

# Personal wellbeing in focus at new symposium

The inaugural Dental Innovation Symposium is framed by a focus on how to cope with the ever-increasing pressures of practice life. We sat down with keynote speaker **Steve Head** to find out more

Customer service, implants, lasers, marketing, and finance – a combination of topics that the award-winning Digital Symposium and the Good to Great event are bringing together for the Dental Innovation Symposium. But as keynote speaker Steve Head will illustrate, boosting resilience for both yourself and your team is also key to the success of your practice.

'It doesn't matter what job you do, what level of seniority or what level of financial investment you have in the business, everybody has some degree of pressure, at home or at work,' says Steve, explaining why the practical tools and techniques he'll be sharing at the Symposium are applicable to the whole dental team.

As a motivational speaker and author of *How to Avoid a Near Life Experience*, Steve is passionate about 'the 1% difference' – the idea that if everyone in the team makes a small, manageable, positive change, the incremental benefits can be huge.

The 1% difference is Steve's jumping-off point for discussing a host of issues surrounding resilience at work, all designed to help us cope better with stress. 'You'll learn how to remove some of the pressure points at work, so you have a more relaxed and comfortable weekend with your family,' he explains. And who wouldn't want that?

Excessive regulation, responsibility resting on too few shoulders, dissatisfaction with the NHS contract, the growth of corporates, all these elements are creating pressure within the workplace. Through Steve's input, with sessions that both open and close day one, the Dental Innovation Symposium aims to address this culture. Best known for working with the NHS, Steve has enjoyed great success helping professionals cope with a challenging, changing environment that nonetheless demands world-class service.

'When we get things wrong, the natural human instinct is to understand why it went wrong and how we can fix it,' he says. 'But my message is, let's focus on the people who are doing it right. Let's interrogate their success to create a positive, supportive, encouraging culture.' Steve's sessions promise to share plenty of evidence behind that philosophy, showing how his methods can impact on results – from personal performance and discretionary effort to resilience and mental wellbeing.

But is all this pressure a new thing – a product of the 21st century need to be permanently switched on – or have the stresses and strains always been there? 'It's a bit of both,' says Steve. 'Of course, modern technology has had an impact. But if you look at the neuroscience behind it, there's quite a bit of research to show that our brains are wired to tune into risk and negativity.' He explains that the brain is really good at letting go of positive experiences because there's no rational reason to store them – 'whereas negative things – like the sabre-tooth tiger's roar – are worth saving; when you hear that roar, you remember it, and you run. Our brains are hardwired to store things that risk our survival.'

Changing perceptions about weakness is also key to Steve's teaching. 'You don't have a breakdown because you're weak, it's because you're strong,' he says. 'Think about dental professionals – they're educated, have massive responsibilities, they deal with legislation, the public... and they're the people who break, because they take on too much. I want to help them understand that, and to start learning to forgive themselves.'

The irony for those of us working in dentistry is that, like Steve, we're well versed in telling educated people what they probably already know; the challenge is getting them to act on that advice. 'When patients visit a practice,



Steve Head will be the keynote speaker at the Dental Innovation Symposium in June

**Early bird rate: £275+VAT (offer ends 31 March 2019)**

**Previous delegate rate: £225+VAT (for previous attendees at the Digital Symposium or Good to Great event)**

**Standard rate: £325+VAT**

most of them know what good dental hygiene looks like – but ask them how often they floss and they'll think of a reason why they don't do it as often as they should,' he explains. 'I don't think audiences listen to people like me and have no idea what I am talking about, they know already and they understand they should be following the advice, the problem is that often they're not provided with the practical help that can help them change.' Where Steve's talent lies is in offering up practical tools that can be used straightaway to turn his ideas into reality. 'When you've got a nice idea but no technique, you're a bit lost. My job at the Dental Innovation Symposium is to provide the tools.'

Would he describe this approach as mindfulness? 'Yes' he says emphatically, but acknowledges that the term is too broad a church. 'I prefer to use the phrase

'psychological armour' – how you can protect yourself, so that whatever the world throws at you, you can cope with it better.'

Crucially, Steve believes that his techniques translate outside the workplace. 'I'm not just giving my audiences tools to be better at work, but to cope better with stresses in every part of your life – so there's real added value. By helping you build your culture around a more positive framework, rather than a critical one, you'll feel better at work, and better at home.' **D**



**THE DENTAL INNOVATION SYMPOSIUM 2019**

**STEVE HEAD WILL be speaking at the Dental Innovation Symposium on 7 June. For further details, visit [www.dentalinnovation.co.uk](http://www.dentalinnovation.co.uk).**