

Ultimate Guide to Hygiene Temping and Professional Success 2017



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Founder/CEO, TempStars

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Preface

Since launching TempStars as Canada's premium hygiene temp agency, things have been pretty busy. And if you've never done so, writing a book (even an e-book) is a pretty big undertaking, bursting with opportunities for procrastination and Netflix binging. But I still felt compelled to do so, and here's why:

I often emphasize to members of the TempStars Nation how important it is to attain and keep a 5-star ranking. Having "5 stars" is so critical because it pays the highest hourly rate and ensures your resume gets in the hands of dental offices who are looking to hire (if that is your goal). But the question arises: "What do I have to do to get and keep a 5-star ranking?"

Well, here it is. There are really no secrets or surprises here - to many it might all seem self-evident. But the key is, it takes commitment to excel.

For some, following these guidelines is already second nature. If that's you, congratulations! You're on your way to a bright professional future and you can use this book as a useful review.

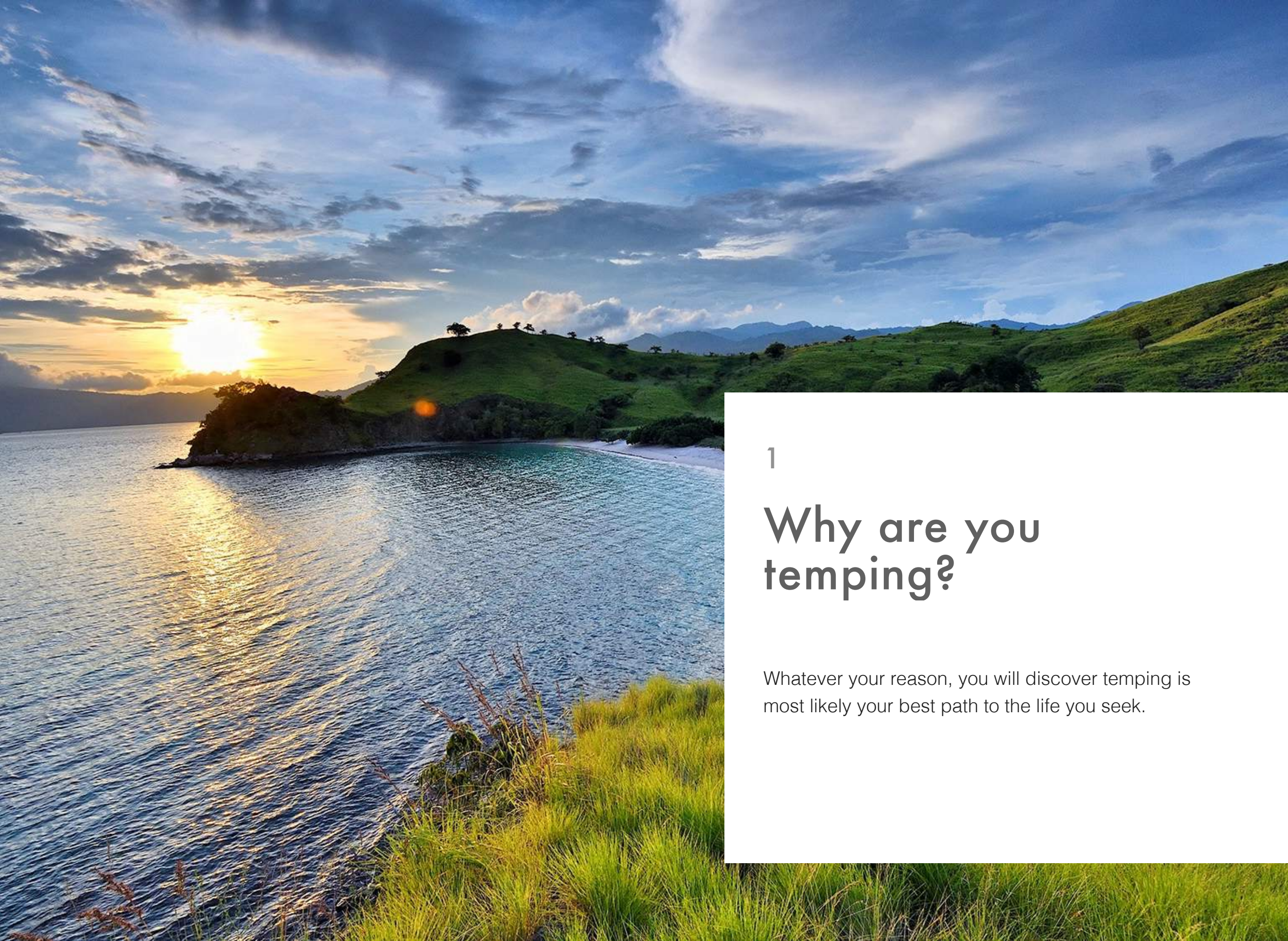
For others, it might feel like executing some concepts doesn't come naturally or instinctively. If this sounds like you, don't worry - all is not lost. While this book contains everything you need to succeed, you'll want to practice the ideas in a conscious way, with effort, until they become habitual and natural. Which I assure you they will.

So enjoy the book! The benefits of an e-book are many: not only can I include dynamic features like responsive photos and videos, I can improve this publication actively and update it as often as necessary. In that spirit, please let me know if there's anything else you'd like to see included. I want this book to be a truly definitive guide, not only to those temping, but to professional success for all hygienists. As such, it will improve and evolve over time based on our experiences and your feedback.

Thanks so much,

James Younger, DDS

Founder/CEO, TempStars



1

Why are you temping?

Whatever your reason, you will discover temping is most likely your best path to the life you seek.



Big Sur, California

Why temping?

As a hygienist, you may come to dental hygiene temping for a variety of reasons:

1. You enjoy the flexible lifestyle that full-time temping allows
2. You are looking for a permanent position at an amazing dental office and are temping until you find the right one
3. You have a permanent part-time position at a dental office and use temping to fill in your week
4. You have a full-time position at a dental office but like to temp occasionally for extra income

Whatever the reason, if you are reading this book, you are likely doing hygiene temping. So you might as well be amazing at it, and enjoy it along the way!

“I’m Looking For a Job - Can’t I Just Send Out Resumes?”

It’s no secret that if you are looking for a permanent position at a dental office, temping is the best possible way to establish professional relationships, gain a shining reputation, and get a feel for the different types of dental offices so you know which styles are a good fit for your personally.

Conversely, if you are struggling as a temp, it's likely you will find it difficult to land that dream job. This is because, as you'll see, the skills and attitude necessary to become a superstar temp hygienist are the same needed to excel on a team in a dental office.

So if you're looking to get hired, temping is a great way to hone those skills and become an amazing, highly sought-after hygienist.

Portree, Scotland





2

Choose your attitude.

The way you see yourself and the world around you is the most significant factor in determining your level of success.

Deciding

This likely isn't the best section to start with. It's by far the trickiest and the one many struggle with the most. But I'm leading with it because it contains the most important concept - one that allows all the others to happen.

Many of us grow up seeing "work" like this: "I work and my boss pays me. I don't much care for the work, or my boss, or how things are run around here, but I have bills to pay so I'll just keep my head down, do what I have to do for my pay cheque, keep going, and try to find some moments of joy in my day."

Sound familiar? If not to your personally, then likely to countless people you know. While this line of thinking is certainly pervasive, it's not the attitude that will allow you to succeed.



Patagonia, South America

If your perception of “work” leans in this direction, the trick is to re-tune your thinking. In your professional life, it helps to think of yourself as a business. And the business you are in? You. You are in the business of you - with all the freedoms (and burdens) attached to it. You have to break through the mindset barrier of an employee and realize that you are the owner and sole proprietor of a one-person business: you*.

It’s a whole new way of thinking. Business owners don’t have the luxury of excuses and feeling sorry for themselves. They work hard, learn from their mistakes and go the extra mile to make sure their business is optimally represented. They (the successful ones) don’t come in late, leave early, or pontificate about how difficult life is.

When you adopt the “you-as-a-business” mindset, you ask a whole new set of empowering questions **:

1. What are my business’s core values?
2. How does my business earn an amazing reputation among my clients?
3. Who are my ideal clients, and whom should I avoid?
4. Can I afford this expense/investment?
5. How do I provide more value to my clients than I ask for in return?

So, it is with this perspective that I wrote the rest of this book.

It is on the assumption that you are ready, to a degree, to think of yourself as an empowered person who owns and manages your own business - the business of you. Are you ready?

* Sometimes what keeps us trapped in the employee mindset is spending more than we earn or needing that shiny new iPhone. But that’s a topic covered by many, many other good books!

** I ask questions like these of myself and TempStars every day.





3

Be early.

Because 90% of success is being there (early).



Galway, Ireland

Being early

Being early is an amazing way to stand out as a temp hygienist. Not only does it show enthusiasm and commitment, it gives you time to familiarize yourself with the office, introduce yourself to the office team and settle in for a busy day.

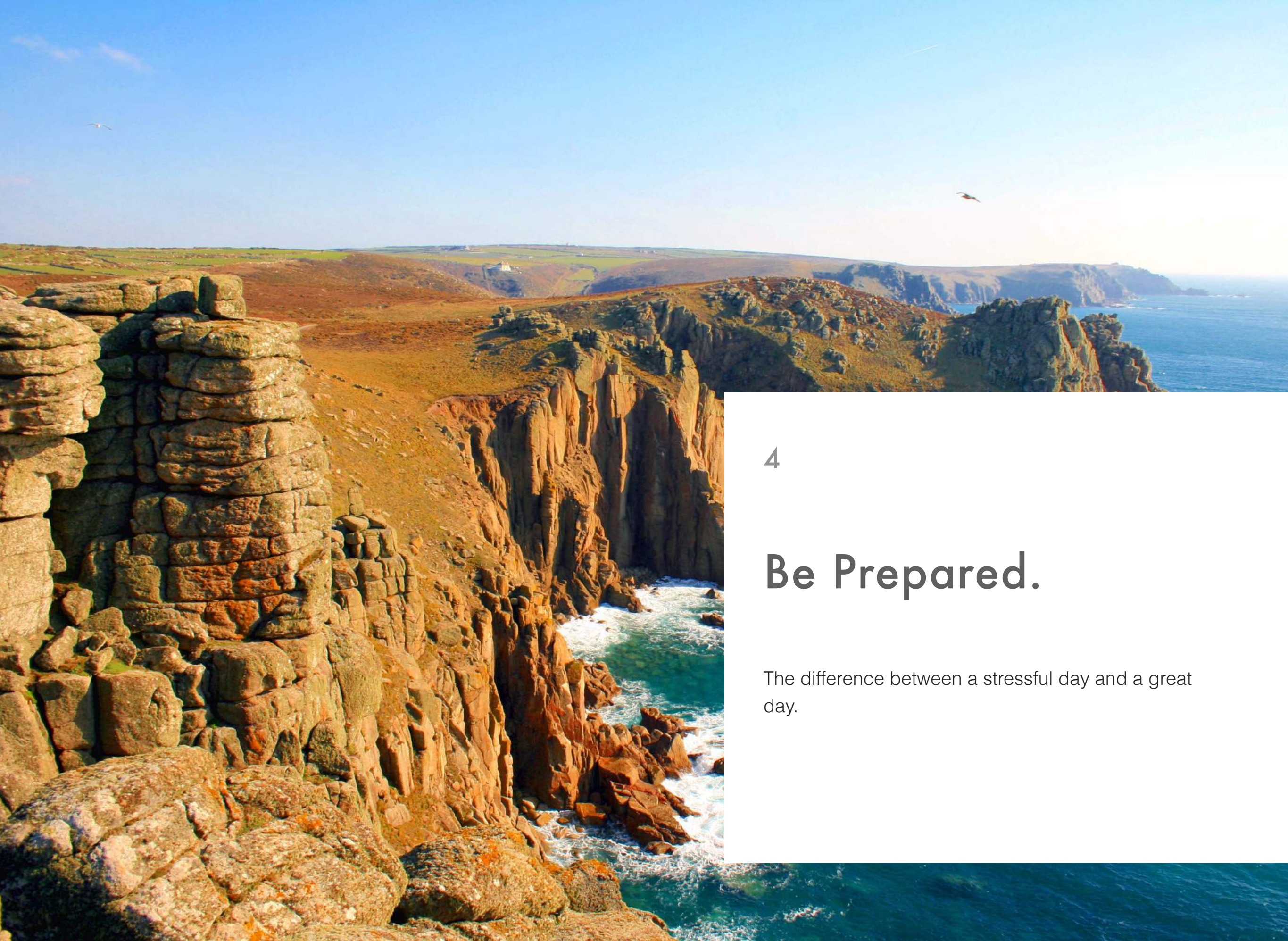
If you fly in at the last minute, not only do you appear disorganized, you start your day off flat-footed which makes it a struggle to stay on top of your timing as you work through your schedule.

“But what if I’m not paid to come in early?”

This question is asked by someone with an employee mindset, a person who doesn’t believe in themselves as a business. If it takes

you 15-30 minutes of your own time to have a more enjoyable day, develop professional contacts and nurture relationships, isn’t that worth it? When you consider some of the other ways you could spend that time, isn’t that a worthwhile investment in yourself and your professional career?

You may not get paid your hourly rate for coming in early, but it will reward you many times over - in peace of mind, reduced stress and professional development.



4

Be Prepared.

The difference between a stressful day and a great day.



Saint Elias Mountains, Alaska

Being prepared

This goes hand-in-hand with being early. When you arrive at a new office, there are some things you need to immediately figure out:

Where is everything

1. Lunchroom/staff room/lockers, etc.
2. Your treatment room(s)
3. Your instruments/equipment
4. The sterilization center
5. Dry goods and infection control supplies

6. Patient charts

How does the office run

1. What is the steri-center flow? Is there a sterilization assistant?
2. Who enters the codes for the treatment of the day
3. What kind of computer/record keeping system is used?
4. What system is used for radiographs?

Each office registered with TempStars will have filled out a general office information form indicating some of these details, so you can refer to that section before heading in for the day.

One of the great things about the TempStars app is that it allows you to make personal, office-specific notes at the end of a job. That way, if you work there again, you can refer to your notes and jump right in.

Review your charts

1. Review your patients' medical histories, and screen for significant findings: (allergies, medications, surgeries, heart and blood pressure problems, diabetes, stroke, mobility challenges, comprehension challenges).
2. Hygiene treatment for that day: maintenance, active therapy, re-evaluation, whitening, impressions, etc.
3. Outstanding/incomplete dental treatment: diagnosed/planned dental treatment that is pending or outstanding (caries, crowns, bridges, etc.)

Depending on the clinical record system, this information will be kept in different areas in the chart. Ask someone where to find these details if you're having trouble locating them.

The key to being a consistently outstanding temp hygienist (and getting hired quickly for a permanent position at a great office, if that is your goal) is to have a system in place that you consistently follow. A repeatable system allows you to provide high quality hygiene therapy while creating a pleasantly memorable experience for the patients, and the team at the dental office.



5

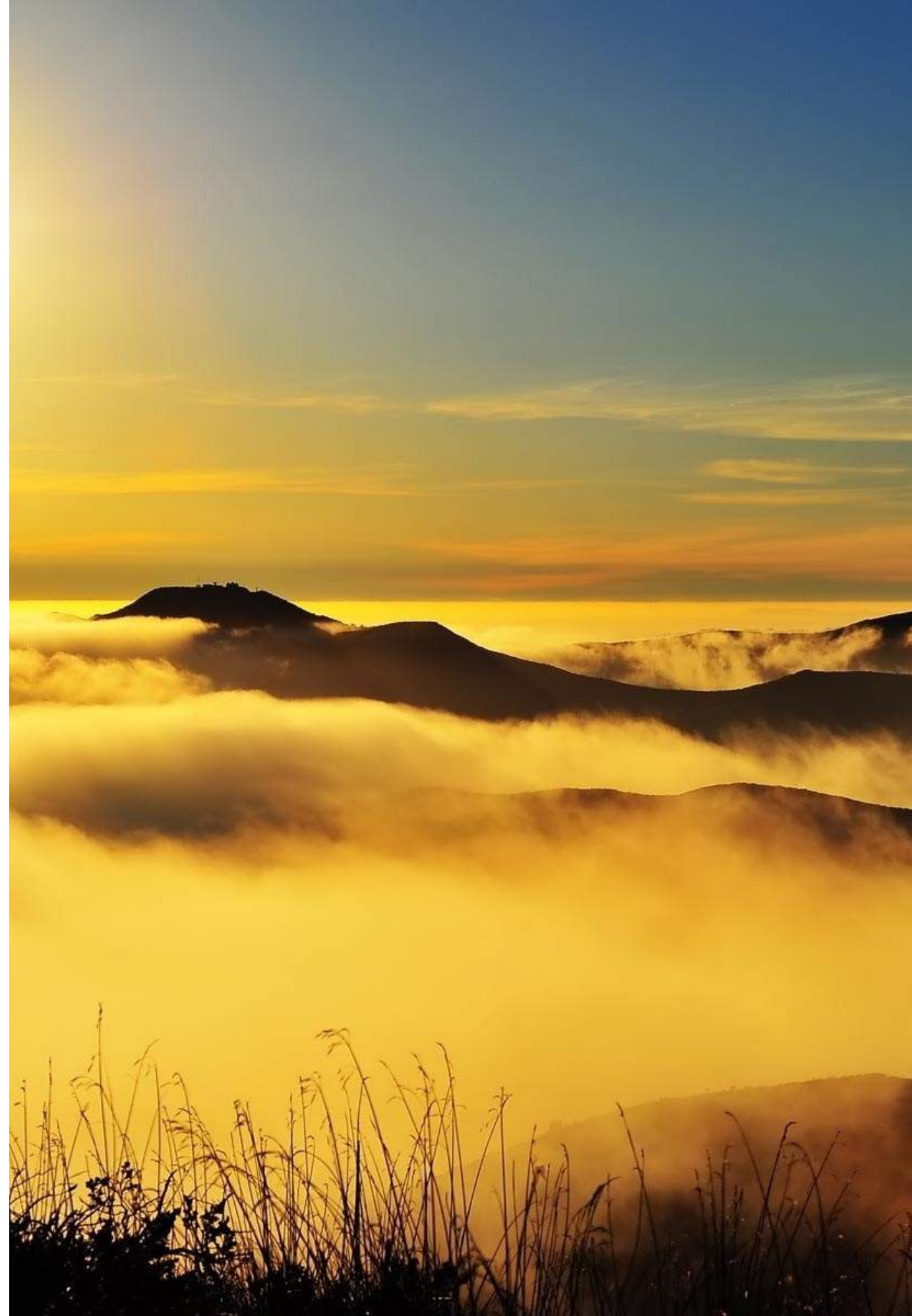
Smile & Introduce Yourself.

Open the door and invite success.

Smiling

It might seem a bit silly to have a chapter on smiling. It seems obvious, doesn't it? It is for some, but in my many years of dental practice, it always surprises me how often team members and temp hygienists forget this most basic of human expressions.

Smiling is not just icing on the cake, it's an important way to connect to people. Whether it's patients or the other team members in the dental office, you can't truly succeed in your profession unless you are able to connect with people. Smiling and introducing yourself is the way you open the door to this connection.



We hear dental experts and read articles in our trade magazines extolling the importance of "establishing rapport" with patients, as though it's simply a step in the treatment process:

1 - Establish rapport (check!)

2 - Review medical history (check!)

Why does it matter? Having a genuine rapport with a patient means you are establishing a connection with them, and influencing others depends directly on your level of connection with them.

When you're going through OHI or dietary counseling, the degree to which you will influence your patient depends on how connected they feel to you. They want to know: does this person care about me as an individual? Do they understand me and my situation personally? Are they speaking to me as a person (and not just rhyming off facts)?

Only if your patient feels the answer to these questions is "yes" will they consider following your advice. Further, you are much more likely to be delivering your advice in a personalized way if you feel connected to your patient. Smiling and introducing yourself is that first step to establishing that connection.

How does it help me professionally? Whether you are a professional hygiene temp or looking to get hired by an office, you are going to be working as part of a team. And fundamental characteristic of a healthy team is that they feel connected.

So if you are able to establish a personal connection with a dental team, you will stand out and they will remember you positively. So you're more likely to be a 'Favourite' hygienist at that office, and you'll be top-of-mind when they're looking to hire someone for their

team. "Yes, I remember ----, she was nice and friendly and genuine. Patients really liked her and she got along well with everyone. Let's see if she'd like to come in for an interview for this position." This happens in real-life dental offices.

As a side note, I realize that's some days it's easier to smile than others. Everyone has busy lives outside of dentistry, and sometimes things just aren't going your way. So yes, this can be challenging on those days, but it's still worthwhile to make a very conscious effort to smile and connect with others. Sometimes you might find if you're focusing on others, it's an opportunity to take a mental break from life's other challenges.

So: smile, introduce yourself, be friendly, engaging and establish a connection with the team, and your patients. It will make everyone's day brighter and more enjoyable.



6

Master Your Clinical Skills.

There's no way around it - you have to deliver clinical excellence.



Husavik, Iceland

Being a hygiene ninja

As a dental hygienist, you will never avoid one rule: you have to be clinically amazing to be successful. Take great bitewings with separated contacts, scale off those last spicules of sub-g calculus, capture sweet impressions with clean borders, isolate meticulously for in-office whitening - your clinical skills must be top-notch.

This book isn't really a clinical guide, so if you need to hone your clinical skills, there are a few great routes:

1. Check out your local dental hygiene society for upcoming courses. Don't be afraid to suggest a topic: if you want help with something, there's a good chance many others do too.

2. YouTube is a pretty good resource for some clinical pointers, but be careful that some content is skewed towards sponsor/corporate content. Try to distill out the objective facts from the marketing hype.

3. Dig out the recent back-issues of dental hygiene journals

4. Ask a colleague or mentor you respect for advice or guidance

5. Ask a dentist you know for their input

Whichever route you use, it's important that your clinical skills impress not only the dental team, but the patients as well. We all know that patients are impressed and happy if we "don't hurt them". But don't be tempted to sacrifice proper scaling and clinical

technique for the superficial reward of pleasing the patient. We are there to serve the patient with exceptional clinical skills in a caring way.

Don't pat yourself on the back if you're skipping over sub-gingival calculus just to have the patient say "Thanks, that didn't hurt a bit!". You want to clean out those 6mm pockets perfectly and have the patient leave happy!

Of course, that's a delicate balance - you don't want the patient heading up to front desk saying "What a butcher!". So the key is to set expectations. Before you do something clinically, tell the patient what you're doing. If there might be some discomfort, mention it *before* you start and explain why.

Examples: "Mrs. Jones, some of your gum has receded here, so it might be a little sensitive to the water. I'll be careful, but please let me know how it's going."

"To get the x-rays of your back teeth, it can be a bit of a mouthful. Just try to relax and breathe and I'll try to make it as easy for you as possible."

If you anticipate discomfort and give the patient a heads-up about it beforehand, you come across as an experienced, caring professional. If you just go ahead and start hurting the patient without offering a warning or explanation, they can quickly lose confidence in your abilities - so just keep that in mind.



7

Know your Infection Control Protocols.

Regardless of an office's systems and policies, the responsibility rests on you to ensure patients are safe.

Playing Safe

Regardless of an office's systems and policies, the responsibility rests on you to ensure patients are safe.

As you know, there have been some changes in infection control protocols over the past couple of years. Be sure you are up-to-date with these protocols.

To be sure, that's not to say that every dental office is up-to-date or following them to the letter, but you must be the expert in knowing the proper ways. If you are working in a dental office that is deficient in infection control, you must weigh your



professional responsibility to the patients against being popular at that office.

I would suggest, if you're uncomfortable with the way the office is running its infection control, use your good judgement to do the right things that day and make the decision not to return to that office. The TempStars app allows you to block an office from future postings for reasons like this.

Don't forget that the office does not bear all the risk. Your license and professional reputation can be in jeopardy if you are compromising the safety of patients during the provision of care. The onus is on you to be doing the right thing, and that starts with knowing the proper rules and protocols.

Here is a link to the current Guidelines from the RCDSO (check with your provincial licensing body for your specific Guidelines):

http://www.rcdso.org/Assets/DOCUMENTS/Professional_Practice/Guidelines/RCDSO_Guidelines_Infection_Prevention_and_Control.pdf

and another good article here (it's American, but the ideas hold up):

<http://www.dentalproductsreport.com/hygiene/article/5-infection-control-mistakes-you-may-be-making-and-not-even-realize>



8

Know Your Dental Software.

There are many systems out there, but knowing a few keys things about each will set you apart and help your day go smoothly.



Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

Do I really need to know computers? Yes.

In the modern world of dentistry, you're just not going to avoid computers - they're here to stay. There are many systems out there, but knowing a few key things about each will set you apart and help your day go smoothly.

These days, most dental offices are computerized to some degree. Whether they are completely paperless or just using the computer for scheduling and billing, you can't escape this technology.

The most popular ones right now are Dentrix and AbelDent. You might notice you run into Tracker more and more, so once you learn the first two, it won't hurt to familiarize yourself with this one.

You don't have to be an expert on every system. And you certainly don't have to know all the functions. But there are some core activities you'll need to know - billing, charting, medical history, x-rays, and photos.

If you focus your effort on learning the billing and charting features of the more popular ones, you'll probably be comfortable in half of the practices you encounter. There is a wealth of resources online to learn the basics of various dental practice management software packages. Check out YouTube, as well as the company's website for information.



9

Get to Know the Team.

Your reputation and professional relationships are your keys to success and fulfillment.

Connecting with the team

Often in life, there are small things that make a difference.

When you're going in to an office, avoid the temptation to keep your head down and "get through the day". Keep your head up, make eye contact, engage in conversation and keep smiling.

Regardless of the natural energy of an office, try to bring your positive energy with you. Make the effort to make small connections throughout the day. Ask someone if they've been working there long, or where they live. Just little expression of interest will go a long way. And if you're at the office multiple



times, each little connection will quickly grow into a positive professional relationship with that team.

Remember, though: you don't want to waste time (yours or theirs) spending the day chatting with everyone, but it helps to take advantage of small opportunities to strike up a conversation with a member of the dental team. This might be before the day begins, between patients at the steri-centre, or at the end of the day.

Don't forget that everyone in the office is busy, so even if you have some down time, it doesn't mean others have spare time, so be mindful of using up other's time. A short meaningful conversation that helps you connect with the team can go a long way to developing your professional reputation - a small effort like this can go a long way.

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. The left side of the image shows a dark, rocky shore with some patches of green vegetation. The ocean is a deep blue-green, and white, frothy waves are crashing against the rocks, creating a stark contrast. The waves are moving from the top right towards the bottom left, following the curve of the coastline.

10

Get to Know the Patients.

Not only is your OHI more likely to sink in, patients will comment to the front desk about you - give them a reason to say good things!



Lehua, Hawaii

Connecting with patients

You might notice a theme as you work your way through these chapters: Connection.

In your professional life, your influence depends on your connection. So establishing a connection with patients is an amazing way to influence them in positive ways, be it their oral hygiene habits or their continuing care intervals.

How do you establish connection when you're seeing a stranger for the first time? There's a saying, "You have two ears and one mouth, use them in that proportion." This means, listening (genuine, active listening) is twice as important as talking. It allows you to care for

and respond to the patient as an important individual. This creates a long-lasting, memorable impression in the patient.

There is a delicate balance between friendliness and using up valuable clinical time when it comes to patients. Your appointment will go a lot more smoothly and your advice will mean more if you're able to quickly establish a rapport with the patient at the beginning of the appointment. You might ask someone in the office why the regular hygienist is away and if appropriate mention it to the patient. Ask some friendly questions and offer some personal details.

Connecting with and getting to know your patients can certainly make your day more enjoyable.

But there is such a thing as too much of a good thing.

Cutting off conversations with chatty patients is more art than science. My first step is usually to lean the chair back, start putting gloves on, etc. to signal to the patient that I'm going to begin the clinical care.

If they're still pretty chatty, it's ok to say something like "Well, we better get started here", and if you get the sense they'll chat at every opportunity, it helps to have something like a cotton roll or saliva ejector in their mouths when you're changing instruments.

Take-away: be friendly and establish a connection with your patients while realizing you have clinical objectives to accomplish in a limited time in order to stay on schedule. If you can strike this balance, you'll enjoy your day more, and patients will (hopefully!) remember all those hygiene recommendations.

A dramatic landscape featuring snow-capped mountains under a cloudy sky. The foreground shows a grassy slope with a small stream. The mountains in the background are dark with patches of white snow. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds.

11

Write Good Notes.

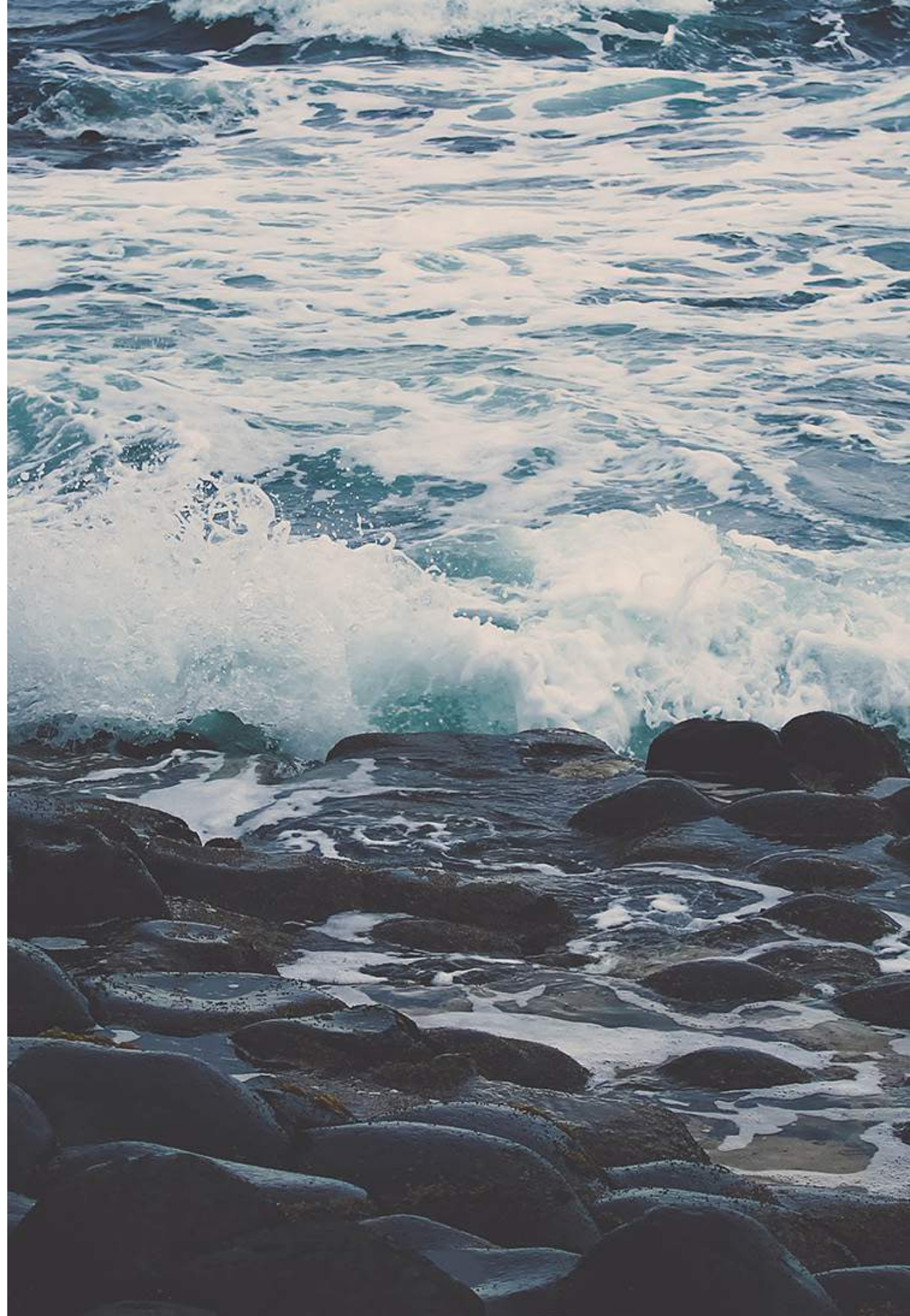
Not just a legal obligation, you're helping the next clinician who sees that patient.

Writing Proper Clinical Notes

It's very likely that someone other than you will be reading your notes at the patient's next appointment, so provide as much relevant information as possible. Keep them legible if hand-written, and keep in mind the clinical guidelines for record-keeping.

Key components of the clinical record:

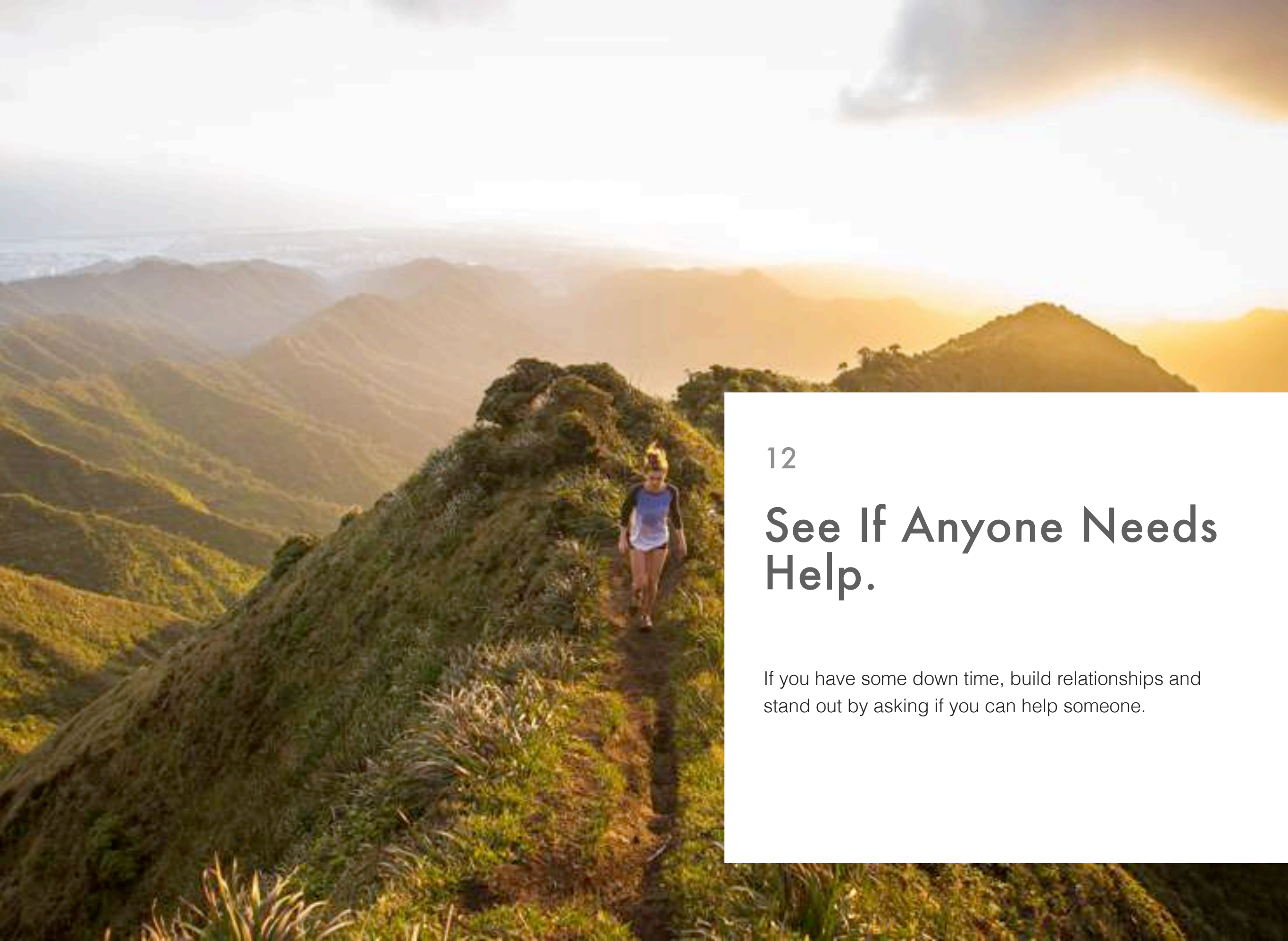
1. Record of reviewing medical history and any changes
2. Clinical findings
3. Clinical treatment performed



4. Materials used
5. Radiographs taken
6. Clinical recommendations
7. Other relevant conversation details
8. Statement of informed consent to treat.

It's always nice to include a personal note about the patient as well for the next hygienist to easily establish a connected rapport.

Check with your provincial licensing body for official requirements for clinical notes.



12

See If Anyone Needs Help.

If you have some down time, build relationships and stand out by asking if you can help someone.



Machu Picchu, Peru

Helping the team

There's a chance you might have a cancellation during the day. If that's the case, your first order of business is to make sure you're ready for your next patients, the rest of your charts are reviewed, and your notes are caught up.

If you're on top of all that, the next step is to make sure the sterilization center is all caught up and clean.

Once that's done, now it's time to branch out a little and offer to help out in other areas. Maybe the dentist is running behind and could use some help with an impression. The reception area might appreciate some help doing recall confirmation calls or some chart filing.

If you find yourself looking for something to do, just look around and ask. Keep in mind, many offices have specific ways of doing things, so if you're helping out, make sure you get some guidance on what you're supposed to be doing.

Again, all these things build on professional relationships, and expand your horizons. When you're in the Business of You, these can only be good things. These offices will likely be looking to hire someone down the road or know someone who is.

When you're remembered as someone who excels, you're more likely to achieve the level of success you seek.

A full-page background image showing a sunset over a calm body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and water. Dark, silhouetted clouds are scattered across the upper half of the sky. In the foreground, a large, dark, textured rock sits in the water, its surface reflecting the ambient light.

13

Ask for Feedback.

Your professional development depends on honest feedback from those around you.

How Did You (really) Do?

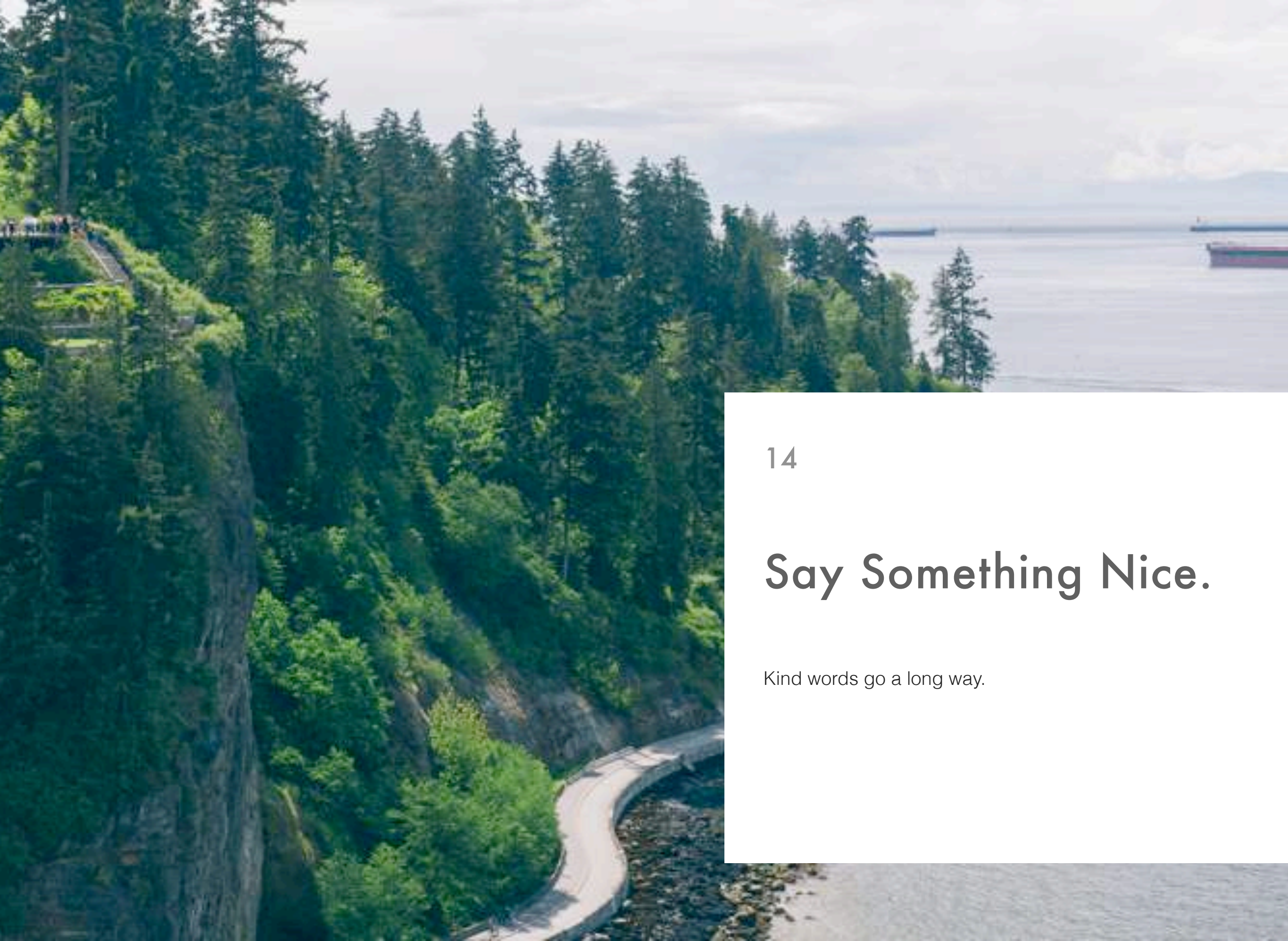
Honest feedback is critical to improving, so at the end of the day, openly ask an office leader (usually the dentist, office manager, or hygiene coordinator) for some constructive feedback.

Hint: They'll most often say everything was fine, even if there were some concerns, so it helps to inquire further or maybe mention something about the day that you felt you could have done better.

Make notes: some feedback will be specific preferences for that office. Make notes like that in your TempStars app so that you



can reference them if you're returning to that office in the future.
They'll be impressed that you remember!



14

Say Something Nice.

Kind words go a long way.



Lake Ontario, Toronto

Leaving with a compliment

Let's face it, some offices are amazing. Some are middle-of-the-road. And some are just dumps. Whatever the case, find something specific and positive to say about the office to an office leader.

You may never want to work in that office again and block it from future alerts, but in a long career you never know who you'll bump into again, and it's always a good thing to leave on a positive note.

With good offices, it's easy. But even if the day is filled with disaster and tension in a terrible office, find one nice thing during the day to compliment to someone in leadership. Here are few if you're stuck:

"You have really good lighting in here."

"The operatories are nice and spacious."

"The team really knows how to hustle."

...or something like that. Be creative!

Remember: it's possible that even the person you make the compliment to isn't happy working there and finds another job at an amazing office, and remembers you temping at that bad office on that day. She recognizes your name on your resume when they're looking to hire a hygienist and mentions it to the dentist...and voila! You're working at your dream job! The point is, you never know how or when the right attitude will reward you, but it will.



15

Clean Up Afterwards.

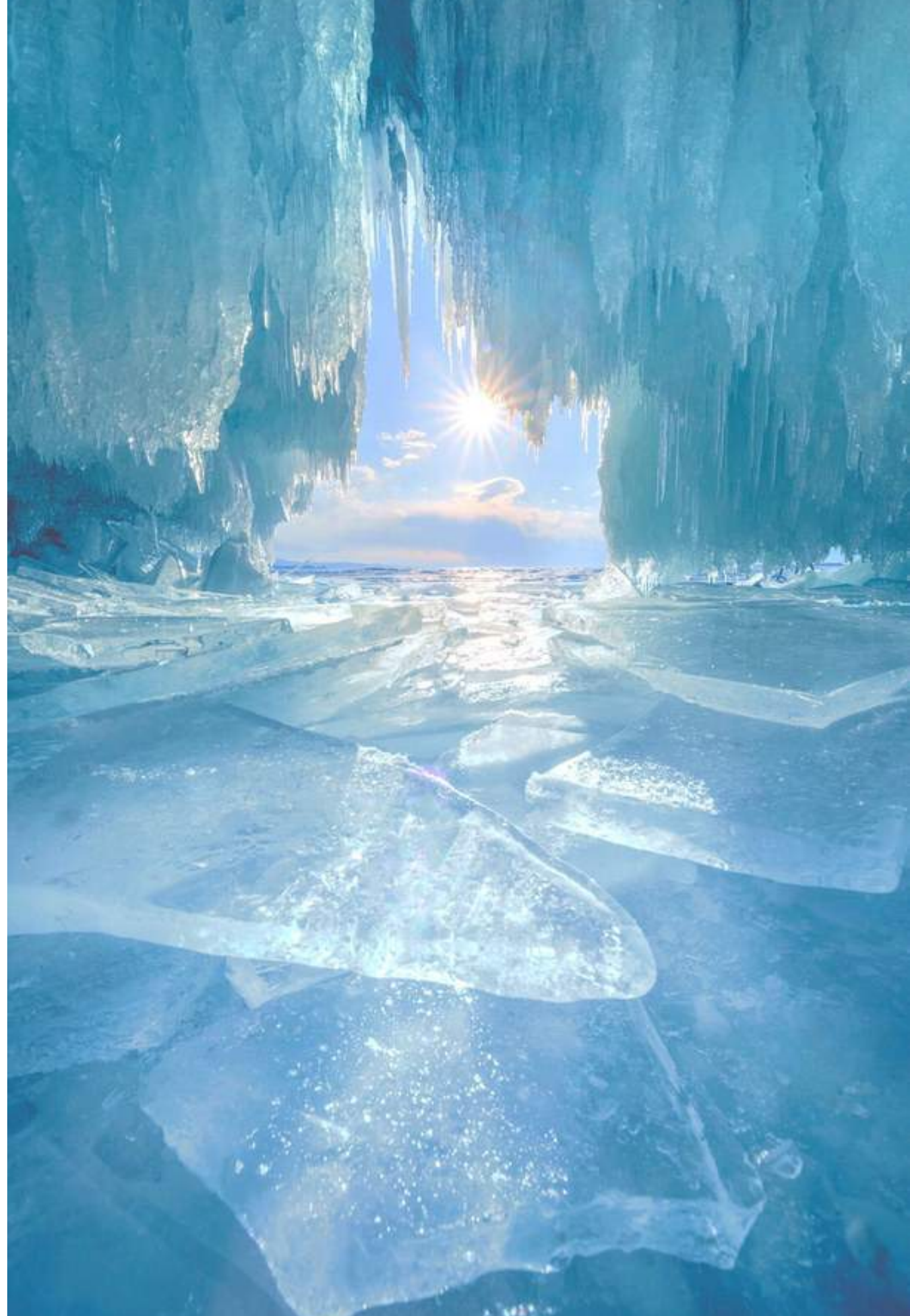
Make sure the instruments and sterilization center are clean and caught up before you go.

Don't be "That Hygienist".

One of the most common complaints from dental offices about some temp hygienists is that they leave things in a mess. Either their operatory or (more often) the sterilization center. Don't do this!

Think of yourself as responsible hiker/camper: as a bare minimum, leave things as you found them. Or go one step further, leave them improved.

Make sure everything is clean and tidy before you leave. Once you're done for the day, especially if you're the last (or only) hygienist, make sure all the instruments are clean and run



through. This not only makes a great impression, but shows you care about your colleagues - we're all in this together.

Offices have differing policies on leaving the autoclave run after hours, so check with someone before running the last cycle and leaving. If you're not running a cycle, make sure the instruments are organized and bagged and ready to go through the next morning.

Don't leave instruments soaking in the ultrasonic overnight and make sure everything is ready for the next day. If you're unsure about something, take the initiative to ask someone.

Find out about the spore testing as well, you might be responsible for running an overnight spore test, depending on their protocol.

But above all: don't leave a mess for the hygienist coming in the next day. That's a very quick way to get blocked from an office and have your Star Ranking drop. Not only that, but nobody wants to hire a hygienist who leaves things in that kind of disarray.



16

Keep Personal Notes.

The TempStars app lets you make personal, office-specific notes that can be helpful references if you're returning.



Tofino, BC

You can't remember everything.

Your TempStars app has a section to make office-specific notes, so use them to your advantage.

Make note about things like:

1. Team member's names
2. Feedback/advice you received
3. Operatory quirks
4. Computer system details

5. Other things that didn't seem intuitive the first time you visited that office.

These things will make your next time at that office run much more smoothly and help you settle in faster at the beginning of the day.

They'll also help you decide if you're eager to work at that office again.

A coastal landscape featuring a sandy beach in the foreground, dark rocks scattered along the shoreline, and a cloudy sky. The ocean is visible in the distance, with waves breaking near the shore. The overall tone is somewhat somber due to the overcast sky.

17

Send a Follow-up Thank you.

Stand out from the crowd by sending a brief note thanking the dentist/office for having you.

Saying Thank-you

The title of this chapter kind of says it all: Sending a little follow-up thank you note or e-mail is classy and helps the office remember you.

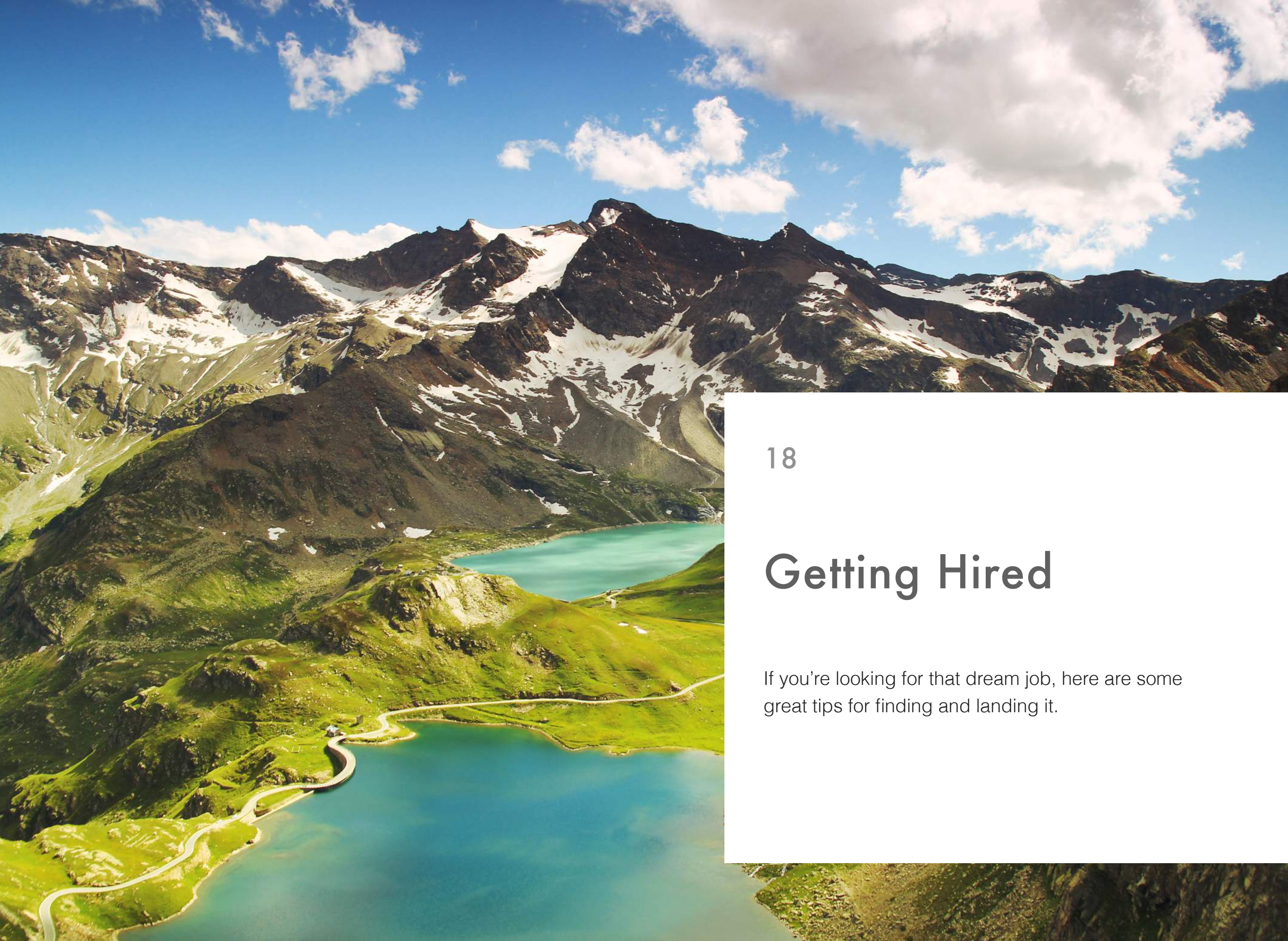
It doesn't have to be fancy, or elaborate. Just an expression of gratitude to the office for having your there.

If you're temping a lot, you can even consider having little folded business cards with a Thank You note that you leave at the end of the day.

Again, even if you never want to work there again, send a thank-you note and then block the office if you must. But think long-



term and remember your career and the value of building professional relationships. Each day is an opportunity for you to build your professional reputation which will surely come back to reward you, sometimes in unexpected ways.



18

Getting Hired

If you're looking for that dream job, here are some great tips for finding and landing it.



Landing that Dream Job

While the temping life can be fun, exciting, flexible and empowering, it's not necessarily for everyone. Some hygienists like the mix of a permanent position with some flexibility of part-time temping, and there are those who just want to join a team and have healthy, stable full-time work environment to go to every day. Either way, if you're looking to get hired at an office, this (the longest!) chapter is for you.

I apologize this is pretty word-dense chapter, but I want to make sure you get the information you need. I'll make it prettier for the 2017 version of the book! So...

Who's hiring?

The first step is to get your name and resume in front of the offices who are hiring. There are a number of online resources for this, such as Workopolis, Monster, Kijiji, etc. You can also check your local classified ads for open positions. More and more dental offices are using the TempStars app to find their next hygienist. There are a few reasons they prefer this route:

-It's free

-It provides the resumes of the best hygienists in their area who have a proven track record of performance.

I don't mean to keep repeating myself, but that's also one of the reasons to make the effort to be a 5-star hygienist.

Here's how it works:

When a dental office tells the TempStars app that they want to hire a hygienist, they enter their e-mail address and the system automatically finds all the hygienists who are within 100km of that office. Then it ranks all those hygienists by their star ranking and e-mails the resumes of the top 20 hygienists based on their star ranking.

It's no secret or surprise that every dental office (even the bad ones) wants to hire the best. The hygienists who are registered with TempStars and who are making great impressions and earning great reviews are the ones that offices want to hire for their team. If you're not one of the top performing hygienists, your resume won't be included in a dental office's search for resumes. So it's best if you use this whole book as a guide to maximize your chance of getting found and hired by that dream office.

Your Resume

Make it clean, easy to read, and be sure your spelling and grammar are perfect. Have someone else proof-read it: you might read the same typo a dozen times and still not see it.

Try to fit it on one page, but two maximum. If you're e-mailing it, make the effort to have it converted to a PDF file, it's easier for the office to read. There are a lot of online converters that will change your Word document into a PDF. It's just a nice little extra touch of professionalism when you do this.

Include a recent referral letter from (in order of importance): recent dental employer, recent non-dental employer, hygiene college instructor (if it's recent). Not your aunt or best friend, it has to be someone who has seen who you are professionally. If you have no referral letters, temp for a few weeks and really shine on every job. Ask one of the temp offices that loved you to write a little note saying how great you were. But you really do have to be great!

Include a brief cover letter: BE SURE to mention something specific about that dental office. Look on their website or social media accounts and come up with one or two sentences that shows the reader that you're not just sending out a hundred copies of the same thing. Personalize your letter to each office. The dentist or manager might be looking at 50 resumes and cover letters, so try to make your first sentence catchy, like "I'm your girl!" or something other than "Thank you for your consideration for this position you posted." (Boring!). Use the cover letter to highlight something unique and important about yourself that isn't said

in your resume, something that will let you stand out above the crowd.

Highlight: Hygiene school, any other post-secondary education.

Work experience in the dental field. Any customer service or medical-related experience (ie. waitressing, pharmaceutical rep, etc.), work that shows you can work in a people industry and are smart.

Continuing education courses

2-3 lifestyle interests

The Interview

Be articulate and professional

When interviewing, try to avoid your “ums” and “likes”. If need time to think about an answer, it’s perfectly acceptable to say “That’s a great question, let me think about that for a minute.” But if you’re really going after that dream job, you might even want to verbally rehearse sample questions with a friend or colleague.

Have a copy of your resume and reference letters

I don’t think this one needs elaboration, but it’s not uncommon for the office to have misplaced your resume, so

have a copy handy. If they did lose it, and you can save them with a copy, you’ll be a star!

Sample questions

Are you more social and outgoing, or quiet and thoughtful?

In your last job, describe someone you didn’t get along with and how you handled it.

Who is someone you admire and why?

Is there anything in your life or lifestyle that would prevent you from coming to work on time consistently for the next year?

What is your proudest professional accomplishment?

What is something you have struggled with, and how did you manage or overcome it?

What is your favourite OHI technique?

What do you feel is the #1 barrier to patients improving their oral health?

NOTE: You may not be asked these specifically, but if you have good answers for them, you can incorporate them into your discussion to elevate your credibility.

Know your rights

There are certain questions that potential employers are not allowed to ask during an interview. These vary slightly by province, but center around things like family, pregnancy, religion, sexual orientation, race, etc. If you find an office is bringing up these topics, they are either unaware of the laws, or just don't care. Either way, you'll probably want to find another office.

Be available

Offices want to know that you're available when they need you. If you are asked to head in for an interview, try to be as accommodating as possible, within reason. It shows that you're serious about the position.

Do your research

Google is great for researching dentists and dental offices. Check out their social media accounts and even RateMDs to find out more. Not only will it give you things to discuss ("I noticed you did a charity event last month, it looked like a great success!"), but it might also give you a feel for the energy and culture of the office. If the internet is full of negative reviews about the office, it might be best to look elsewhere.

Be early, chat a little

Being early is a no-brainer. It shows organization, dedication and shows you're serious. It also might give you an

opportunity to chat with other team members if they're available. A good impression with a receptionist or office manager often gets passed along to the dentist. Of course, make sure you're not distracting anyone from their responsibilities, but make the effort to be friendly.

Dress professionally

It's best either to wear business casual or scrubs. Jeans and t-shirt give off the wrong impression. And mind your shoes, if you're wearing scrubs, swap the Crocs for a clean pair of runners.

Ask questions respectfully

Remember, if hired for this job, it affects you and your life significantly, so don't be afraid to ask questions. But be respectful and be sure to phrase any questions respectfully and in a manner that doesn't make the interviewer feel defensive. Hint: Don't ask about vacation on the first interview. The interviewer, primarily, is trying to figure out what you can bring to the team. Similarly, try to focus on what value you can contribute. The first interview isn't the time to be asking what the office can do for you. There will be time to iron out those questions if the interviews progress towards a job offer. It's perfectly acceptable to negotiate terms at that point, but first you have to show that you're the candidate that they've been dreaming about.

Working interviews

Working interviews are a normal course of an interview process. It's an opportunity for you to show your patient skills and your ability to fit the team. As well, it's a way to get a feel for the energy of the office to decide if it's a good fit for you.

Payment for working interviews is dicey. Hygienists have a broad range of opinions about them, as offices have widely differing policies. Personally, when we were arranging a working interview, we would have the candidate in for one or two patients and give them a gift card for their time if they weren't hired. If they were hired, those hours would be added to their first pay.

Not all offices feel the same way about getting paid, and it's going to be something you'll have to judge for yourself. I would say that, if you're going in for a full day working interview, you should have every expectation that you'll be paid for your time.

If it's one or two patients as a tester, I would play it by ear. If you really like the office and want to work there, I wouldn't bring it up and see how it plays out. Investing a couple of hours is well worth it to find an office you love. If they don't hire you, you can always give them an invoice for your time. If you're sure you don't want the job, don't be afraid to respectfully ask to be paid afterwards.

But if you're asked to come in for a working interview, save the topic of payment until afterwards, I wouldn't ask "Will I be paid for the interview?"

But really, you have to do what feels right for each situation.

Follow up

It's classy to do a follow-up call or e-mail the next day. A phone call is better, but a little e-mail to say thank you for your time and you're excited about the opportunity, let them know to call if they have any other questions, etc. This is a nice way to stand out.

Not Getting Hired

During the interview, get a feel for when they expect to make a decision. The best offices will let you know either way, even if you don't get the job. But, there are many who just won't call or let you know, which isn't very professional but is a reality.

So, for example, if you go in on a Monday for an interview, they might say they're making a decision by next Wednesday. So, the day after the interview, do your follow-up contact. If you don't hear from them by the next Friday (2 days after they said they'll make a decision), a pleasant, respectful call to the office to follow up is appropriate to see what's happening.

If you haven't heard from them, most likely they'll say they filled the position. But be pleasant and professional, and let them know if anything changes that you'd still be interested in the position. This is important because the person they hired might not work out. They might even show up for their first day (stranger things have happened!), so maintain that good energy and relationship so they're more likely to remember you if they need to hire another hygienist.

Nice, you made it through the longest chapter! I'll update and format it for the next version and add some more pictures.

The end is just the beginning.

If you made it this far, congratulations! If you read and took the time to consider the concepts in this book, you are well on your way to a rewarding career in dental hygiene. Whether you want to enjoy the flexible lifestyle of professional temporary hygiene or are looking for a permanent team position, this guide will help you get there.

Remember, reading and learning is only 50%. The other half is actually doing. As I mentioned in the introduction, for some it's easy to follow through on these concepts. For others, it will take conscious effort before they become natural. For those, hang in there - they will become natural and it's worth it!

You might have picked up on the theme of connection and relationship building in this book. If it felt like I was overstating it, then I've accomplished my goal. Connections are critical to success in your profession. But, it's only half of the formula. The other side of the coin is clinical excellence. You have to have both to be truly successful, one cannot compensate for the other.

But, when you are (or become) a hygienist who has clinical mastery while fostering connections and building relationships, then the sky is truly the limit for your success!

Best of luck, and I'm only an e-mail away (help@tempstars.ca)

-James Younger, DDS
Founder/CEO, TempStars



