

## The Bucket List

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I recently attended a local conference in Memphis put on by an organization that deals with aging. The keynote speaker was a witty and funny woman in her late 50's who happens to be in charge of a festival known as Memphis in May. While there are many aspects to this festival, the crux of the month-long event is a weekend music concert attended by approximately 40,000 people. Sorry for this digression but I promise this will all come full circle.

You might be wondering what this woman in her 50's, who organizes a festival that, in part, caters to people in their teens to 30's, could have to talk about at a conference focused on the aging population. Even though this group deals with decline and eventually death, she chose to speak about life and living.

The topic for the talk was creating a bucket list. For those of you who do not know what a bucket list is or have not seen the movie of the same name starring Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson, a bucket list essentially is a list of all the things you want to do before you die. In the movie, instead of being something that creates sadness, the act of carrying out the bucket list brings the lead characters to life and shows them and the audience how to live.

Listening to the keynote speaker talk about some of the items on the bucket list created by the characters in the movie as well as her own, made me think about what my bucket list might include. What would I

like to do before my time comes to a close? Where do I want to travel? What do I want to accomplish personally and professionally? Below you will find the top items on what is to be my bucket list.

### **1) Do something extraordinary!**

I like to think that I accomplish this goal every day when I am seeing patients. Think about what we can do first, as optometrists and second, as clinicians that specialize in pediatrics, binocular vision and vision rehabilitation. We can give the gift of sight with glasses and contacts and the gift of vision through vision rehabilitation. What other specialty in our profession has the potential to affect the outcome of a patient's life? Take myself for example. Without the help of both Dr. Eliot Forrest who diagnosed my binocular vision disorder and Dr. Joel Waldstreicher who performed the therapy after Dr. Forrest's death, I would not be writing this article today. We have the power to do this for the thousands of patients that are seen in our offices every day.

### **2) Give back to the profession of Optometry**

There are so many ways to do this that the opportunities can be overwhelming. I have chosen to become active in COVD on several levels and spend countless hours a week dedicated toward making the organization and its members a success. It does not matter what you do and for whom you do it, but as the Nike commercials used to say, "Just Do It." Contact your local Lions club, go on a VOSH mission, be part of COVD, AOA, AAO, and state organizations in some way. Just don't sit idly by and let others do what you should be doing. Be part of the process instead of letting it pass you by.

### **3) Live long enough to watch my children get tortured by their children!**

As I sit here and type, my children are tearing apart my house. Luckily I have some time to clean before my wife comes home in a few days. Hey, I love my

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children, but 5½ and 3-year-old boys keep me on my toes and suck the energy from my body. I have been told that it will get better sooner rather than later, but I am still waiting. By living long enough for the circle of life to touch my children, I would have had the opportunity to teach thousands of students and affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. The longer I breath, the greater my impact. I love going to work 99.99% percent of the time and would not choose to spend my life doing anything else.

#### **4) Help others to better themselves**

In a past editorial in this very journal, I spoke about being a mentor to those going through the fellowship process.<sup>1</sup> This is just one of the ways that I accomplish this item on the list. For me, mentoring is an ultimate giving of yourself. You give your time, resources, and knowledge so that others can succeed. This affects not only them and their practice but indirectly affects the patients that they treat. This is how I choose to accomplish this task, but there are so many alternatives from tutoring a child to read to helping a friend land the perfect job.

#### **5) Write a book**

For an academician, the writing or editing of a book is the ultimate goal. I cannot give out the details on this project, but this item on my bucket list will need to be replaced sooner rather than later. Thank you to everyone (you know who you are) that is making this dream a reality.<sup>2</sup> I expect everyone to buy at least ten copies and yes I will be happy to sign your copies for a nominal fee.

#### **6) Be a lifelong learner**

Read, read, read! Discuss, discuss, discuss! I will never stop reading and never stop discussing the topic of optometry with anyone who will listen. I am lucky enough to have a library and librarians at Southern College of Optometry that are second to none. I can take out books ranging from Kraskin to Borish. I can access thousands of articles, both present and past. I acknowledge that a majority of you do not have such resources, but there are some simple ways to succeed at being a lifelong learner that do not include sitting through CE lectures. This includes reading journal abstracts and articles online at websites such as PubMed and joining a discussion based listerv or social networking site such as Sovoto, the DOC listserv or reading MainosMemos<sup>3</sup> (a blog dedicated

to research on children's vision, binocular vision, and those with disability).

On PubMed, you can search literally thousands of journals. You have the opportunity to purchase these articles if you want the entire text and many journals are open access so they are free to the public.<sup>4</sup> The DOC listserv created 1½ years ago connects approximately 350 doctors all over the world. You can pose theoretical questions or case scenarios and get the assistance of some of the greatest minds in our specialty. While the emails can be numerous depending on the day and topic, you can pick and choose what threads to which you will devote attention. If you would like to learn more about or join the DOC listerv, please contact me at mtaub@sco.edu.

#### **7) Honor those that have taught me and whose shoulders I have stood upon along the way**

There are direct and indirect ways in which I think I have already accomplished this item on the list. By simply doing what I do for a living, I am honoring Drs. Forrest and Waldstreicher.

Since arriving at Southern College of Optometry in 2007, I have been fortunate to have some of the best mentors that have dedicated their entire lives to the pediatric, BV, and vision rehabilitation specialties. In 2008 and 2010, two scholarships were created through the college to honor their accomplishments. Drs. Glen Steele and Al Fors were honored with a scholarship in pediatrics in 2008 and Dr. WC Maples was honored with a scholarship in optometric vision therapy in 2010.

These scholarships will create an opportunity for future generations to learn of their legacies. If you would like to contribute to either or both of these scholarships please contact the Office of Institutional Advancement at Southern College of Optometry. I am happy to have been a part of the creation of these scholarships.

#### **8) Help cure a devastating disease**

I fully admit that I will not be the one to cure cancer or rid the world of diabetes, but I can be one of the thousands of optometrists that are attempting to reduce the incidence or completely eliminate amblyopia in children through the InfantSEE<sup>®</sup> program. InfantSEE<sup>®</sup>, conceived in 1998 and created officially in 2005 now has approximately 8000 participating doctors of optometry. Over 70,000

children under the age of one have been examined as of this writing. If you are not part of this program, you should ask yourself why. Not only are you giving back to the community, you potentially can save a child's life.

### 9) Visit Australia and Europe

Every four years, a conference takes place that I have to admit took me by surprise this year. The quality of speakers, the facility and the planning of the 6th Annual International Conference of Behavioral Optometry was astonishing. Doctors from around the world participate in this conference which occurs every four years, rotating in location among the United States, Europe or Australia. This past April, it took place in Pomona, California. I met and was able to become better acquainted with doctors that I had only known via email and the DOC listserv. The Optometric Extension Program Foundation with Bob Williams in the lead put together a great program. Four years from now the conference will take place in England and four years later, it is time to go "down under" to visit Australia. I cannot wait to cross this item off of the bucket list in 2014 and 2018!

When I set out to create my bucket list I thought it would be difficult to accomplish. I thought there would be a disparity between those items on the list that were personal versus professional. This did not turn out to be the case as there was a melding of the two in many cases.

In looking at many of the items on the list, I have accomplished some of them completely and several partially. Of the ones completed already, I will keep working to simply do them over and over as many times as possible as the profession of optometry, specifically the pediatric, binocular vision, and rehabilitation specialty affords me that opportunity. Being only 35 years old, I realize that I have many years left (hopefully) to keep working on my bucket list. I may add new things to achieve and just a few may be removed from the list, but the core goals in my personal and professional life will remain the same.

I hope in baring my soul to you in this manner that I have provoked some thought in all of you about what might be on your bucket list. I challenge you to make your list and work towards accomplishing those goals. Be creative in making your bucket list and even more imaginative in finding ways to complete each task. As in the movie and for the keynote speaker from the aging conference, my list does not make me sad to know that my life will eventually end. It allows me to live it to the fullest every single day. I hope it does the same for you. Let me know how it goes!

### References

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