

**Dr. Jeffrey Galler**

### **On the Dangers of Giving Advice**

You're flattered, of course.

When a colleague asks for advice, you, naturally, are very pleased. "How bright he is," you think proudly, "to recognize how he can benefit from my sage wisdom."

But, beware: there are dangers inherent in trying to be helpful. Remember that George Bernard Shaw counseled, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

In a magnanimous effort to help my fellow dentists avoid advice-giving pitfalls, I have classified these dangers into three categories. Your advice may be:

- 1- Used against you.
- 2- Used inappropriately.
- 3- Used for too long a period of time.

**The good advice you offer may be used against you**

“Jeffrey, I need your help,” pleaded Jimmy, a talented, handsome, personable and unmarried endodontist, “every time patients hear that I’m single, they torture me. They all have sisters, nieces, or granddaughters that they insist I take out on a date. What should I do?”

“No problem,” I responded wisely, “just say ‘Thank you Mrs. Patient for thinking of me like that, but I’m seeing someone right now.’”

“That way,” I concluded, “patients won’t be insulted, but they won’t pester you with blind dates.”

Jimmy, the endodontist, thanked me profusely. Several weeks later, he brought some x-rays over to my office. One of my part-time dental assistants said to me, “Wow! He’s cute! Would I love to go out with him!”

I called Jimmy and suggested he call up my very bright and beautiful assistant, who was also an aerobics instructor.

“Uh, I’m sorry Jeffrey,” he replied, “I’d love to, but I’m seeing someone right now.”

### **Your excellent advice can be misunderstood and misapplied**

My good friend Sammy, a successful orthodontist, was troubled. “Every time I turn around,” he complained, “the parents of one of my

patients is trying to sell me life insurance. These salesmen are relentless! They never take no for an answer! I don't know how to shake them off!"

I realized that I could help him, because I, too, had struggled with the very same problem until I developed the perfect solution.

"The difficulty here," I advised Sammy, "is that you can't insult the guy who's paying for the braces, but you have to make it absolutely clear that there is no possible, remote chance of him succeeding in selling you insurance."

I explained to Sammy that when confronted with an unwelcome solicitation from an insurance salesman, I have a standard response: "My sister is married to an insurance broker and he takes care of all my insurance policies."

"But Jeffrey," Sammy sounded puzzled, "you don't have a sister!"

"That's right," I confided conspiratorially, "this is a stratagem, a little white lie, that keeps pesky insurance salesmen away. Even the most persistent salesman will realize that you simply cannot go against your very own family, and he'll leave you alone."

My friend thanked me for my pragmatic solution. Some time later, the orthodontist and I were at a cocktail party. I realized that my advice was misconstrued when I overheard him say to someone, "Oh, no thank you,

sorry but all of my insurance policies are taken care of by Dr. Jeffrey Galler's brother-in-law."

### **Your advice may be accepted as everlastingly engraved in granite**

At a recent dental conference, I was delighted to bump into a fellow dental school graduate whom I hadn't seen in 25 years.

He complained that he was under a lot of stress in his practice because a large percentage of his crown and bridge work often loosened and needed to be recemented.

"What cement are you using?" I asked.

"Why, I use the same polycarboxylate cement that you said you were using," he answered.

I explained that I hadn't used that cement in over two decades, and, as pointed out in the dental literature and in continuing education courses, that product is inferior to several generations of other materials.

He glared at me accusingly. He demanded, "Don't you think you should have called me to tell me that?"

**In conclusion**

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that this article doesn't stop anyone from trying to help a colleague.

So, if anyone asks you for help, my advice would be to...

On second thought, don't listen to me. Just do whatever the heck you want.