

Effective time management

In a new series of articles, Jane Lelean provides useful and effective techniques to improve your time management, ensuring you make every hour in the day count. Part one explores the essential differences between 'in time' and 'through time' spatial orientation and the impact it has on you



This is the first in a series of articles that will provide you with techniques to improve your time management, making you more profitable and giving you more time away from the surgery. In this first article, I hope to explain how the different ways that we spatially represent time affect how we are able to plan.

One of the most common issues my clients ask to be coached on is time management. So many people seem not to have enough hours in the day to complete the items on their 'to do' list, let alone live an enjoyable and rewarding life as well. Given that there are only ever 24 hours in one day, and that is all there will ever be, this series of articles will enable you to spend them wisely.

'In time' or 'through time'?

Working with many clients in a multitude of businesses, including dentistry, I notice

that they generally have time coded one of two ways spatially: 'in time' or 'through time'.

I have also noticed that my clients who have a natural ability, or have learnt to be adaptable, choose when they use 'in time' or 'through time' orientation and tend to have the healthiest attitude to time and use it most profitably.

Which are you?

To determine whether you are 'in time' or 'through time' orientated, take a moment to take a deep breath, relax and close your eyes. As you start to relax, begin to get a sense of the space around you. Where do you feel the events of the past are and where do you sense your future is? Ask yourself:

- Where is my past?
- Where is my future?

Point to your past and then point to your future.

While there are many possible ways to arrange time,

the most common are 'in time' and 'through time' orientations. Each time orientation will affect the way you perceive time, set your agendas and, consequently, how you live your life.

'In time'

If you are 'in time' orientated, you will have probably pointed to the past and the future, so that you are stood on the 'time-line' passing through you. Generally people point to the future in front of them and the past behind, although this is not always the case.

'Through time'

If you are 'through time' orientated, you probably pointed to the past and future so that it was some way out in front of you. Most people have the past to their left and their future to their right, although this can be reversed.

Different attitudes

'In time' and 'through time' people have various and different characteristics and attitudes to time.

'In time' people tend to:

- Have their time line passing through their body
- Their past behind them and their future in front
- Be caught up in the moment
- Often late for appointments
- Not have any idea as to what the time is
- Prefer not to plan, choosing to 'go with the flow'
- Find that they cannot use a diary
- Forget birthdays, anniversaries or other significant dates
- May avoid setting deadlines
- Be associated into events and experiences
- Find it easier to be 'in the here and now'
- Often use phrases like 'put the past behind you', 'you will look back and laugh at this'

- Remember passed events sequentially, making it harder to make comparisons
- Have their future out in front of them, making it harder to identify the time frames of incremental stages.

'Through time' people tend to:

- Have their time-line straight across in front of them or as a 'V' with either straight or curved arms
- Have their past on the left and their future to the right with the present immediately in front of them
- Generally arrive on time or early for appointments
- Know what the time is
- Find using a diary really easy
- Find planning and working to deadlines really easy
- Be disassociated from their memories or their experiences
- Be able to compare multiple mental images by having multiple images available at the same time like computer windows
- Use phrases like 'time is on my side'
- Remember birthdays, anniversaries and other significant dates.

Become flexible

What I recognise, and am able to show my clients, is that while you may have a preferred style of processing time, it is appropriate to become flexible.

For example, you will be able to enjoy a party more, complete a complicated dental procedure or find it easier to read a book if you are processing time 'in time'. Whereas, if you are chairing a meeting, planning a complicated treatment plan or setting the incremental markers that ensure that you achieve your compelling three-year vision, this is best done using 'through time' orientation.

Altering your orientation

Imagine your time-line. Instead of being an imaginary line, see it as something solid that you hold and put your

hands out and grasp it.

If you previously had time coded 'in time', move your hands so that the line is now orientated 'through time' and vice versa if you were initially 'through time'.

Notice how time feels different in this way. Ask yourself when it would be more appropriate to think of time in this manner.

I invite you to spend some time exploring how it is for you to experience time in different ways. Know that you can choose to put it back to how it was or think about it differently whenever you like.

This article should have enabled you to understand the essential differences between 'in time' and 'through time' and the impact it has on how you function day-to-day.

The second part of this series, published in the next issue of *Irish Dentist*, will show you how to allocate your week to generate an optimum number of 'free days', 'focus days' and 'buffer days', which will enable you to be more effective and profitable in the surgery, get all your admin and strategy planning done, and have the time and energy to do the things you love to do with the people you love. 

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