mental health, visit [ADA.org/wellness](https://www.ADA.org/wellness) or the NAMI website at [nami.org](https://www.nami.org). ■

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WELCOME

The *ADA New Dentist News* is a quarterly supplement to the *ADA News*.

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- [ADA.org/newdentistnews](https://www.ADA.org/newdentistnews)
- 1-800-621-8099
- newdentistnews@ada.org
- [NewDentistBlog.ADA.org](https://www.NewDentistBlog.ADA.org)

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New dentists expound on the importance of wellness

(continued from cover)

Houston, believes the first step in initiating a wellness routine is setting regular time aside for rest and self-maintenance.

"This profession does not have to be something stressful or overwhelming," said Dr. Barrera, a yoga practitioner who is also an ADA Wellness Ambassador and ADA 10 Under 10 winner. "We can prevent things like burnout, back pain and struggles with mental health, but the only way to do that is to be honest with ourselves as to what our needs are."

Dr. Barrera added that he encourages new dentists to find something outside of dentistry that makes them happy and gives them a break. For him, that's yoga, but it could be any hobby or change in scenery that helps an individual relax.

"According to Brené Brown, creativity, play and rest are wholehearted behaviors that will promote a healthy mind and body," he said. "I truly believe in the importance of hobbies outside of things we 'need' to do. When we allow ourselves time to enjoy things, we can better show up for our patients, our families and ourselves."

Dr. Barrera, who is doing a series of videos for the ADA, added that self-care "shouldn't be something we resort to because we're so burnt out that we have no other option."

"It should be a regular part of our lives so that we can continue to show up as the best versions of ourselves," Dr. Barrera said.

Like Dr. Barrera, Shivani Kamodia Barto, D.D.S., is also a yoga practitioner. A new dentist currently living in Okinawa, Japan, where her husband is stationed, she is also a wellness coach who works with health care providers.

"What many people don't realize, dentists included, is that wellness is essential in creating healthy, productive teams," said Dr. Kamodia Barto, who offers a free wellness course on her website. "It's a shortcut to greater productivity, improved mental and physical well-being, and an overall higher quality of life. If we don't take time to take care of ourselves, it will cost us more time, money and energy down the road."

When asked how taking care of wellness benefits how a dentist practices, Dr. Kamodia Barto said it

allows a person to show up as the best version for their selves, families, patients and communities.

"Wellness practices allow us to pour into others without sacrificing our mental or physical health," she said. "We can prevent physical injuries, chronic pain, mental fatigue and emotional strain."

One of the best things about getting started on a wellness journey is that small changes can make a big difference — sometimes almost immediately, she said.

This could be as simple as trying to develop healthier eating, sleeping or exercise habits.

But it could also be permanent changes to daily routines to help prevent burnout. Dr. Kamodia Barto also recommends dentists try:

- Integrating yoga, breathwork or meditation into their lives.
- Prioritizing frequent breaks from work, be it daily, weekly or quarterly.
- Taking time for true rest, leisure and fun.
- Regularly unplugging from technology.
- Checking in with a mental health professional.

"Wellness and stress management go hand in hand," Dr. Kamodia Barto said. "Managing chronic stress involves reducing stressors, learning to relieve stress more effectively and training our nervous system to respond to stress better."

The ADA offers a variety of health and well-being resources to assist dentists and their teams, including webinars that can be found by visiting ebusiness.ADA.org/education and searching "resilience." To see all the ADA resources on wellness, visit ADA.org/wellness. In addition, the ADA Accelerator Series is a hub for wellness, leadership and work-life balance tools to accelerate your life, your way. Visit ADA.org/accelerator for more information.

The ADA's Dental Team Wellness Advisory Committee members focus their efforts to support the health and well-being of dental professionals.

If you or someone you know is in immediate crisis, dial or text 988 to be connected with support. ■

If we don't take time to take care of ourselves, it will cost us more time, money and energy down the road.

What you can do now

TO HELP PREVENT HEARING LOSS LATER

BY MARY BETH VERSACI

While hearing loss may not be top of mind for new dentists, there are steps you can take now to help prevent issues later in your career.

Hearing problems are common among dentists. More than a third of dentists reported experiencing hearing issues in the ADA's 2021 Dentist Health and Well-Being Survey Report, and of them, more than 60% said they had not been evaluated by an audiologist.

Dentists are regularly exposed to the noise of handpieces and ultrasonic scalers at levels of 60-99 decibels. While that level of noise presents only a minimal risk of hearing loss, sustained exposure can result in sensorineural hearing loss, which is the most common type of permanent hearing loss.

Because exposure to noisy equipment is unavoidable in a dental practice, prevention is key to protecting your hearing, according to the ADA Practice Institute.

The institute offers information on the causes and symptoms of dentistry-related hearing loss, as well as tips for what you can do to help prevent hearing problems before they start.

Causes

Sensorineural hearing loss is only one of several types of hearing loss. It is usually caused by damage to the corti hair cells in the cochlea.

The hair cells may be damaged by medications, infections or trauma to the ear, but a common cause is the trauma of loud noises exceeding 90 decibels. Loud noises heard regularly over a period of years can gradually damage the hair cells.

Dentists are commonly exposed to the noise of dental equipment for 15-45 minutes several times a day for many years. Although the 90-99 decibel level of noise that is produced from some pieces of dental equipment may pose a relatively minimal risk to hearing, the daily exposure to that level over several years may contribute to damage to the hair cells in the cochlea. In general, exposure for eight hours or longer to noise levels between 85 and 90 decibels is harmful.

Sensorineural hearing loss is diagnosed through audiometry, which is the measurement of the range and sensitivity of a person's sense of hearing.

Symptoms

Symptoms of sensorineural hearing loss include diminished intensity of conversation and other sounds, sound distortion, and difficulty understanding complex sounds. High tones are particularly difficult to hear, and enunciations of the letters s, f and z may not be heard at all.

You may also have difficulty hearing conversation in a noisy room or where there is surrounding environmental noise.

In some cases, the hearing loss may be accompanied by tinnitus, which is ringing, buzzing or other noises in the ear.

The degree of hearing loss may be mild, moderate or severe.

Additional resources on hearing loss are available from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association at asha.org and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health at cdc.gov/niosh. Find more information to help promote your physical health at ADA.org/wellness. ■

TIPS



Wear ear plugs or noise-canceling headphones when you use dental equipment.

Consider the noise level produced by dental equipment when making purchasing decisions.



Get tested to establish a baseline of your hearing.

Monitor your hearing acuity on a regular basis to encourage correct diagnoses and early intervention.



Report finds YOUNGER DENTISTS FEEL LESS RESPECTED

The ADA's 2021 Dentist Health and Well-Being Survey Report found most dentists are satisfied with their practices and feel respected by their co-workers, but younger dentists reported feeling respected less often than older dentists.

The report also found the percentage of dentists diagnosed with anxiety more than tripled between 2003 and 2021. Less than half of dentists were aware of state dentist well-being programs, although older male dentists were significantly more likely to know about them.

Most dentists said they experienced pain or discomfort while working, particularly in the neck, back and shoulders.

Both the report and a well-being program directory are available for free through the ADA Store. ■

Well-Being Survey Results:



reported they were **SATISFIED** with their dental practices.



reported feeling **RESPECTED** by their co-workers.

But
younger dentists

reported feeling **respected less often than**

older dentists.



Source: 2021 ADA Dentist Health and Well-Being Survey Report.



Ask the Expert: WHAT DO RISING INTEREST RATES MEAN FOR MY FINANCIAL WELLNESS?

BY DIANA TALPA, M.B.A. — BMO

Dear Diana: *I've been an associate dentist for about three years now. When I first began my career, inflation wasn't on my radar, and I was happy with my financial situation. One mantra that has helped me show fortitude during challenges is "prevention is better than a cure." Now that the cost of everything is rising, I want to revisit my finances to adapt to the new reality. What do I need to know about loans and rising interest rates? — A Warrior, Not a Worrier*

Dear Warrior: Preparing yourself for the future is a very smart move, and inflation can be a cause for concern, but there are several ways to protect yourself. As the government adjusts the federal funds rate, banks follow suit to amend their lending rates. Let's dive into some measures you can take to mitigate the added expenses that rising interest rates can create:

Adapt the debt snowball approach

List all the debts you have. The debt snowball method is a debt-reduction strategy that helps you focus on paying off your small debts first before moving on to larger ones.

Make sure you are paying your small and high-interest-rate debt first, as that will help you save those extra dollars for your other loans. You can also consolidate your high-interest debts into a loan that has a lower interest rate.

Pay more than required

The best way to ensure you're managing your debt in a rising-rate environment is by making higher payments that pay down your principal faster. This can save you on interest over time. Cut down on your expenses, if possible, and apply those savings toward your loan payments.

Know your loan type: variable rate or fixed rate?

Beware of the type of loan you currently have or are planning to take. A fixed interest rate has the same interest rate for the entirety of the borrowing period, whereas a variable interest rate changes with fluctuations in the market. Your banker can advise you as to which loan structure is in your best interest. Do ask about refinancing options if you have a variable-rate term loan.

Keep your financing options open

There are several lenders out there, so do your homework and shop around for a competitive interest rate. Remember that a best rate might mask benefits available at a slightly increased rate, such as the ability to obtain 100% financing. Find a lender with expertise working with health care professionals. It's their job to know the market and help advise you as to your financing options. ■



Ms. Talpa

Ms. Talpa works with privately held companies to consistently deliver innovative, industry-specific financing and cash management solutions to meet their diverse needs. As a vice president in commercial banking at BMO, she leverages her background in business valuations, financial analysis and commercial credit underwriting to add value, foster long-lasting relationships and — above all — help dentists realize their vision for practice success.



8 ways to prioritize SELF-CARE EVERY DAY

BY MARY BETH VERSACI

When life gets busy and your to-do list seems never-ending, it can be difficult to find the time you need to take care of yourself.

But self-care plays an important role in helping you maintain and improve your mental health.

“When it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness and increase your energy,” the National Institute of Mental Health states.

“Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact.”

With Mental Health Awareness Month coming up in May, here are some suggestions from NIMH to help you get started on your self-care journey. But remember, self-care looks different for everyone, so prioritize what matters most to you.

Get regular exercise. Just 30 minutes of walking every day can help boost your mood

and improve your health. Small amounts of exercise add up, so don't be discouraged if you can't do 30 minutes at one time.

Eat healthy, regular meals, and stay hydrated. A balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day. Also, limit caffeinated beverages, such as soft drinks and coffee.

Make sleep a priority. Stick to a schedule, and make sure you're getting enough sleep. Blue light from devices and screens can make it harder to fall asleep, so reduce blue light exposure from your phone or computer before bedtime.

Try a relaxing activity. Explore relaxation or wellness programs or apps, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy activities you enjoy, such as journaling.

Set goals and priorities. Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say “no” to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Try to be mindful of what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do.

Practice gratitude. Remind yourself daily of things for which you are grateful. Be specific. Write them down at night, or replay them in your mind.

Focus on positivity. Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.

Stay connected. Reach out to your friends or family members who can provide emotional support and practical help.

To learn more and access additional resources, visit the NIMH webpage at [nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov). ■

ClassPass offers discounts TO GET ADA MEMBERS MOVING

BY MARY BETH VERSACI

If you've fallen behind on your New Year's resolution to exercise more — or at all — it's not too late to kick-start your fitness plan through ClassPass, which offers free on-demand web classes and discounted in-person classes for ADA members.

ADA Member Advantage endorsed ClassPass in 2021, giving members free access to all 4,000-plus pre-recorded audio and video workouts included in its online library. The endorsement also provides ADA members with 15% off in-person class packages.

In 2021, about three-quarters of the ADA members who took advantage of the

ClassPass benefit were aged 26-45.

New dentists between the ages of 26 and 35 made up almost half of the ADA member users.

ClassPass is a monthly subscription service that provides access to tens of thousands of different boutique studios, gyms and wellness offerings in more than 2,500 cities worldwide. Participants also have the option to use credits for wellness experiences, including massages, acupuncture, manicures and more.

To get started with ClassPass, visit [ADA.org/CP](https://www.classpass.com) and sign up using company code ADACP. ■



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