



The **HAPPIEST**  
Dentist in the World

The Story of One Man's Journey Beyond the  
Stress, Burnout and Misery of Traditional Dentistry  
to Discover a Completely New Way to Practice

**BENJAMIN CARTON**

# THE HAPPIEST DENTIST IN THE WORLD

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*To my wife, who had the patience to  
watch me figure all of this out.*

## A Note to You, Dear Reader

*If you're reading this story, then someone who cares about your future thought enough of you to tell you about it. As you read Ben's story, you might find his experience trying to make it in dentistry to be very familiar.*

*Know that the quality and profitability of your future in dentistry is completely up to you. You can walk the path that leads to stress, burnout and possibly financial ruin. Or you can choose a brighter road. Ultimately, Ben's story is told in an effort to help you make the right choice for you, your family and your practice.*

# ONE

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## WHEN THE DREAM OF BECOMING A DENTIST BECOMES A NIGHTMARE

This story covers the six most difficult years of my life. During that time, I was stuck practicing dentistry the way I had been taught to do it.

I knew a lot about teeth, but I was miserable. I was in debt. I was stressed. My marriage was not in good shape. Maggie, my wife, was not happy.

With a set of circumstances like that, the story you're about to hear might sound like a fairytale. I confirm to you that it is not. It is a real story, lived by a real dentist who was stuck in a prison he built for himself. What you're about to hear is how he found his way out.

### My Dad Got Me Into Dentistry

When I graduated from high school, I knew I was going to be a dentist. My dad was a dentist and the expectation was there that I would eventually take over his practice.

When I was a senior in dental school, I got married to my wife, Maggie. Boy did we have exciting plans for our life together! We loved spending time with each other and were nothing but

optimistic about the future. As you will soon discover, I gave her quite a few reasons to walk away from the disaster I created. But luckily, she had patience and we made it through together to the life we enjoy today.

## Benjamin Carton, DMD

The plan is probably one you've heard before. Once I graduated, I'd join my dad's practice followed by a general practice residency. I had no problem imagining my name on the door. It was a goal that got etched into my mind early on: Benjamin Carton, DMD, right underneath my dad's name, Stephen Carton, DDS.

I had that part figured out. Unfortunately, that's about where the fun came to an end. Because nothing I had learned in dental school prepared me for what it was *really* like to practice in the world of dentistry.

I really should have noticed the clues in dental school. Almost all of my teachers were actually struggling in their own practices. Some had financial issues, others were dealing with back pain. Some were just tired out from the grind.

At the time, I didn't pay attention to those clues. I was focused on acing histology and bio-chem. And I was really good with my hands, which made learning all of the skills pretty simple.

As I got closer to graduation I could hardly contain my excitement about the future. I knew that, working together with my dad, we could really make our mark on the dental world. I knew we could become the most successful practice in town, even more successful than the large corporate group that had moved in.

## Working on Dental Easy Street

Everything was going smoothly for a while. I graduated from school, did a GPR for a year and then joined my dad's practice. He focused on the business side of things, I did some dentistry and I got paid.

My dad's practice was what you might call "old-fashioned." He'd been working with the same staff for 30 years! And since he was a one-man practice, the structure was pretty traditional.

He was the only dentist and he worked along side his longtime assistant, Ann. The rest of the office included his hygienist, Carol, and Mary at the front desk. He had a four operator practice, each one equipped with an X-ray machine.

The schedule was pretty common. His days were mainly fillings and doing single tooth crowns. At first, I did the fillings. For a while, that's all he would let me do. A few years into it, I started doing a crown every so often. Eventually, as I got more experienced, my responsibilities at the practice grew.

I have to admit, I'm a total technology geek. So I really thought my dad's office was too old-fashioned. I'd spend hours reading through all of the dental magazines I could get my hands on.

I was up on the latest technology with digital X-rays, single visit crowns and CT scans. And I was excited about building a modern day practice. One day, I made that known to my dad and I approached him about "upgrading" the office. That's the day I realized that our priorities included totally different things.

*"Ben, I built this practice. I've been doing things this way for 30 years. I know you're excited about this stuff but I don't have any interest in dipping into my retirement money to buy this fancy schmancy equipment."* Those were the exact words he used: fancy schmancy.

## TWO

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### THE BUYOUT

My dad finally asked me to buy him out. It was the best day and the worst day of my life all rolled up into one. I was scared to death of taking the helm of the practice. I had zero business experience. I didn't know the first thing about running a practice. And I wasn't sure I was ready to put all of that responsibility on my shoulders.

But I had a dream. I was excited. My mind was racing with images of my dream coming true. While I had some reservations, they weren't nearly powerful enough to keep me from saying YES. So that's what I did. I was finally going to have my own practice and I was ready to go!

That's when I found out my dad is a serious negotiator. Looking back, I would have been the same way. His practice was his life's work. All those years he had invested had to payoff, and I was the one who was going to provide the payoff.

We consulted with a practice broker to come up with a fair price. Between the two of us, the practice was doing about a million dollars a year. After a good amount of talking and thinking, we agreed on a purchase price of \$700,000. I thought it

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was fair, my dad thought it was fair, our friend, a practice broker, thought it was fair.

We hadn't even completed the deal yet, but my mind was already racing. I sat down and started planning out the practice I wanted to build. I was going to bring this practice up to the cutting edge of dentistry and I was excited!

Digital X-rays were an obvious choice. I wanted to do my own crowns, so CEREC machines were on the list. I was also pretty interested in implants, so a 3D CT Scan was something I was going to need.

That was the equipment. But there was also the makeover the actual office would need to go through to improve the decor. If I was going to build an amazing practice, I wasn't going to cut corners. That meant new computer systems, new wallpaper, and a long list of other updates.

## How to Dig a Money Pit

When I went to get the financing to buy out my dad, the bank was kind enough to throw in some extra money to cover all of the other upgrades I wanted to make to the office.

Getting the equipment was one of the smoothest purchases I've ever made! The local Patterson representative gave me a great deal on a brand new CEREC machine, a Galileos CT Scan and even this amazing machine called Sicat Air and Schick digital sensors. *(To be honest, I had no idea what Sicat Air even was! I just thought it sounded like the coolest thing.)*

The best part about buying all of this stuff was that it didn't take a penny out of my pocket. I got it all for no money down. No one even checked my financial situation to know if I was going to

be able to pay for everything. All I had to do was sign some documents and the equipment showed up.

## Changing of the Guard

Finally, the day came to announce to the patients that my dad would be retiring from the practice. Fortunately, most of the patients stayed with the practice. I was finally in charge of my future. My dream had come true!

With the “changing of the guard” came quite a few other changes in the practice. For starters, I got rid of “payment plan” patients. I knew cash flow would be important so I wanted to do everything I could to make sure the cash kept flowing. If I was going to do a crown for \$1000, I wanted to get paid \$1000. I think that’s fair and I wanted to work with patients who thought the same.

My dad ran things differently. He pretty much had a “pay when you can” plan. Ms. Johnson, for example, was paying \$5 per month on her \$3000 fee for a full upper and full lower denture. \$5 a month! Ms. Johnson is a sweet old lady, but I wasn’t going to be able to offer something like that and still keep my head above water.

I thought all of the changes were great. I was excited to wake-up every morning, go to work, and see my name on that door. What a thrill! And all of the changes I was making were really bringing the practice and its services up to date. There was just one problem...the patients.

## The Quickest Way to Lose 25% of Your Patients

The patients weren't happy. They didn't like the feeling that came with seeing everything they were used to about the practice completely change overnight. I was excited to make the changes, but I didn't realize what that means from the patients' perspective.

For lack of a better way to describe it, they got "spooked." About 25% of them liked the practice the way it was. When I started shifting everything around, they decided to go somewhere else. It's amazing how long it takes to build up trust with your patients. It's also amazing how quickly you can destroy it.

Believe it or not, the patients weren't the biggest problem. My dad's longtime assistant, Ann, wasn't so keen with everything shifting under her feet either. As the technology in the office advanced, she realized she didn't want to keep up. So she chose retirement and moved on.

Then Carol the hygienist left too. As it turns out, she was just sticking around as a personal favor to my dad. But once he was gone, she decided to leave as well. That left me with Mary at the front desk. Losing half your staff is no small issue, but at least I had Mary.

The honeymoon lasted for about six months until the reality of the situation became all too clear. The water was starting to rise around my practice and a storm was on the horizon. And then it got worse!

A few months after finally completing my changes to the practice, I noticed that production was starting to decline. After all of the money, time and care I had invested into making the office truly remarkable, the dip in production was quite a surprise. I thought all of my investments would surely pay for themselves

(or more!) pretty quickly. But then we had our first sub \$50,000 month and that's when I knew something was wrong. I imagine it's how the folks on the Titanic felt when their all-powerful ship sprang a leak. It's not a good feeling. You know there's something bad lurking under the surface and you're torn between wanting to find out the truth and just sticking your head in the sand.

I'm not one to back down from a challenge, so I met the problem head on. I arranged a meeting with my accountant to get a plan together for boosting production. Accountants are rarely the most exciting people in the world to talk to, but this meeting was even more bleak than normal. *"Ben, you've got a choice: you either have to figure out how to get more patients in the office or you're going to have to bring your overhead WAY down."*

Considering I didn't know exactly what my overhead was at that moment, the number he gave me was really shocking. My overhead was 110%. The most recent month saw \$49,500 in revenue and \$55,000 in expenses. I was sinking.

## When In Doubt, Spend More Money!

I sat down and made a plan to turn things around. I managed to get my bank to extend my line of credit so I could breathe a little bit. Little did I know I was only tightening the noose around my neck.

The next step was a major boost in production. I started investigating all of the "big promise" practice consultants. I needed to post big numbers and I wanted someone who could help me do it.

I was looking for "double your production" type of results.

I reached out to three different consultants. Each one came back with a plan pretty similar to the others: 1) increase your

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online presence 2) get new patients 3) test your employees to make sure that you and they are on the same page and 4) revamp the way you and your staff answer the phones and talk to patients.

I had three consultants, one basic plan, and three different fee levels. I didn't choose the cheapest guy (\$50K for the year) and I didn't choose the most expensive one (\$200K!). I went for the middle choice and started working with a credible consultant who charged \$75,000 for the year.

His promise was that the increase I would see would be at least double what I was paying him. That would make him a "great deal." It would also make this \$75,000 investment in my future one of the smartest things I had ever done. That made me feel totally fine with the loan he set me up with to pay for it all.

Unfortunately, there were some extra charges attached to his plan of action that I hadn't accounted for. Some of these charges included fixing my web presence, phone training for my staff, advertising costs and more. It seemed like he always had something more to buy that made cash disappear even faster than before.

What I received was one phone call per month, a ton of information to review (I didn't read it, I admit it), a few t-shirts and a complimentary ticket to his annual conference.

If you've ever worked with a dental practice consultant, this might be a familiar tale. Almost every suggestion I received came with an additional price tag. Direct mail, patient review system. Every time I turned around, his suggestions meant spending more money.

Now I've proven to you already that, at the time, I was not a savvy business man. But even I knew that at some point, the

money going out the door has GOT to come back or else the whole ship goes down. And that's when the leak that was sinking my practice started to spread into my personal life.

## THREE

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### DESPERATE TIMES

Things were getting serious. Everything I tried just made the hole deeper. Even my wife was starting to lose faith in my ability to turn things around.

As you might imagine, this did not make for a smooth time at home. I was frustrated, she was frustrated and the practice was on the way down.

I'll forever remember what she said to me one night as I was venting some of my stress and frustration in her direction (again). She said, *"You had to go and and change things up. Your dad had a successful practice for 30 years and in just 18 months you managed to screw it all up."*

That hurt. But it was also the truth. The situation was getting desperate and I decided to take action. I started off with something I had promised myself I would never do: I joined up with all of the insurance plans—Aetna, Cigna, Delta, Met Life, United, plus four more that I never heard of.

Luckily, this brought new patients in the door. I got 20+ new patients during the first month I was in those plans. And then something terrible happened: MY PRODUCTION WENT DOWN AGAIN!

I was busier than I had been in a long time and I was making less. Joining the insurance programs was not without cost. I had to accept a bunch of new fee schedules, which meant I was charging about 40% LESS than before. And those new fee schedules extended to my existing patients as well, so production took an enormous hit.

## There's No Speed Limit on the Road to Bankruptcy

And that's the point when it finally hit me. This was the bottom. I was now living a life very similar to the lives of my teachers from dental school. I hated my job, I was struggling financially and my overhead was stuck at 90%.

I was pedaling like a mad man and getting nowhere. Patients were coming back with crowns that kept falling out. Others were returning for what seemed like endless (and free) denture adjustments. Two times I broke a file while doing molar endo and I even had to endure a few implant failures.

In just 18 months I took a profitable practice, assumed control of its future and drove it straight into the ground.

Every waking minute of my life was invested to support everyone BUT me. I covered my loans, I paid my employees, and I played the shuffle game with all of the other bills that were due. My "salary" disappeared in an effort to save the practice.

To say I was desperate would have been an understatement. I went back to my accountant and sat down to figure out how to get my practice off of life support.

As we were going over the numbers, I found that good old trusted Mary at the front desk had been stealing. I was happy she decided to stick around when my other staff members left! But as

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it ended up, she took over \$100,000 from my practice without me knowing. In the interest of full disclosure, getting that \$100,000 back wouldn't have made a difference in the health of my practice. I was still headed for disaster.

Here are the choices I was given by my accountant after he had a chance to review the numbers:

- 1) I could sell the practice and (maybe) pay off the debt with the proceeds, then work for someone else
- 2) I could fire everyone, do my own hygiene and have Maggie help me run the office

And then there was bankruptcy. I could simply declare business bankruptcy.

Bankruptcy is actually the option he recommended as the shortest and most painless way out. Bankruptcy would involve all of the equipment going away, but it would give me a chance to survive, regroup and rise from the ashes at some point in the future. I didn't like any of the options, so I took a few weeks full of sleepless nights to think it over.

## The Day the “Fit Hit the Shan”

My reality was about 4,000 miles away from the dreams I had about being a dentist. I had planned on being a star. I was going to build a practice that would be legendary. I'd spend 3.5 days a week at the office and have 2 months of vacation every year.

I'd be living with my wife, Maggie, in a beautiful home with a pool. And one day, our kids would bring their kids for family get togethers and holidays. I had it all planned out. But none of it was going to happen now because my practice was at death's door. That's the moment that I regretted ever becoming a dentist.

I had a long talk with my wife about the reality of our situation. She was furious. She gave me that look that showed me just how much of a loser she thought I was.

She used to have faith and confidence that I could do it. But now, I had given her plenty of proof that I wasn't up to the task. After a long talk, we decided that bankruptcy was really the only option. Other than winning the lottery, we couldn't see another viable way out.

So I sat down and started searching for bankruptcy attorneys. As I was looking, I remembered reading about a lawyer who actually specialized in helping dentists through bankruptcy. I had seen him mentioned in an old magazine. I found the issue, made the call, and went to see him.

I even took the magazine along with me to the meeting just in case I had some extra time to read.

## FOUR

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### THE DENTIST WITH THE 17.5% OVERHEAD

When I got to the bankruptcy lawyer's office, I took out the magazine to read while I was waiting. It was actually an issue of *The Profitable Dentist*. Back then, I used to chuckle because it was a constant reminder of the one thing I didn't have: PROFIT.

Inside the magazine I found a small booklet I had somehow missed. The title of the booklet was:

#### Discover How One Dentist Retired at 40 by Reducing his Overhead to 17.5% And Not Practicing Dentistry

Most smart dentists might look at a headline like that and say, "*Oh yeah...that's right. Sure, I believe you...*" But I was desperate. Even if the booklet was written by another practice consultant in an effort to get clients, the title was really too irresistible for me to ignore. So I read the whole thing from cover to cover.

I may as well have been reading my own biography, because the story of Dr. Williams that the booklet told was almost exactly like the past 18 months of my life!

A dentist starts off with dreams of building a successful practice...dentist loads up office with expensive toys, dentist gets in over his head...dentist finds himself \$5 million in the hole!

You might not think this sounds like an exciting story, but I was living it. And I wanted to see how things turned out for this guy who was wading through the same type of disaster I was.

Here's where the booklet took a turn. Because instead of declaring bankruptcy, Dr. Williams managed to turn his practice around and even RETIRE from dentistry just five years later.

By this point I was getting excited. When your back is against the wall the way mine was, any ray of sunshine is enough to lift your spirits.

While Dr. Williams was never looking to be a drill and fill dentist, his entire future shifted because of a single patient he saw just a week after opening his practice.

This patient came to him suffering from Sleep Apnea.

## The Happiest Patient in the World

This patient had not had a good night's sleep in over seven years. She couldn't wear a CPAP machine (the mask that most patients who have sleep apnea use) so her options for relief were limited.

As luck would have it, just weeks before this visit, Dr. Williams had taken an introductory course on sleep apnea.

He treated the patient with a simple device known as an oral appliance and told her to come back in two weeks for a follow-up appointment.

The first thing she did when she walked into the office after those two weeks was to greet Dr. Williams with the world's

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biggest hug. She said, “*You just changed my life and I can never repay you for what you’ve done.*”

While the patient technically didn’t repay Dr. Williams, her insurance company did. Her insurance paid \$3,500 for the procedure. Dr. William’s costs were \$350. That’s a profit of 1000%.

## How to Struggle With Gold in Your Pocket

At this point, you might be wondering how Dr. Williams could have possibly amassed debts of \$5 million if he was able to perform such profitable procedures? He was sitting on GOLD and yet he was struggling.

I was certainly wondering how that was possible. Reading that booklet, I was like a detective trying to figure out how to save my practice. So I was paying attention to every detail of the story.

The problem was that Dr. Williams only got his next sleep patient six months after that first one.

He tried everything he could think of to attract more sleep patients, but the most he ever managed in a single month was three of them. THREE.

And that was his story for the next ten years of his career. In the meantime, he did all the normal stuff to build up his general dentistry practice.

His story was almost exactly like mine! Exactly like mine up until the point where he turned it all around. I was still trying to figure out how my comeback would actually happen.

Something obviously changed for Dr. Williams to go from struggling to find sleep patients to retiring from dentistry and being financially free in just a few years.

I didn’t have the \$5 million in debt like he did, but I did have \$1 million which felt like a huge ball and chain around my ankle.

While I was sitting in the waiting room counting the minutes until my meeting with the bankruptcy lawyer, I picked up the phone and called the number for Dr. Williams that was in the booklet. I was at least going to leave a message with his office for him to contact me.

The phone rang and a man's voice came on the line: "Is Dr. Williams there," I said? "Speaking," he replied.

Little did I know this was the conversation that was going to change my life.

## FIVE

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### HOW DR. WILLIAMS PUT HIS PRACTICE "TO SLEEP"

I could hardly believe that the same dentist who wrote the booklet actually picked up the phone. But he did. "Is this Dr. Williams," I asked?

"Call me Jim," came the reply. "I stopped calling myself doctor 5 years ago when I put down the hand piece for good."

As I told Jim the story of my career in dentistry, two things became very obvious to me: First, he was an excellent listener. Second, he knew exactly what it was like to be in my situation.

After I got done telling him about my complete self-destruction in dentistry, he asked me a question that I will never forget:

*"If I could help you get out of debt and get you to the point where money would no longer be a concern, will you get up and get out of that lawyer's office and never go back there again?"*

I knew that if I left, my wife would kill me. She was already at her limit and me pulling one of my "I've got an idea!" moments on her would not help.

And when I explained that a complete stranger had instructed me to leave the bankruptcy lawyer's office, the solution we had agreed on, well...it might get a little tense.

But I decided to go with my gut. There was something about Dr. Williams (Jim) that made me think I was onto something.

So we arranged a call for the next day where Jim would walk me through the plan.

## The Phone Call That Changed Everything

It didn't feel good to bend the truth when my wife asked me what happened at the lawyer's office. I told her he needed to reschedule. Looking back, I know it's a dumb move to lie to your wife. But back then, I REALLY wanted to be the one to fix the mess. And I needed to buy myself a little time to figure out how to do that.

I didn't know if Jim would be the answer I needed or if he'd just turn out to be another one of those big promise, small results consultants.

I called Jim and asked him directly: *"Please tell me how you can help me. I am pretty desperate, and I'm already feeling burnt out."*

Jim took my question and jumped right into the answer... I'll let him tell it to you in his own words as I remember them:

“

*Back when I was struggling, I came to the point where I was determined to build a practice based on treating sleep apnea. I got hooked with that patient who came in the first week. Not only was that the most fulfilling moment I've ever had in dentistry, it was also the most profitable. Unfortunately, I struggled to figure out how to build a practice focused on sleep apnea for about 10 years. That's a long time.*

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*But I struggled to do it successfully for ten years.*

*As I did more research into sleep apnea, I discovered that 90% of the people who have it will never be diagnosed. Doctors who graduated over 10 years ago were never taught about it. Doctors who graduated more recently only heard about it for half a day. That's it. Most of them think it's something that comes only with obesity. That's the perception they have. And because the docs don't know about it, they don't screen for it.*

*But the facts are that millions of people suffer with it. And it can lead to all sorts of serious cardiovascular complications. It's no joke.*

*The only doctors who get it are sleep doctors. But they hardly get any referrals. And when they do, they prescribe the CPAP. Why? Because a patient with a CPAP machine has to come back every six weeks for an appointment, that's why."*

I was starting to see why so many dentists struggled in the world of sleep apnea. The problem was largely unknown, misunderstood and ignored in 90% of the people who suffered from it. But at this point, I had no idea where this was going. I couldn't see what Jim could have figured out to make this puzzle work. So I kept listening...

*"The sleep docs were biased, so I had to figure out a way for NON-sleep docs to get more involved in sleep apnea. If I could crack that code, that would lead to an influx of patients into the sleep pool, which would translate into more patients to treat with an oral appliance.*

*All of the friends I had who had tried to build a sleep practice had failed. Every. Single. One. I was determined to figure it out. So I did something crazy. I took my dental practice and took care of all of the patients on ONE day per week. I hired a dentist to work*

*at my practice and let him handle everything except the ONE day. That bought me a lot of time to focus on figuring out the sleep mystery.*

*What I discovered is that none of the major players wanted the oral appliance business. They just wanted to test patients and do the CPAP. So if I could get them more of what THEY wanted, what I wanted (the oral appliance business) would benefit in the process.*

*The one last obstacle was to figure out how to get non-sleep physicians interested in sleep. THAT is really where the whole thing began to turn around. I came up with a way for non-sleep physicians to profit from the world of sleep. I haven't looked back since.*

*Doctors are in a tough spot. Given the insurance situation and changes with Medicare, they have to see about 6 times the number of patients they had to see 20 years ago to earn the same amount of revenue!*

*I created a new way to help them profit and, at the same time, became their go-to expert for everything sleep related. I created a simple way to benefit from screening and testing their existing patients for sleep apnea.*

*Once this got started, I ended up seeing ten times more oral appliance patients each month than I ever dreamed of seeing.”*

It was at this moment when, for the first time in a LONG time, I actually felt something other than dread about my future. Yes, I was in the hole over \$1 million with a practice that was barely alive, but it didn't matter. I didn't even know the full details about what Jim was describing but I knew enough to get the general gist. And it reminded me of something I had been told about

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being successful in business a long time ago: all you have to figure out how to do is to become valuable to the right people.

And that's what Jim had done. He had figured out how to put himself, doing something he loved, right in the flow of people who could benefit from that thing.

Needless to say, I was hooked at this point and wanted to hear how I could start down the same path that had completely changed Jim's career.

*"This sleep business isn't for everyone. You have to be willing to think differently and risk getting made fun of by your colleagues who think you've gone crazy. But that's the price you pay for not ending up tired, worn out and in pain like most of them will be by the end.*

*I teach this every month. I even travel around the country to do it. I'm that interested in seeing other dentists benefit. And the model works anywhere. You can be in the middle of Manhattan or out in some town in Kentucky and it will still work. So far, I've trained over 100 students and I imagine that number is going to grow substantially as word gets out.*

*The biggest question traditional dentists usually have is, 'What's the catch?' We're all trained to think there's some big gotcha at the end. We're trained that life in dentistry couldn't actually be ENJOYABLE and PROFITABLE. Much of my work is simply helping people get over that brainwashing."*

By now I was totally onboard. But I thought about relaying all of this to Maggie and knew I had to get some more details before I could make a compelling argument that following this "crazy" dentist Jim was a smarter plan than rescheduling that meeting with the bankruptcy lawyer.

## SIX

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### DR. WILLIAMS REVEALS THE "CATCH"

I wanted to dig into the specifics. In order to make this work and make sure I had the support of Maggie, I really wanted to get clear on the facts about how this business worked. To be frank, it sounded too good to be true. I was skeptical just like Jim was saying...

*"You should definitely be skeptical of something like this. There's no shortage of people out there who are willing to say whatever they have to say to get you to part with your money. I've worked with a lot of those people during my journey to figure this out.*

*When I first started, I went the same place every dentist goes to learn about sleep medicine. I went to a weekend course!*

*The traditional course is LOADED with science. They really do a good job teaching you about the science of sleep. And oral appliances are very straightforward. If you know how to take an impression and a bite registration then you already know how to make one.*

*When it comes to making this a successful business, though, that's where things got sketchy.*

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*All the courses depended on you figuring out how to secure referrals. That's a problem, especially for an introverted guy like me. I am NOT the life of the party and I don't want to be. So wining and dining people is not my cup of tea.*

*I tried anyway. I went out and tried to get referrals because I loved the business so much. Like most people who go to those sleep courses and come home pumped up, the referrals never materialized.*

*That's when I started really digging into the solution.*

*It was worth the pain to figure out. Let me tell you the rest of the story about that very first sleep apnea patient I had—the one who hadn't slept in seven years.*

*That patient went for regular visits to a cardiologist. They tried everything they could to reduce her blood pressure and it did not work. She was taking three medications every day just to get her BP to a tolerable level. Within two weeks of wearing her oral appliance, her blood pressure dropped. Within 3 months she was off all three of her medications. The patient's cardiologist actually called to thank me. He told me that I had literally saved this patient's life. He was the first doctor I went to when I put my new system of screening all patients into play. All together, his practice ended up sending me over 1000 patients over the next 18 months. But treating that patient all those years ago literally saved her life. That's satisfaction you won't find anywhere else in dentistry. What I found is something where profits and purpose actually go together. This procedure saves lives, is extremely lucrative, stress free and most of the work is actually done by my assistants. The catch is that YOU have to build this. You have to do the work. It's not a magic pill but it IS the best thing in dentistry."*

Hearing Jim speak, I knew I wanted this to work. Knowing there were about 125 dentists out there actually doing this already and having success was another plus. Ultimately, I wasn't interested in other dentists' success. I was interested in MY success. And that's something that I had not yet proven I was capable of achieving.

But I had to make sure Maggie was Ok with this. I had created a huge disaster in my dad's practice and, while I was willing to work my way out, I certainly wanted her support while I did it.

- I knew I didn't want to declare bankruptcy.
- I knew I didn't want to go back to working for someone else.
- I knew I didn't want to grind against the corporate dentistry machine and watch my profits get squeezed to nothing.
- I knew I didn't want to follow in my dad's footsteps and wait 30 years to hopefully find someone to buy me out.
- And I knew that I wanted to walk away from dentistry with a much bigger payout than the \$700,000 my dad had received for 30 years of work.

Jim asked me if I wanted to come to his next weekend training in Chicago. While one weekend wouldn't be enough to make me an expert in this business, it would certainly be enough for Jim to go through the entire system he's created for making this a viable and lucrative path for dentists. And I'd get to hear from other dentists who were actually doing this.

I left Jim with an "I don't know yet," and I said I'd call back in a day. The next step was to have a long talk with Maggie. As

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expected, when I told Maggie about Jim, she was less than enthused.

The discussion got a little bit intense and, while it's embarrassing to write out, it ended with me simply begging. I not only had to convince her to let me go to Jim's course but to also come with me and hear everything for herself. After a lot of back and forth, we came to an agreement: if Maggie was not convinced by the end of the weekend, then we would go ahead with the bankruptcy.

## SEVEN

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### MAGGIE'S DECISION

Maggie and I were off to Chicago. Jim was there with his team as were other dentists who were scheduled to speak. I was one of 15 dentists in the group.

The weekend began with Jim delivering a two hour introduction which included his story and all of the struggles he's dealt with in his career.

I looked around and saw almost every dentist nodding in agreement while listening to Jim's story. Apparently, I'm not the only dentist who found it familiar!

Jim started at the beginning and told the very same story he told me about his first sleep patient and all the satisfaction it brought him.

Then he told everyone in the room about the long period of trial and error he had to endure to really figure out how to get the patients flowing into his office. Frankly, it sounded about as fun as pulling teeth! (Pun intended.)

The story was great, but I was most excited to find out exactly how his whole business approach worked. And following a short break, that's exactly what we were going to hear.

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After the first lecture, Maggie and I spoke to a number of dentists who were in the crowd. We found quite a few with stories very similar to mine.

There were several dentists who reminded me of my dad's situation, and there were some who were nowhere near retirement but were getting tired of the stress that comes with trying to be successful in traditional dentistry.

Maggie also got the opportunity to speak with a few spouses (men and women) who were in positions similar to hers. They all basically said the same thing, *"We love our spouse, but they're just not great at business and we're getting tired of riding the roller coaster of mistakes."*

## How Steven Got Debt Free in 12 Months

After the break, one of the dentist lecturers named Steven told us his story. It was very similar to mine except for one big difference: he met Jim almost two years before I did.

He came to the course and was sitting in the very chair that I was sitting in. And like any smart dentist should be, he was extremely skeptical.

After reviewing everything Jim presented, he decided to move forward with Jim's full program. In the next 12 months, he completely erased his debt. In the year that followed that, he retired from general dentistry altogether and now focuses solely on his sleep practice.

When someone asked him to describe the biggest difference between having a sleep practice and a general practice he explained that his life used to be full of stress. But now he actually looks forward to waking up and going to work every day.

This should be a common thing in the dental world. But as we all know, this level of satisfaction is extremely rare. After his presentation, he actually walked over to Jim and gave him a big hug. It was almost like we were all at a family reunion.

I looked over at Maggie and, for the first time in a LONG time, her face began to soften.

As Jim explained the specifics of his system, he mentioned it took a full three years to get the model working well enough that any dentist could repeat his success.

After the first day, I asked Maggie what she thought so far. Although she was still skeptical, she was enjoying meeting real people who were having success, especially Jim's most successful student to date, Wendy.

Wendy is a dentist from Texas who actually came to Jim's weekend training with an existing background in sleep medicine.

She had a lot of training in sleep but was seeing very little success with finding patients. With Jim's help, she went from struggling to becoming the most successful dentist in sleep medicine.

## Meeting the Future Bankrupt “Ben”

On day two of Jim's course, we heard even bigger success stories. We even heard from one dentist who did go through bankruptcy and spent the next seven years recovering. We heard from someone who was in the exact position I'd be in if I went through with the bankruptcy.

My ears perked up when he said that he wished he had met Jim three years earlier because it would have saved him from bankruptcy. Apparently Maggie heard that part too, because that's

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when she leaned over and whispered into my ear, “thank you for bringing me to the course this weekend. We have a lot to talk about.”

The course ended the next morning with a one-on-one conference with Jim.

I let Maggie tell Jim what she was thinking first. “For the first time since Ben started dentistry, I think he has finally found one of the good guys. The stories we heard this week were incredible. And hearing that some people came back from situations even worse than ours gives me hope. Do you really think we can do this?”

Jim’s response was pretty direct:

“Maggie, I will be honest with you: anyone can do this program. But it’s not as simple as saying it, it requires a lot of action to follow through. We give you the exact steps to follow but you are the one who has to do them. We will help Ben do this, but he will also need your support too. So I’ll turn your question around and ask it to you. Do YOU think you can do this?”

Out of the blue Maggie said “Ben you are doing this! I’ve stood by and watched you make some pretty terrible choices. It’s been a tough journey but this is something different. Jim and his team have a purpose and a very detailed plan for us to follow. All we have to do is do it.”

At that point, I knew we were going to do it. I was nervous and scared to be trying something new, but I had to save my practice and family from bankruptcy. And I really wanted to have a career where I loved to go to work. So we said “YES.”

## EIGHT

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### HAPPILY EVER AFTER

I wouldn't be writing this story if it did not have a happy ending. After spending the weekend at Jim's course, I enrolled in his full program and went home and immediately started implementing everything he asked us to do. Some steps were quick and easy and some were hard.

The results, however, have been spectacular. Just 20 months after the course, not only am I debt free, but I LOVE MY JOB.

I work a total of three days per week and see a TOTAL of 15-20 patients each week. I used to see 20 patients per day! With my sleep practice, I make more money than I ever did with traditional dentistry. And my days are completely stress free! Plus, I made regular vacations a reality!

In fact, as I write this, we are on our way to Utah for a combined retreat/skiing vacation. All of my fellow sleep dentists will be there with me. This group has become like my second family.

I wrote this story to let you know that if you are experiencing any of the things mentioned in this little parable that there is hope.

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But you have to take action. Success isn't going to come and find you. If I had not gone to Jim's weekend course I would be two years into bankruptcy. I imagine there's a good chance that divorce court would have been in my future as well. But that's not what happened. My marriage has never been stronger and I have never been happier.

If I did this, anyone can do it. I worked approximately six hours a week building this up, and within 20 months, I sold my general practice. I maintained the right to continue with my sleep business and that's all I do.

I work three short days a week. Best of all, I don't have one patient that is on my schedule who I dread seeing.

I can honestly say I might be the Happiest Dentist in the World.

The good news is that, while this story is primarily a parable, Jim's course is real. And the path he showed me IS available to you.

If you're curious to learn more about Jim's course, then I urge you to visit the website below or give that office a call at 908-258-0341.

There's a good chance he'll actually be the one to pick-up the phone when you call. No matter what you choose, I wish you the best.

Can YOU Become the Happiest  
Dentist in the World? Find Out:

[www.HappiestDentist.com/start](http://www.HappiestDentist.com/start)