




IRONDDS

James McCreight, DDS

“Swim 2.4 miles... bike 112 miles... run 26.2 miles... BRAG for the rest of your life!” This has been the moto of **IRONMAN** for a number of years. **IRONMAN** is one of the more strenuous physical and mental activities a human can endure in a single day involving the three disciplines of swimming, biking and running. **IRONMAN** is the “big daddy” of multisport or better known as triathlon. Sure there are shorter versions of a swim-bike-run out there, but those that seek to push the envelope of personal and mental fitness (and health to a degree) will attempt and sometimes finish an **IRONMAN** distance triathlon.



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There are obvious physical benefits that can be gained from IRONMAN training. However, IRONMAN training becomes a way of life that goes beyond race day. In fact I have found that my IRONMAN experience created habits for me that go hand in hand with running a successful dental practice. Hopefully my experience will inspire a few that might want to test their physical and mental strengths and possibly join the elite few that are called IRONMAN. More importantly, I want my experience to show how IRONMAN might create a few habits of success in your dental office.

IRONMAN, St. George, Utah, 2011: I had successfully completed a difficult 2.4 mile swim in very cold water in early May. At just mile 15 of the 112 mile bike I incurred x2 flat tires at once! Anyone that incurs a flat in the middle of nowhere on a bike knows the panic that sometimes sets in as whether you have the right equipment to fix it. In IRONMAN it is all about the finish and x2 flat tires can turn into a DNF (did not finish) in a short period of time.

The bike segment of IRONMAN has demanding cutoff points that must be met or your race day is over with no smiling photo at the finish. Good news is that I had rehearsed how to fix a flat under the pressure of the clock and went on to finish IRONMAN, St. George, my second IRONMAN finish. I was prepared to handle adversity under pressure.

How do YOU handle adversity? In truth how you handle adversity is how you live life. Are you one that blames or are you one that accepts responsibility and meets the challenge head on? It is a fact that something will go wrong during IRONMAN race day. After five IRONMAN finishes I have learned this to be true more than once. Sometimes it is as minor as forgetting a specific supplement that you train with to as major as being disqualified. Being prepared both mentally and physically for adversity is important. Practicing multiple times the changing of a flat tire was part of my mental training for IRONMAN. Sure the flats I incurred at St. George were unfortunate as they were caused by tacks being thrown on the race course (common at some IRONMAN events), but ultimately were handled. Although it turned a decent bike split initially into one of my all-time worst, I still was given a chance to complete another IRONMAN finish.

Often in dentistry we are faced with adversity. I create checklists on major dental procedures such as a full mouth case. These checklists serve as a mental rehearsal so when things do not go as planned in the dental office you do not overreact from the stress by throwing instruments or worse blaming your dental ceramist. Again you can rehearse just about any scenario in your head and practice mentally how you will meet the challenge and succeed. How do you handle adversity?



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I think it was mile 15 of the marathon segment of IRONMAN, Florida that I came across a gentleman that was 80 years old. It was my reality that I was in discomfort physically and it really was messing with my head. So there was the 80 year old keeping a decent pace, but it was apparent that I would soon pass him. In passing I asked, “How is it that YOU are competing in a full distance IRONMAN?” His response was simple. “Everything I did in my 40’s allows me to compete today!” Wow, what a life lesson!

Are you planning with the future in mind? What are your goals for your dental practice for 2015? Do you discuss these goals with your team? IRONMAN is ULTIMATELY about goal setting and meeting those goals over time. It really is surprising WHAT the body can accomplish with a structured plan and working with people that understand where you are going. Often I have found with IRONMAN training what you do consistently on a daily basis predicts the outcome on race day. In other words, IRONMAN race day becomes a long training day. Successful outcomes in dentistry are the same. Whether it is a smaller procedure such as a quadrant of bonded ceramics vs a Neuromuscular full mouth restoration the outcome should be the same with daily goal setting and surrounding yourself with a team that shares your goals of the future.

IRONMAN finishes are filled with bleachers of cheering fans and of course professional photographers capturing your moment of success. Regardless of the amount of pain or discomfort near the finish of a 140.6 mile IRONMAN journey the last mile for me always involves gratitude to those that have inspired me to dream big.

Some days in the dental office can be like an IRONMAN finish where both mental and physical limits are stretched. In fact if you have not had a single day like this you probably are not pushing the envelope like many fellow LVI alumni. So when you get to the daily finish line remember the dentist that you have become and express gratitude to those that have inspired you to make big goals. Remember the importance of daily planning and goal setting and realize everyone faces adversity not just IRONMAN athletes. For many IRONMAN can simply be a long day of swimming, biking and running. For the elite few, the IRONMAN moment in dentistry may be helping someone smile comfortably for the first time in years and feeling that sense of professional accomplishment that lives with you for a lifetime. Now go out there and capture YOUR IRONMAN moment!