The challenge:
I am 64 years old and have been practicing dentistry for over half my life. I’m not ready to retire, yet, but want to start spending more time out of my office. I have a nest egg of about $1.5 million dollars and my practice does $1.2 million dollars. I don’t know what to do next? Can you help me?

The solution:
In my further discovery with this doctor, I learned that his wife had recently passed away.

First, you need to know that you are not alone. I have received a large number of calls from doctors all over the country in the same position and with the same challenge.

Throughout my career, I’ve experienced a dramatic difference between male and female dentists in the area of being clear about what they want and when they want it.

Losing your wife dramatically affects your life and your practice. She not only provides you with love and companionship, but a certain sense of knowing where to go and what to do next. She gives you some of your purpose in life.

This observation had intrigued me so much that I sought out the top people who’ve studied this behavior. What I learned was that men are more fixated in the present time, while women innately are visionaries. They can see the house with the white picket fence with three children, and how many grandchildren they will have, and the schools they will attend. Most men find it difficult to see what they’re having for dinner.

Therefore, most men subconsciously rely on the predominant female influencers in their life. This shows up in dentistry in more ways than one. There are a high percentage of practices that employ doctor’s wives and/or female office managers who are very influential decision makers. I have even come across dentist’s mothers who are running practices.

Men naturally focus on the present time like being chair side with their patients, while women who are managing and scheduling calendars, are working on predicting the future.

So here is my suggestion to you. Reach out and get help. There are a number of great life and practice coaches who focus and support you in gaining clarity on your future. For example, I want to retire in the future and in order to do that, I have to deposit more money into my 401K and savings account. Instead, I suggest looking at the future first. Make a list of everything you want, not of what you don’t want. Avoid the pitfall when making your list, though. When you make goals such as “I don’t want to smoke,” it doesn’t stick and it’s pronounced in a negative, problematic connotation. Change you’re “don’ts” into “wants.” In example, “I want to be smoke-free” is positive and combines an “I can do it” mentality.

In addition, when looking into the future, start your list of goals and wants 20 years from now. Then, list it from 10 years, then five years, and finally, from Dec. 31st, 2007. This will help you outline specifically, what you want and how you're going to do it. Looking out to the future, then back to the present will leave you with fewer constraints because you're not making goals based on your present situation. You can finally demand what you want on a clear slate.  I call it our “box”; some call it our comfort zone. Swing out and break the box you have been living in. Be true to yourself and what you truly want from your life, set your plan and just go for it. You deserve it.

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