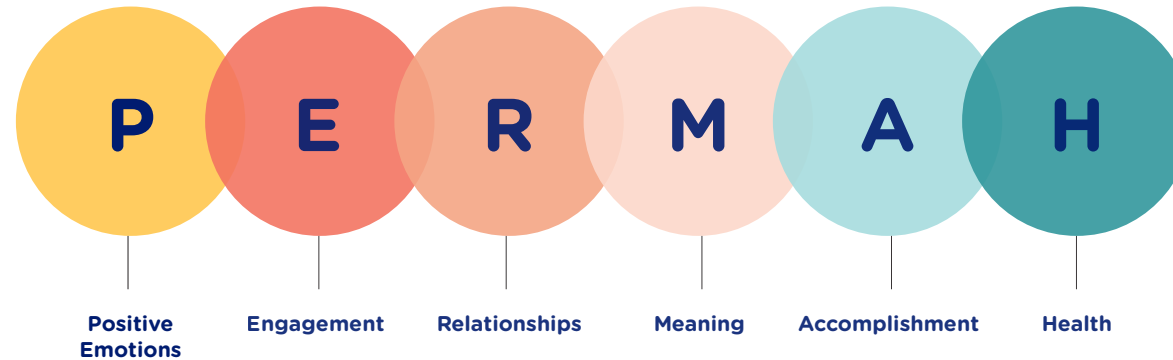


# Enhancing Our Sense of Accomplishment

## Part of The Well-being Toolkit for Dental Professionals

In collaboration with Dr Mahrukh Khwaja,  
Dentist and Positive Psychologist





Dr Martin Seligman's PERMA model explores five pillars for flourishing and thriving at work and beyond.<sup>1</sup> It suggests that well-being is cultivated by the presence of a rich diet of positive emotions, feeling engaged, connected through positive relationships, meaning and accomplishment. Since 2012, a further component has been added to incorporate health factors, known as the PERMA-H model.<sup>2</sup>

**A****Accomplishment****A****Accomplishment**

# Enhancing our sense of accomplishment

What have you accomplished today? High-achieving professionals such as those who work in dental health can be susceptible to stress and burnout if they feel a low sense of accomplishment in their daily lives and career.<sup>3,4</sup> This article discusses how the PERMA-H model can be used as a strategy to help build resilience and combat stress and burnout in dentistry with expert tips from Dr Mahrukh Khwaja: dentist, positive psychologist and author of the book 'Resilience and well-being for Dental Professionals'. It focuses on the fifth component of PERMA-H; 'accomplishment'.

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**The Well-being Toolkit for Dental Professionals:**

part 5 of 6 of a Unilever mini-series on how to flourish, thrive and avoid burnout in dentistry

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## Accomplishment is a sense of achievement

Given the level of dedication required to pursue a career as a dental professional, 'accomplishment' is a very relevant topic. However, after qualification and the first few years of working in the field, reduced levels of personal accomplishment may contribute to stress and burnout.<sup>3,4</sup> This can be especially relevant to more senior dental professionals who reach a point in their career where new achievements become less frequent. As a result, it's important to consider how you can improve your daily perception of personal achievement throughout your career and in your personal life.





## A sense of accomplishment is highly personal, and doesn't have to be about your own achievements

Accomplishment can mean many things. It includes concepts that can be adapted to any situation like 'goal-setting'. It also doesn't have to be all about you — accomplishment can include appreciating and celebrating the achievements of colleagues, friends, your spouse or children.<sup>5</sup>





## The value of goal-setting in everyday achievements

Pursuing goals that are important to you is associated with your personal sense of well-being and positive psychological functioning.<sup>6</sup> It's something that can be easily adopted using the 'Goal-Striving Reasons Framework', SMART goals and the GROW model.<sup>6-8</sup> The framework notes the four main goal-striving reasons as pleasure, altruism, fear of self-esteem loss and necessity.<sup>6,7</sup> This encourages people to reflect on and modify what is driving them to achieve a given goal, and given that 'fear of self-esteem loss' and 'necessity' are not ideal long-term motivators for dental professionals, that leaves 'pleasure' and 'altruism'. Altruism is a relevant goal-striving reason for dental professionals, as it aligns with the core values of healthcare (i.e. a focus on helping others). It has been demonstrated to have a

positive impact on one's own happiness.<sup>6,7</sup> But as long as goals are aligned with our personal values and what matters to us the most, we will achieve the right type of motivation - intrinsic motivation, where we strive for goals because of the pleasure they naturally bring.<sup>7</sup> Goals pursued because of the pleasurable emotions associated with them are ultimately more sustainable, as they've been shown to coincide with improved subjective well-being.<sup>7</sup>

Once the reasons behind pursuing the goal are better understood and aligned with your core values, you can start to use more practical methods to achieve them, such as the well-known SMART goal-setting criteria, or the GROW model.<sup>8,9</sup>





GROW is a coaching model and acronym developed in the 1980s by Sir John Whitmore and colleagues at Performance Consultants International, and stands for:<sup>9</sup>

- Goal (aspirations)
- Reality (current obstacles or situations)
- Options (strengths, resources)
- Way Forward (accountability and personal actions – what, when, by whom, and the will to do it)

GROW is a simple and effective framework that can be used in any coaching setting, including as an individual, enabling the pursuit of growth-related goals in any area where obstacles need to be overcome.<sup>9</sup>

The 'Goal' section of the framework can help you to realise your strengths and align these with your objectives. The 'Reality' aspect can help you to find perspective and explore new possibilities. The 'Options' section of the framework can help you to choose one of these new possibilities to move forward with. The 'Way Forward' can help you to plan specific actions for your next steps and develop a commitment to your goal.<sup>9</sup>



**To start applying the GROW model to your own life, try Dr Khwaja's activity at the end of this section. You can also find more information about the GROW model here:**

<https://positivepsychology.com/grow-coaching-model/>



DR MAHRUKH KHWAJA

## Top Tips in Creating Habits That Stick

1

### Inject fun along the way

Consider ways you can make whatever new habit sustainable through making the process more enjoyable

2

### Keep your goal as small and realistic as possible

If you are likely to achieve the goal, you're chances of persisting are increased. If your goal is to start a mindfulness practice for example, practise meditation for 30 seconds to begin with. You can slowly grow this to 2 minutes and so on.

3

### Break a large goal into smaller subgoals

This prevents us feeling overwhelmed

4

### Stack habits together

For example if you already jog in the park every week, add an element of mindfulness to your experience by honing into your 5 senses

5

### Ask a friend to act as an accountability buddy

6

### Celebrate your wins along the way

7

### Lean towards a growth mindset approach





## Nurturing the ‘growth mindset’ for personal achievement

Individuals who believe their talents can be developed, either through hard work, strategy, or input from others, have what is called a ‘growth mindset’. Those who believe their talents are innate gifts have a ‘fixed mindset’.<sup>10</sup>

Having a ‘growth mindset’, as opposed to a ‘fixed mindset’, can lead to feelings of greater empowerment and commitment, which can be incredibly helpful to personal development and gaining a sense of achievement. ‘Growth mindset’ individuals tend to achieve more than those with a ‘fixed mindset’.<sup>10</sup>





DR MAHRUKH KHWAJA

## Developing a Growth Mindset in Dentistry

The skill of developing a growth mindset is highly relevant to dental professionals. To have a long, thriving career in dentistry requires us to be constantly upskilling — whether that be in short-term orthodontics, bonding, managing complex cases to sedation. A growth mindset approach helps us in this journey of learning through encouraging us to:

- explore the positives from setbacks or ‘failures’ along the way
- unlock a loving inner voice that supports us through the discomfort of difficult emotions
- receive feedback without feeling as though our sense of self is under attack



## DR MAHRUKH KHWAJA

Our thoughts all sit on a spectrum, where fixed and growth mindsets are on opposing sides. All of us, shift up and down this continuum. The good news is growth mindset, no matter what age, can be strengthened. Here are some key strategies from the pivotal research by Carol Dweck.<sup>11</sup>

1

### Place emphasis on progress over perfection

When we focus on our experience of learning and positive shifts in clinical and non-clinical skills, we can see more clearly how we are on the right track. Just as we can nurture children to focus on how much they have improved, we can use the same principles to help motivate us to continue learning.

2

### Reframe our relationship with 'failures'

Dweck talks about 'failures' as a stepping stone to success. Just acknowledging this may dramatically shift our response to inevitable challenges along the learning pathway. If we know that, in order to be successful in cementing a new skill in dentistry we will come across obstacles, those events during treatment with a patient don't upset us in a way they could otherwise. One practical application of this is asking ourselves at the end of our clinical day: what did I 'fail' at and what did I learn from today?



## DR MAHRUKH KHWAJA

3

### Use positive language to shift towards a growth mindset approach

The words we use have profound impacts on how we feel and act. Use Dweck's 3 step approach to help create a kinder inner voice:

- Label the fixed mindset thought. For example you may say to yourself, 'I notice I am having a thought that if I avoid challenges, other's won't doubt me'
- Acknowledge that mindset is a choice
- Reframe the fixed mindset 'inner dialogue' to a growth mindset approach, for example saying to yourself 'With every challenging case, I keep growing and improving my skills', 'If I don't succeed this time, I learn for the next time' or 'I'm not there yet, but with time and effort I will be'

4

### Seek support from a mentor or coach

Choosing the right coach for us can help role model positive language we discussed above.



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DR MAHRUKH KHWAJA

ACTIVITY 1

## Taking Positive Actions Forward

Working out the first steps to taking positive action on our goals can be challenging. Try the following worksheet to start applying the GROW model to your own life. This could be to work out the initial steps in accomplishing a goal that matters to you greatly. The GROW framework can also be a useful aid in problem solving.



ACTIVITY 1

### Taking Positive Actions Forward

#### GOAL

Consider what you would like to work on. Why would you like to work on this specific goal? What are the potential positives from achieving this goal for you?

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#### REALITY

What would it look like and feel like if you achieved your goal? What small steps have you taken so far? Is there anything getting in the way?

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**A** — Accomplishment

**ACTIVITY 1**

**Taking Positive Actions Forward**

**OPTIONS**

What are the options for achieving your goal? What has worked well in the past? Consider the pros and cons for each. Which option would you like to try first?

Options	Pros	Cons

**WILL**

When will you start this option? How can you get support in the process? How determined are you on a scale of 0-10 (10 most committed) to taking this action. How can you move towards 10?

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