



## Are Side Gigs The Unsung Hero Of Dentistry?!

Meeting Laura was serendipity. I had just launched my site and had texted one of my best friends from dental school to share the news. She was excited, not just for my content, but to see that we were both actively seeking tools to stay happy in our careers. She mentioned taking a professional development course through the [Metro Denver Dental Society](#), led by Dr. Laura Brenner.

Dr. Brenner is a dental career coach, avid speaker, and founder of [Lolabees Career Coaching](#). Although she no longer practices dentistry, she is changing the culture of dentistry by addressing burnout and prioritizing joy.

Her secret to a happier dental career? Get a side gig.

After experiencing the stress of dentistry, she realizes, "I just need to have fun, I need to play." Initially, she'd searched for career options that would help her exit dentistry, but the pressure tied to that outcome hindered her. "Something shifts in us when we take away the pressure. Just have fun, just play with different ideas," Brenner says.

The beauty of the side gig is that it allows you to pursue different passions, and even create an alternative career path. But you don't have to quit dentistry to do it, you can do both.

"I think a side gig is the best cure for burnout because it allows you to do less dentistry, [have] less dependence on dentistry, and more freedom," Brenner continues. "For so many reasons, dentistry isn't as heavy because you've got a perspective that there's more out there in the world."

Side gigs can bring more fulfillment, whether we love what we do or are burnt out. Trust me, I've experienced this first hand. Even when I loved dentistry, my passion for it overshadowed so many other things I loved, and didn't make space for. So how did Dr. Brenner find hers?

She started doing what she's termed, "dating your career," which means, essentially, playing with different creative outlets, based on interests that you find to be fun. The same way we date a person before choosing them as our life partner.

Brenner won the speaking contest *Dentistry's Got Talent* with this concept. She also had a travel and food blog, and did weight loss coaching. She dabbled in different interests, admitting, "You never know what one door is gonna open next. And it wasn't like my third door was the answer, it was like my 20th door." These small steps eventually led to her coaching career, which unfolded organically for her.



Dr. Brenner created a system that directs dentists toward their passion and potential projects. “We start on your limiting beliefs and your mindset, and then once you give yourself permission, we look at who you are, and what’s important to you. There’s specific exercises I walk people through,” she explains. “Pick one [idea] and [I] break that one idea into small steps, so that you can actually get from point A to B to C, and make it possible.”

Brenner emphasizes addressing our beliefs, saying, “It keeps coming back along the way over and over again.” The process may be designed to help identify another passion and get that business off the ground, but it’s truly about shifting our mindset, fostering creativity, and emphasizing fun.

“I think when we get in touch with our creativity, it doesn’t have to be like painting or playing guitar. It’s just creative thinking, then we begin to see the world differently,” Brenner adds.

The key for her was shifting from the perception that she was stuck, to being hopeful that something greater existed for her. She broke through the limitation that dentistry was her only career option, admitting, “Dentistry is hard. If I can do this work, I can do anything. Now it’s just figuring out what I want.”

Dr. Brenner pushed through 10 years of clinical dentistry before pivoting into a new field. “It’s not just that I’m burnt out by [the] work,” Laura explains. “It’s actually that this isn’t the right work for me.” It takes a great level of honesty to acknowledge and admit that. She expresses the obstacle this brings, sharing, “I think that’s our challenge, when we’ve invested so much in this [career], and you get here and realize that it’s not for you. It’s pretty inconvenient to have to go with that truth.”

Laura now helps other dentists achieve a career that is more fun for them. She helps her clients with burnout, and those interested in changing their careers. Her Facebook page, *Dentist Side Gigs*, hosts thousands of dentists who have created or are searching for their side gig. This community shares ideas, relishes in each other’s successes, and encourages those who have just started on their journeys. “We don’t have to make things complicated. If you find someone who can help you, there’s no better way to do it than [to] use that assistance,” says Brenner. When you want to try something new, you simply have to trust yourself, and “Give yourself permission.” She reminds us that even if what you try isn’t the thing that brings you immense success, “It’s been empowering to take a step.”

A community of dentists helping each other explore passions and a fabulous mentor behind it all? Sign me up.