

NEWSLETTER

A VITAL AREA OF LEARNING

We have had our teaching programs in place at Duggan Oral Design for slightly over a year now – and I wanted to share my observations over that period of time.

While I have seen this for decades – one of the most important things to note that is still a very common issue with students is **LOOKING THE WRONG DIRECTION!**

Everyone has heard my advice: “**KNOW** what it is you need to see, and make sure you **DO**”!

Doesn’t that sound like the most simple and obvious advice you could possibly hear?!

So WHY is it that students tend NOT to do this?

1. Habitual behavior – without thinking things through, many people just do things the way they “always” have. There may seem to be safety in habit as far as relationships are concerned, but not in dentistry!

2. No clear rational thinking. For every step of every preparation there is **ALWAYS** something specific that **MUST** be seen – and may be several things at once. The awareness of what **MUST** be seen in the moment is critical. This involves a clear understanding of the design principles of the preparation.

3. No firm decision about **HOW** to look so that you **CAN** see what must be seen. There is **ALWAYS** a direction that you must be looking so that you can see what you are doing – in very specific terms. If you are doing an isthmus for a class II preparation and are looking **ALONG** the central groove so that you **CAN** see where you are cutting faciolingually and the angulation of the bur faciolingually – you are OK. Any other direction of view and you will **NOT** see what must be seen.

4. No critical analysis of the results of what you have done. A very clear understanding of the **ERRORS** that are likely and how serious they are is vital. Will an error compromise lifetime – it is a failing error.

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5. Correcting errors. Being aware of an error is one thing, but KNOWING that it MUST be fixed and actually DOING it is quite another. Few can do a good preparation and just hand it in. Mostly we have to notice things afterward and make a decision about changing the preparation in certain ways so that failing errors are eliminated, whereas non-failing errors may be left.

Everyone that does any preparation must be sure to master each of the principles indicated above. This is how we teach courses – so that students are more aware of every step of the process.

In the RD10 ten-day program we carry this even further for the weekend mastery session – we take several teeth and do just one step of a prep on each of the teeth, and then the next step of the prep on each of the teeth, until the prep is completed on every tooth. This forces us to concentrate on particular aspects of the prep multiple times without being distracted by what will be done next. Eventually each student learns to complete each step while KNOWING they are doing it right, and also develop the skill to make changes of a step before moving on to the next step of the prep.

I often refer to performers in other fields. The pianist who is practicing to play a concerto, the gymnast training in the uneven bars, the soccer player practicing specific skills, the dancer learning a choreography – ALL work on just PART of their performance to master that part, before combining it with other parts. Master small parts and then overall mastery can be achieved!

Make no mistake – when you are taking a practical exam, you are PERFORMING. You are no different from the performing artist in the concert hall, arena, athletic field or stage. When you are in practice it is the same, but the audience is YOU. Are YOU happy with what you have done? Do you know enough about the design principles of restorative dentistry so that you CAN be happy with your work? Many do not!

Dentistry is the most pleasurable as a career and vocation if you KNOW you are serving your patients well. You are doing what they can afford, and doing it well! IF you have the understanding of alternative procedures that might benefit the finances of your patients better, and you can honestly evaluate your own work – you deserve to be content!