

RED, WHITE, BLUE, AND BRIGHT SMILES

Creative July Ideas to Boost Patient Engagement and Office Culture

July is packed with opportunities for your office to connect with families, raise team spirit, and create engaging social media content that feels fun and meaningful. This year is an extra special milestone because the Fourth of July marks America's 250th birthday!

Creating a patriotic theme in the office during July can help build excitement for both kids and parents. Offices can decorate with red, white, and blue, encourage team members to wear festive outfits, and incorporate fun additions like top hats, star sunglasses, or themed scrub accessories. July 1 is the perfect day to kick things off with a team dress-up day and social media photo opportunity for the holiday. Families love seeing the personalities behind the practice, and festive team photos often perform well online because they feel authentic and approachable.

The holiday also provides an important opportunity to share safety reminders with parents. Fireworks, sparklers, and summer celebrations can quickly lead to injuries, especially for young children. A simple social media post reminding families to stay safe while enjoying the holiday can go a long way. Parents hear those reminders every year, but they still matter!

And here's another opportunity to get creative: Worldwide Art Day is on July 10! This could become a month-long dental-themed art contest that engages patients and parents. Offices can invite children to create artwork featuring toothbrushes. Encouraging kids to design their "dream toothbrush" or invent a new flossing gadget can make oral health education feel exciting and playful, and don't forget to incorporate social media!

For younger children, offices can provide printable coloring sheets so everyone can participate regardless of age. Once completed, artwork can be displayed throughout the office to create a colorful and welcoming atmosphere. Some practices may even want to hang the toothbrushes cut out from the artwork sheet from the ceiling using floss for a fun little touch! You can also create a toothbrush-themed border around the office walls or dedicate a "Smile Gallery" section in the reception area. Sharing entries on social media throughout the month can increase engagement while helping young patients feel celebrated.

National Sugar Cookie Day on July 9 offers another excellent educational opportunity. While offices may not want to hand out sugar cookies, they can absolutely use the theme to start conversations about sugar and oral health. Visual displays tend to make the biggest impact, especially with children. Practices can

create posters or displays showing the amount of sugar found in sodas, sports drinks, cereals, cookies, and other popular snacks.

Using sugar cubes or visual representations of sugar can help families better understand how much hidden sugar children consume daily. Even foods marketed as "healthy" can contain surprising amounts of sugar. These displays work especially well in hygiene areas where team members can use them during patient education conversations. Offices might also tie the theme into the art contest by having children draw tooth-shaped cookies or decorate smile-themed coloring pages while learning about healthy snack choices.

Looking ahead to August, Planner Day on August 1 is a great reminder for dental teams to evaluate their systems and organization. By this point in the year, many New Year's resolutions and office goals have either gained momentum or quietly faded into the background. Planner Day creates a natural opportunity for a midyear check-in.

Offices can use this time to revisit systems, improve efficiency, and reduce stress for the entire team. Reviewing scheduling workflows, opening and closing procedures, equipment maintenance checklists, and communication systems can make daily operations smoother and more predictable. Many teams benefit from using templates and standard operating procedures as starting points rather than building every process from scratch. Having organized systems helps create consistency, improves accountability, and ultimately supports a better experience for both patients and staff. You can find systems' templates and many helpful checklists for your office in the Member's resources section in the Members area.

Summer provides the perfect chance for your office to combine creativity, education, and organization. Small seasonal activities can strengthen team culture, encourage patient engagement, and help families feel more connected to the practice while reinforcing healthy habits in a fun and memorable way.

Happy Fourth of July!



Rhea

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Brain Rot Be Gone

SHARPEN YOUR MIND IN A SCREEN-OBSESSED WORLD

Ever finish a long scroll session and feel ... off? Sluggish, distracted, maybe even irritable? That hazy mental state has a nickname: "brain rot."

While it's not a clinical diagnosis, experts agree the effects are real. Too much low-effort content (endless scrolling, quick-hit videos, or repetitive feeds) can leave your mind feeling dull, unfocused, and overstimulated all at once.

What's Happening in Your Brain

Your brain thrives on challenge, but when it's constantly fed fast, easy dopamine hits, it starts to adapt and not in a good way. **Your focus weakens, your patience shrinks, and tasks that once felt simple, like reading or even holding attention, start to feel harder.** Over time, this pattern can chip away at memory, decision-making, and motivation. In short, your brain gets used to "quick and easy" and starts to resist anything that requires effort.

Yes, You Can Reverse It

This isn't permanent. Your brain is incredibly flexible, and with intentional changes, you can start to feel sharper again. One of the

most effective ways to kickstart that shift is by stepping away, even briefly, from constant digital stimulation.

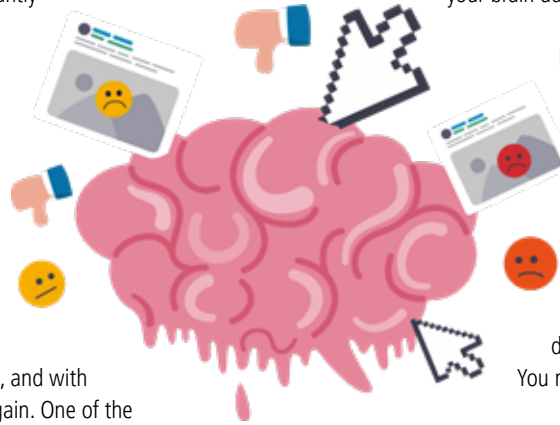
A Simple Reset That Works

A temporary break (at least 72 hours) from fast-paced content can help your brain recalibrate. During that time, lean into slower, quieter activities. Take a walk without your phone. Sit down with a real book. Let your mind wander a little. At first, it might feel boring or a little uncomfortable. That's okay because that's just your brain adjusting to a new rhythm.

Rebuilding Your Focus, One Day at a Time

Once you've reset, you need to be more intentional. Challenge your mind regularly. Routinely read something that makes you think deeply. Try puzzles, learn a new skill, or simply spend time in real, uninterrupted conversation. Even a small daily effort can strengthen your attention span over time.

Give your brain something better to work with. Slow down the input, raise the challenge, and stay consistent. You might be surprised how quickly the fog lifts.



SITUATION OF THE MONTH

Dear PDTA Pro,

July 12 is National Simplicity Day, and many dental teams need smoother systems and clearer accountability in the office. What are some simple ways practices can reduce confusion, improve teamwork, and organize daily responsibilities without creating extra stress?

—Ready to Simplify

Dear Ready to Simplify,

This sounds like the perfect reminder that sometimes the best way to improve an office is to make things easier, clearer, and more consistent for everyone on the team, as we mentioned on the cover of this newsletter.

Create Clear Systems and Responsibilities

One of the largest causes of frustration in a practice is confusion over who is responsible for what. Simplifying your systems starts with clearly outlining daily responsibilities for every position in the office. When tasks are assigned

and expectations are consistent, accountability naturally improves.

This goes beyond front desk duties. Think about your opening and closing routines. What does each team member need to complete at the start of the day? What responsibilities should be handled before leaving? Creating simple checklists for every role helps eliminate overlap, forgotten tasks, and last-minute scrambling.

Rotate Shared Office Responsibilities

Another easy way to simplify office dynamics is by rotating shared responsibilities. Tasks like checking bathrooms, tidying the reception area, restocking supplies, or helping with end-of-day cleanup can quickly become frustration points if the same people are always handling them.

Consider assigning these duties on a weekly rotating schedule to keep responsibilities fair and balanced across the team. Not only does this prevent resentment, but it also encourages everyone to take ownership of the practice environment.

Keep It Simple and Consistent

Your goal should be to create simple systems that remove confusion and help everyone work together more efficiently. When each person knows their role and responsibilities, the office runs more smoothly, stress levels drop, and teamwork improves naturally. Remember: Sometimes, the smallest changes can create the greatest impact.

—Pediatric Pro

When's the last time you explored the Member Resources area or Monthly Pearls? Go to our website and discover helpful tips, tools, systems' templates, checklists that can help organize and practical practice insights today!

PUMP PRICES GOT YOU STRESSED?

GIVE THIS A READ BEFORE YOUR NEXT FILL-UP

Watching the gas pump climb higher and higher can feel like a punch to your wallet. However, there's a positive way to look at it, and you don't need a hybrid or a total lifestyle overhaul to save money on fuel. With smart habits and small tweaks, you can make every gallon go farther and keep more cash in your pocket.

Drive smarter, not harder.

Aggressive driving habits like speeding, rapid acceleration, and hard braking can significantly reduce fuel efficiency. In fact, driving faster increases drag, meaning your engine has to work harder and burn more fuel.

Instead, aim for steady speeds and use cruise control when possible. Slowing down, even slightly, can make a noticeable difference over time. Smooth driving doesn't just save lives, it saves you money, too.

Keep your car in shape.

Think of your car like an athlete ... if it's not in prime condition, it won't perform efficiently. Regular maintenance, such as oil changes, clean spark plugs, and proper engine tuning, helps your vehicle use less fuel to do the same work. Don't overlook your tires either. Even slightly underinflated tires can hurt fuel economy, while properly inflated ones can improve it and extend tire life.

Lighten the load.

Your car isn't a storage unit! Carrying unnecessary weight forces your engine to burn more fuel. Even an extra 100 pounds can reduce fuel economy by around 1%–2%. Roof racks and bulky cargo also create drag, reducing your car's aerodynamic efficiency. If you're not using them, remove them to achieve better fuel economy.



Plan and combine trips.

Short trips on a cold engine use more fuel than one longer, well-planned outing. That's why combining errands is such a powerful (and simple) strategy. Try grouping your grocery run, school pickup, and other stops into one trip. Not only will you conserve gas, but you'll also save time. It's a win-win!

Take advantage of savings opportunities.

Many gas stations offer loyalty programs that knock a few cents off each gallon, which adds up over time. You can also shop around using apps or local price comparisons to find the cheapest fuel nearby. Even minimal differences per gallon can lead to significant yearly savings.

HAVE A LAUGH



INGREDIENTS

- 1 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp chili powder
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 1/4 tsp onion powder
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 tsp sea salt, divided
- 1 lb flank steak
- 2 tbsp olive oil, divided
- 1 small red onion, finely diced
- 1/3 cup cilantro
- 1 ripe avocado, diced
- 1 tbsp lime juice
- 8 small flour tortillas

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat grill to medium heat.
2. In a small bowl, combine first 7 seasoning ingredients with 1/2 tsp sea salt.
3. Brush steak with 1 tbsp olive oil and sprinkle seasoning mixture on both sides.
4. Grill steak for 2–4 minutes per side.
5. Remove steak from grill and let it rest.
6. In a bowl, stir together 1/2 tsp sea salt, 1 tbsp olive oil, onion, cilantro, avocado, and lime juice.
7. Heat flour tortillas on the grill.
8. Slice the grilled flank strip into 1/4-inch strips. Assemble your tacos with the onion avocado mixture and enjoy!

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A Hero With No Name

The Stray That Cracked the Case and Vanished

Many individuals don't want the fame that often accompanies courage and heroic actions. Some disappear before they can ever get the credit they deserve, but their actions remain in the headlines long after the event has passed.

At the beginning of the year, Louisville police responded en masse to reports of a missing 3-year-old boy. They searched far and wide, using drones and helicopters to locate the child, but were unsuccessful.

As they continued searching the area, an unfamiliar dog caught the attention of one of the officers. It started barking, which prompted the officer to follow the dog and investigate further.

"It would bark at me to tell me to hurry up," exclaimed Officer Josh Thompson. "It led me all the way to the backyard. At this point, I'm thinking, OK, this kid's in the backyard."

The dog quickly led law enforcement to a car off the property, then sat near its back bumper. Within moments, the officers saw the boy in the passenger seat and instructed him to unlock the door. He quickly jumped out of the vehicle and bear-hugged his rescuers. When they turned their attention back to the proud pup, it was nowhere to be found.

The story broke a month after the event, when police officers released the bodycam footage, but no one has been able to confirm where the dog came from or who it belonged to.

Some people claim that the dog was the boy's guardian angel, while others theorize it belonged to the owner of the vehicle the boy was found inside. Regardless of the dog's origin, one thing is for certain: It will forever remain a hero in that boy's eyes.

