



House Ethics Committee. US Senate SELECT Committee on Ethics. ADA Code of Ethics. Every state, every professional organization, every institution has a written Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, or Expressed Culture. It would appear in watching the news headlines that, for some, their personal ethics are not effective, honored, nor believed in. Blatant choices have violated personal ethics, which poses the question: why is it so difficult to do the right thing?

Visions of what is ethical vs. unethical vary in different cultures, societies, generations and individuals. The “right thing”, by extension, varies within those same cultures, societies, age groups, genders, etc. What looks like a clear choice to me may not be so clear a choice to you, as our choices are influenced by all that persuades us.

Personal choice is a voluntary decision made of free will and independence; it is the will to do something, regardless and in spite of any known or potential consequences.

Personal choice is governed by personal ethics.

While writing this article In December, another senator resigned for inappropriate behavior. Stars have fallen in Hollywood. Journalists have crashed their careers. Yet, the behavior they are experiencing consequences for is behavior that has been accepted in my 47-year work life.

“Me Too”—by those who have chosen not to lead by example or by their personal code of ethics. Exposing power abuse or influence has been long in the making and substantiates the serious lack of genuine personal ethics.

We cannot force anyone to live by our own code of ethics. It is personally owned, the essence of who we are and who we want to be. However, we also

cannot choose to wear our personal ethics like a coat and fling it to the corner when we so desire; doing so violates who we are and numbs us to our future “right” choices.

I often witness dental office employees (and dentists) making bad choices. It is the nature of my job, as I have seen a growing thread of employee entitlement in embezzlements for the past few years. Employees have been remorseful at being caught, but not necessarily for the wrong-doing that affects the practice, dentist, fellow staff or patients. Let us get back to our sense of right and wrong, in our work life and in our personal life.

HOW DO YOU RE-EVALUATE YOUR PERSONAL ETHICS?

Start by asking yourself who you are and who you want to be, not what you want or where you want to go. At your very essence, who do you want to be known as? Do your actions speak louder than your words?

My dad used to say, “if all your friends jumped off a cliff, would you follow them? Just because everyone seems to be doing something does not make what they are doing right. It may mean the crowd you are hanging with is not a good influence in your life.” I am sure I rolled my eyes at the number of times he said this, but as an adult, realize how he was right.

AN AGE-OLD QUESTION: IF YOU WERE TO DIE TODAY, WHAT WOULD THEY SAY ABOUT YOU AT YOUR FUNERAL?

Are you a peacemaker or a pot-stirrer? Are you eager to roll up your sleeves or lazily glued to a chair? Are you a grumpy complainer or a cheery encourager?

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Would co-workers say it is a blessing to have you work alongside them or would they experience relief at your absence? Do you add value to those around you as a blessing or devalue them as a curse? If your life was completely transparent, with all behavior and actions known to everyone in your life, would you be mortified or completely unworried?

On a recent "Ask The Expert" call with a doctor and spouse, the doctor relayed how his office manager screamed at him in anger for years, even in front of patients. She had worked in the practice for over 10 years. He did not like confrontation and other employees tip-toed around her. Finally, he said, she quit and stormed out one day—to his relief.

"I think she thought I would call and beg her to return," the doctor said. "The employees begged me not to call, and we are not replacing her."

This raises the question: are you being the absolute best employee possible?

Most of us develop our personal code of ethics without thinking; however, reviewing our lives can reveal who we have become. The goal is not to have more people like us. The goal is to have a personal set of guidelines from which we live, making every second count.

EVALUATE YOUR EXISTING PERSONAL CODE OF ETHICS.

Remember, your personal code of ethics is yours only. You cannot force others to live by your ethics, but you can choose to live life (work and play) with those whose ethics align with your own. Here are some questions to help you evaluate what your personal code of ethics is currently:

1. What are your existing core beliefs?
2. Are those beliefs evident to others (family, friends, co-workers) around you through your actions?
3. List the positive traits you treasure that others see in you.
4. List the positive traits you treasure that others do *not* see in you.
5. What truly motivates you to do what you do?
6. Will anything you are choosing to do cause harm to anyone else or yourself?
7. Is there anything you need to choose to ensure a positive future?
8. Is there anything you need to *not* choose to ensure a positive future?

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MEET SUSAN GUNN AT THE
2018 AADOM CONFERENCE!



MEET THE AUTHOR

Susan Gunn is
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A nationally recognized conference and study club speaker, Susan shares relatable stories, expertise, humor and down-to-earth practical advice. Susan views speaking as a means to disseminate critical information, passionately standing alongside the audience in whatever she is addressing: embezzlement, finances, ethics, leadership, or caregiving.

As a Certified Fraud Examiner, Susan provides evidence for prosecution and/or civil suit purposes in embezzlement cases, and then provides systems and procedures to protect the practice's future.

She is the author of *QuickBooks In Your Practice* (1997-2017), *Advanced QuickBooks In Your Practice* (2004-2017), *More Than Just Turning It On* (2000), and *Matters of the Heart* (2016). Susan co-authored *The ADA Practical Guide to Expert Business Strategies* (2014) and contributed to *ADA Guidelines for Practice Success Managing Finances Best Practices* (2016).

To learn more about Susan and how she can help you and your practice, visit www.SusanGunnSolutions.com.

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9. Do the people you share life with encourage an ethical lifestyle or weaken your ability to choose the right thing?

My own personal self-imposed questions are: "Am I living a life worthy of the space I am consuming? Am I making a difference in whatever has my attention? Am I focused on myself or what is most important?"

I have lost many loved ones in my life, and in their absence, I feel compelled to live more fully. I have most often asked if what I am doing is fulfilling my purpose for being alive.

I maximize my life by adhering to my own personal code of ethics.

- I choose to live my life with integrity.
- I choose to not do anything in the shadows that

I do not want exposed with bright light.

- I choose to be a blessing, not a curse, in every situation, with everyone.
- I choose to not put on appearances, but to be authentic in nature.
- I choose to speak the truth, regardless of how hard it is or how it may make me look.
- I choose to be compassionate to all people, at all times.

Having a Code of Ethics in your practice aligns employees to the same set of standards, establishing core principles for that practice's success.

But it all starts with you. Having a personal Code of Ethics establishes core principles for your life. No one writes it for you or forces you to follow it. It is simply your choice. ■

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF DENTAL OFFICE MANAGEMENT

AADOM
WHERE DENTAL LEADERS ARE BORN

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

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1. Participate in the development and in the advancement of our profession.
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