

Building a Life by Design: From Dental Burnout to Lifestyle Freedom

Drs. Becky Steinbach & Schuyler Van Gorden: Ep #557



Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

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Dr. Becky Steinbach

Schuy looked at me and said, you know, what do you think about selling our dental practices and going to South America for a year? And it took me all about 30 seconds to say, sure, I'm in. And so that's what we did.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

Not the response

I expected.

Dr. David Phelps

Decades ago, I hustled to grow my dental practice and real estate empire. Society patted me on the back and every new deal and patient reinforced the success they said I had. Then my daughter Jenna was diagnosed with leukemia. Nine years, several intense chemo treatments and years of epileptic seizures, my daughter was given one more miracle, a life-saving liver transplant. In that hospital, I realized I wasn't successful. I had money, I had real estate assets and a business, but the only thing that mattered was time with my daughter.

In that hospital room, I decided to sell my business, leave active income and sustain my lifestyle with my real estate assets. Now, Jenna is healthy and all grown up and me, I am teaching others to do what I did. And I continue to uncover the principles, strategies and lessons we can apply in business and investing to create ultimate freedom for what matters most to each of us. Welcome to the Freedom Founders podcast.

Doctors Rebecca Steinbach and Schuyler Van Gordon are not just dental professionals. They're an unstoppable married duo who've intentionally crafted a life of autonomy, balance, and purpose. Today, they share how they transition from the chaos of clinical overload to a freedom-focused lifestyle that aligns with their values. From burnout in early practice to leaving it all behind to rebuilding once again, this time differently. Rebuilding.

not on the pillars of traditional and monetary success, but of purpose, impact, and fulfillment. This episode offers powerful guidance for healthcare entrepreneurs seeking to build their futures on their own terms. Please welcome Dr. Rebecca Steinbach and Schuyler Van Gordon. Hello, everybody. It's my pleasure to bring to the forefront today a conversation with two people that I have really become.

I guess I should say intrigued to know because of like who they are. Interesting people that are living lives in my opinion at the forefront of what I'm all about. It's like having freedom and options and sovereignty to make choices and decisions not based on what you know society or the industry standard would be but about what's important to us and I'm pleased to have doctors Becky Steinbach and Sky Van Gordon with us today talking a little bit about their journey which I hope to bring out if I do a good job here I hope to bring out

what I think are the interesting points about kind of a decision tree that they've been working on and really been part of their whole life together and their practice together, I think, is I've watched them more through different situations well before I had the opportunity to meet them. And that's where I wanna go first. So Becky and Skye, take all this back a little bit to earlier in your dental careers and what you did earlier. And then I know you took a break and enjoyed some real freedom and then where you are today.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

I mean, Sky and I, kind of have an interesting origin story. We both went to the same dental school, but we didn't know each other in dental school. Sky graduated four years ahead of me. So we had a mutual friend who in 2010 introduced us on a trip to Belize. So Sky and I actually met each other in Belize and Schuyler was practicing here in the valley that we are now. I was practicing down on the front range of Colorado. So we had a two-year long distance relationship until

We decided we kind of liked each other and wanted to spend a little more time together. But Schuyler was a solo practitioner, kind of wearing all the hats in his practice. I was in a partnership with, in my practice and my partner, he was getting ready to retire and really, really big practice I was involved in and wasn't really something that I wanted to take over solo. Schuyler and I were coming back from a wedding, I think in October and Sky looked at me and he said, you know.

What do you think about selling our dental practices and going to South America for a year? And it took me all about 30 seconds to say sure I'm in and so that's what.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gordon

Not the response I expected.

Dr. David Phelps

Not typical. ■ My first question is, what were you both doing in Belize? Was this a CE course or?

Dr. Becky Steinbach

No, no.

Dr. David Phelps

I didn't think, not that you couldn't, but I didn't think it was.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Yeah, definitely nothing to do with dentistry. Everything to do with having fun and enjoying. Yeah, a group of people.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

and fishing, fishing focused for me.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Yeah.

Dr. David Phelps

Well, so I had to bring that out because that's what I know about you. You know, I know that you are super serious and very, very dialed in on your practice. And we can talk a little bit more about what you do there. I know there's some things that Becky that you're wanting to ■ evolve and still be in patient care, but I know that about you. So I know your practice, ■ high level, high caliber, ■ high touch experience, all the things that most doctors in this would say.

That's a great practice. But the other side of these, what you started out with was, well, we met each other, not at a CE course, which is where I was meeting each other, right? Maybe that's back in the day, how we found our mate, many times that happened. But you were there just enjoying the spirit that you both have. And I don't question the fact that when Scott said, hey, let's go travel, you said, I'm in. So then what happened? So how long did this travel break from dentistry?

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

So this happened in 2012, David, and I'd been kicking the tires because to be honest, I had burned out and I had been a solo practitioner for 10 years and had run through two years of nonstop employee turnover. I don't think I had a day that I wasn't training for two years and it ground me where I had nothing left to give. So I needed to take a break and step away. And so I talked to a practice broker and he said, well, Schuyler, he goes, me nine months to sell your practice. And you're in a small mountain community in Colorado, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Two months later, I got a big check and no job. So yeah, so my exit happened very quickly. I was at a point in my life where I needed to get away from dentistry. I would be honest in saying that I wasn't very particular about who inherited my practice. I just wanted to move on and explore whatever else was out there in my life.

Yeah, Becky ended up actually taking about eight months to sell hers. It was quite a bit longer and the kind of the thought was that hers would go much quicker. And so then basically once

we were both free and clear of our dental practices, we rented both of our homes, just one year leases, and we bought a one-way ticket to Costa Rica. And we ended up traveling throughout Central and South America for the next 12 months to the day. We came back, we left May 31st and we came back June 1st the following year in 2013.

And yeah, I we visited 17 different countries, just had phenomenal experiences.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

We really truly are intent when we left was actually to never come back to the US. I mean, we were looking for a new place to live, looking for a reboot in life. And just as we traveled along, mean, myself in particular, I just grew to love being back home a lot more. I understood that being in the United States was the best place to be. So I was like, yeah, I think I want to go back home. And think Schuyler, I don't know, I don't think he'd still be down there. I think he realized too.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

mean,

it's been sleeping in a different bed, you know, pretty much for a year straight, you know, and just carrying everything that you need to exist on your back. And puts things in perspective, you know, a little bit. And so that was very interesting when we had to come home and go through our storage units and look at all of the things and possessions that we had accumulated over, you know, and not being that old. I mean, we were just in our late thirties when we when we went on this venture. But yeah, we had accumulated a ton of stuff. And yeah, and fast forward, we've got even more stuff.

Dr. David Phelps

So the stuff that you stored for a year, it didn't need for a full year miraculously. you got along without it. You came back and you didn't like pare it down. You just kind of kept it and then added to it.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

Well, was interesting because we had two full households. then when we were separate, when we got back from our trip for a couple of months trying to figure things out, and then we kind of made the determination that Becky was going to move up to Glenwood Springs, where I was. And so we had basically two identical households and two posters, two everything. And so, yes, we did get rid of half of everything. Yeah, because we didn't need multiples. But yeah, just, you know, was pretty amazing what little you need to exist on and how happiness and fulfillment.

you know, just came along with it.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

happiest year of my life was that trip. I mean realizing how little I needed to be truly happy. It was phenomenal.

Dr. David Phelps

There's so much to be said there. I'm really glad we kind of started here. And I'm not saying I'm a poster boy for this at all, but I like you. I believe in more minimalism today than I ever have in my life for the same reasons. I feel like you entered the conversation and backed me up or say what you think. I think that we put pressure on ourselves as skilled, educated people who should be able to

create, produce a better than average lifestyle, whatever that is. And so we go do it to whatever level. Again, I don't judge anybody. I'd be the last one to judge somebody for some of the decisions I've made in life. But when it comes down to having ■ more, less, lower stress, ■ more peace of mind is the less stuff that we feel like we have to carry and support. ■ And you proved it. I haven't done what you've done. Now, let me be fair to everybody. You don't have kids.

So we have to place that there. So if you had kids to take off a year and go travel, kids that needed support, you wouldn't be able to do that. But nonetheless, I'm kind of future pacing here. Why can't we all look for a point in our lives when we can potentially pull the rip cord to some degree, slow down, cut back, maybe start a transition out, because we don't have so many needs that we thought we had.

back to what makes us happy, what gives us joy in life, what makes it happen. And I think that's, you've developed that conclusion and really have a definition of that probably much better than most people do right now.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Well, and I mean, truly, I don't know. mean, it's interesting when we when we built this practice, the chiropractor down the hall from us, he and his wife and their two young kids did exactly the same thing we did for a year. mean, they went, I mean, Scott, yeah, I mean, I think it's it's all I think I think we get pigeonholed, you know, and again, this is from a no kids perspective. But I think I think as professionals, we get pigeonholed into thinking that, you've got to do this for consecutive decade after decade after decade when

Why not? You know, mean, our life gets built in spurts. I mean, we have these bursts through life and it's why not take a mid a mid career retirement? You know, we as dentists, we have we learn this firsthand. We have an amazing skill set that does not go out of style. You know, I mean, we we bowed out for a year, didn't touch a single handpiece, came back, took a little more time and built another phenomenal dental branch. I mean, and I think it's it's I mean.

Lord, if we can do it, anybody can do it.

Dr. David Phelps

Before you rush to sell the practice you're tired of, stop. Your practice is still your strongest lever. Not to trap you, but to buy you options. Options to simplify, stabilize, partner or sell on your terms. This November, I'm leading a four-week masterclass designed to help owner doctors like you create margin fast, understand what buyers really value, and build replacement income so you never have to negotiate a weakness.

Ad

By the end, you'll have your own option-ready plan. A clear path for the next two, three, four, five years. Whatever makes sense for you, your life, not just your practice. If you want fewer moving parts, more margin, and a freedom to choose your path, this is the place to start. Reserve your spot today at [freedomfounders.com forward slash masterclass](https://freedomfounders.com/forward-slash-masterclass). That's [freedomfounders.com slash masterclass](https://freedomfounders.com/slash-masterclass). Because freedom isn't selling fast.

that's being ready for any option. And Sky, particularly from the standpoint, you said, you just really hit that burnout. And yeah, I totally get it. With staff turnover, and I think a lot of people are dealing with that to this day after COVID and just all the things culturally that we've seen come to pass, that burnout. But taking a full year off and traveling and then coming back and starting a new practice, but with a new partner. ■ so maybe having a chance to redesign. Because sometimes when we've been with a model,

that is, let's say, worked to a point, but to revamp a model in the same structure, the same environment, kind of hard to do. if you just wipe, I kind of talk about like wiping the whiteboard clean. Because one of my friends, Sean McCloskey says, if you don't like your life, figuratively, figuratively, burn it down and start over. And it's kind of what you had the opportunity to do. You sold, so you left and you came back and started brand new. So what was it like coming back after having a year of just really having this great experience?

coming back and doing something together with someone you really liked each other. This is new. mean, you've been in a partnership, Becky, but this guy had been solo. How long did the enthusiasm for coming back and starting to practice in the Valley where you are today, how long did that last? Did it last quite a long time? mean, some dissipation, but did it stay with you for a while or what changed after a while?

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

Yeah, I think, you know, when we came back, there was obviously just kind of settling in because we had literally spent a year waking up every day saying, we have the freedom to do whatever we want today. You know, we can stay in bed all day. You know, we can go surfing, anything that we wanted to do. And so that was wonderful. And then to come back, we kind of came back to an environment where we had to get our lives back in order, kind of reestablishing our existence here in the States. But we still really didn't have a lot of responsibility. You know, it just says, OK, well, I got to get the cable put back in my name.

You know, different things like that. And so we both ended up doing different things for some time. I became a professional fly fishing guide. I wasn't ready to pick up the handpiece right away. Becky was an associate dentist, you know, for a couple of days a week. And then we did that for probably about the first nine months. And then kind of, I kind of started the idea of that, that I was going to build another dental practice. And it started out, I was going to do that by myself because Becky had a pretty good situation as his associateship. But then I had to.

We didn't have an income for quite a while, traveling and all this stuff. And so we started to kick the tires on building a practice together and trying to get financing and all those things. so Becky had a job. I had to actually get a decent income other than a fly fishing guide. And so I went to work at a federally qualified health center, just a Medicare clinic, basically, and did a part-time dentistry three days a week there. And we were afforded the ability to build and develop our new practice and facility.

while we each were dabbling in these other dental environments in there. I think then there was a lot of excitement because for both of us, we had just stepped into previous existing practices. This is something that we had a raw space that we got to design. Yeah, I can remember. Yeah, philosophically as well as physically. Yeah, I know we spent a Labor Day weekend in its entirety, putting together 96 cabinets. And so we did a lot of it ourselves. We're just trying to be budget friendly and conscious of that. And the enthusiasm once we got the practice started.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

So, stop.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

It was tremendous because it was just Becky and I staring at the phone, hoping it would ring. And then it would ring and say, come right in. And then we'd be like, all right, you want to be the dentist? Sure. I'll be the assistant. And then the next patient we would switch. And so we did that back and forth, just the two of us, for a number of months. And then finally, we finally need someone to answer the phone because we're getting a little busy. so then it's just kind of through the last 10 years, it's kind of continued to evolve and grow to the point where we're now maximized our facility and we're just like.

Kind of have to plateau our growth, we're at a good spot.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

But as far as the enthusiasm, how long did the enthusiasm of rebuilding this last? We're gonna be celebrating year 10 this coming November. I wanna say year seven, think year seven, yeah, is when that peaked and we're like, oh wow, here we are again, kinda dealing with similar issues that we've had post-COVID, dealing with.

the high cost of living in our area. ■ again, I think a little bit, yeah, think dental burnout, I Schuyler has, has, has reached his capacity for dentistry. And so now we're looking at our next, you know, I mean, which we thought, I don't know, I guess, I think maybe we thought it would be longer than 10 years, but you know, we're not putting a lot of judgmental energy around how we're feeling about that. It's just, we've built it, man, we did it well. And.

Yeah, I think that we were looking for our next career retirement, you know, our next mid career retirement because Schuyler and I are going to go on to do different things. And so here we are. It's just seems as though both Schuyler and I, think every 10 years, it seems like we've, we've reinvented ourselves and not intentionally. think it just happens naturally for us.

Dr. David Phelps

Well, and to you gave yourself permission to do it, which is huge. You know, they call it the seven year itch for a reason guys. Just keep that in mind. Just put it on the calendar and just know that every seven years you're gonna have to flip the switch somewhere. I wanna go back to one thing and then I go to the future. Cause that's, think interesting discussions. You mentioned Sky when you sold and certainly Becky did the same thing when she sold out of her partnership. You got a big check, but no more income.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

Right.

Dr. David Phelps

I think that's the scary part for everybody. As long as we're able to work and produce income, you we can float, we can float. And certainly the two of you took that full year off and knew that, you you weren't producing income, so you were depleting savings, you know, capital. But that was okay because you knew somewhere you were going to go back and you'd produce income. So really taking that gap. But a lot of people would say, man, you know, if you take, take a year off or you're not being as productive as you can in those

those years where you shouldn't be really productive, you're going to pay for that down the road. I don't sense any of that from you.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Man, I mean life is short. I mean, you know, I mean it is yeah, I mean it was yeah, we were but we were we were conscious, you know, I mean granted we were traveling in at a time and in an area where things were cheap, you know, I think I mean I want to say how much did we spend collectively that whole year? I mean 40 40 grand. Yeah, I mean it was yeah, I mean because we were budget traveling. That's what we did. We wanted a budget travel experience.

Dr. David Phelps

Gosh, we should all go do that.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

We run public buses.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Because that works for us. You know what I mean? That's that's that's we like that that side of things. But you know, it wasn't it. It wasn't off of our mind, but you know, yeah, we did. We did that trip for a purpose to live life and living life comes with a cost. Yeah, you know, I mean, yeah, and we're OK. We're OK with that because I think we were having this. I think we were actually having this conversation in our fit call the other night.

All of us in this profession were producers, were entrepreneurs. We're always going to be employable. No, we're always going to make money. If any of us in this profession or within our Freedom Families Group need to make money or want to make money, you will find a way. That's right. It's not resourceful. Yeah, we're too resourceful. Maybe it's not going to be at the levels that we're used to as as as practicing providers. But at some point, that's OK.

Yeah, how much do you really need?

Dr. David Phelps

Well, I just going to say that that's what we talk about, how much is enough. Not for a final end game necessarily because we've got a lot of people like yourselves that aren't ready to quote retire where you just do nothing. You talk about your next week, next week can involve still some level of patient care, which Becky and I know that's on your forefront. Sky has his ideas. Where I'd like to go is let's, we've been having some discussions. Have you been involved in

the pit debates regarding pros and cons of selling versus staying yet? that come up?

Dr. Becky Steinbach

We did that. We did that on Tuesday. ■

Dr. David Phelps

So I'm sure you had some great discussions there, but from your own situation, I know that because you both got that itch about, we gotta do something else. We're seven years a little bit past that and it's time for us to figure something else out. So give the audience here, the listeners, a little bit of the context of what we've had conversations about over the last number of months as you've been made a consideration, is this a time to sell?

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

Yeah, I mean, that's definitely been a roller coaster. We kind of live in the moment a little bit. And I would tell you that I've never been an individual. It's like, I've got my five-year goal, I've got my 10-year goal, and maybe to a fault. But we kind of, as we did kind of entertain a second, okay, well, when would I like to be done practicing clinical dentistry? And I did kind of come to a definitive decision at age 55. And so that as we kind of had these discussions between Becky and I, it ended up being about two years out. And I said, hey, I can do this for two more years. Dentistry has been good to me.

Give a couple more years of the best that I've got and then we'll just transition out. But we have gone back and forth as we've gone through this process. ■ We have listed our practice. It received tremendous interest initially. That created a little pucker factor for us. We're like, wait a minute, we had two years in the back of our mind. Not two months. We've gone back and forth and back and forth and really the cohorts that we did over the summer just the timing couldn't have been better.

for us to participate in that, and especially to the exit strategies and things like that, we were able to bounce a lot of these different ideas and the emotions that we were having off the rest of our group and gain some very valuable insight and input from our colleagues. ■ And it's helped us find clarity ■ and come to peace with whatever happens and happens, and we're gonna be okay with it. And the greatest thing that I think we've looked at is that we're in control of this decision and how that factors out and moves forward.

So I think there has been some fear, you know, from all different modalities, whether it be a financial fear, a fear of what are we doing next, you know, a fear of if this doesn't work now, is it going to work in two years on our timeframe? And I think we've done a good job of putting those fears aside and just say, hey, you know, we're just going to let this kind of play out. And if it plays out ideally, wonderful. If not, we'll pivot and, we'll come up with a different strategy.

Dr. David Phelps

So at this point, you put the practice up for sale because you thought it would take a good two years for anything meaningful to happen. You got a number of strong interest, some offers and decided, well, that's a little too quick. We weren't really ready to take it that fast. If you got an LOI with a number on it, you don't have to give me a number. I'm not gonna give you a number, but let's say, is there a number that would be high enough where you just look at

each other go, okay, we gotta take this and go.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Yeah.

Dr. David Phelps

There is a number. Okay, so those folks that are out there that are making offers, you just need to make it higher. I'm just... Make it higher. Imagine waking up one day and not having a practice to run. No patience, no charts, no 6 a.m. staff texts. Just space to think, to breathe, live the life you've put off for years. But here's the truth. You don't stumble into that kind of an exit. You build it intentionally.

That's why we created the Exit Strategy Playbook, a free, rudely practical guide for practice owners who want more than just a payout. You want peace, purpose, financial security, and a path that honors your values. Inside the playbook, you'll find how to align with your spouse, what your numbers really need to look like, deal terms that protect you, and how not to lose your identity when you hang up the coat. This is your literal blueprint for exiting on your timeline.

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We're talking about your next. ■ Becky, you willing to give a little bit about some of thoughts you've had about what your next is? Because I liked what you were thinking. Is that OK to?

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Totally, yeah, yeah. I have, you know, just through some of my surgical training that I've taken over the years, I've used a lot of, I've trained a lot with Dr. Rick Miran. He's a fantastic guy when it comes to using, you know, blood concentrates and PRF and lasers and things like that, as far as regenerative bone healing and stuff like that. Well, the beautiful thing about all of that is that all of those modalities using lasers and platelet-rich fibrin works really well in the facial aesthetic space.

And so I have that's going to be my next is I always say that I want to continue seeing patients, but I want to do treatments that they are excited and super pumped to get. So putting needles in people's faces for different reasons as far as natural facial aesthetics, ■ just because that's it's I enjoy it. It's going to allow me to kind of maintain that that touch point with patients and just provide a totally.

I mean, a service still within the same sphere, but in a totally different modality. And so I am in the process of getting that of my next set up. I've gone in, state of Colorado requires that I get an esthetician's license. I'm now a certified esthetician. I'm going to be starting up a side business. It's got its own name, its own business entity. I have a medical director. I'm getting ready to launch my scheduling, my website, all of that. And so that's, I'm going to see where that takes me.

It's just gonna be something fun and it's gonna be something that's gonna bring me a lot of joy and excitement. So I'm really pretty pumped about it.

Dr. David Phelps

I can feel it in your voice. It's there. Skye, for you, keeping a touch on patience or we'd be happier just touching fish.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

Maybe a little bit of each, David. You know, as I said, I think, you know, what Becky's got going on, this, the reality of this has been in the works for about five years. And so it's finally kind of getting in its growing momentum and now we're kind of at the final push with this. And I really haven't had any involvement other than just to be there to support her and encourage her and say, yes, we've been talking about this for five years. Let's get it going. Let's get it going. then to the reality of it is, if Becky really enjoys this, the reality was this can be much more profitable than dentistry ever was. ■

Dr. Becky Steinbach

per hour, you know.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

Yeah, not a per hour basis and things like that. so, you know, I think as this becomes, as we transition out of clinical dentistry, I know that I'll have a role in managing some of Becky's business. I simply, run business here just from a financial aspect and things like that. So I'm sure that I will lend support there. I might get into just doing sleep, you know, and just focus. I've been doing a lot of continuing education on that lately and just really trying to make that determination of do I want to focus?

just really what I do. So I still get that patient interaction. I'm not picking up a handpiece. I'm just taking digital scans and delivering sleep appliances. You know, so that non-invasive, I might do that. But at the same time, David, I know that I've got a lot of skills and good communication skills. And I just, I might dabble in a couple of things. I might get a job for the Division of Wildlife. And if I don't like it after six months, I can quit, you know, in dentistry, you're unafforded that ability. And so I might dabble and try a couple of different other things. And I said,

I'll do that with the attitude that this isn't to replace my dental income. I paid my dues in dentistry. We lived below our means for a long time and planned, saved well. And through what we've learned through Freedom Founders, that's going to position us financially for our future. Anything else that we do on the side, that's just going to be gravy. ■ And I think Becky has the potential to make a lot of gravy. I might make a little, but as I said, it'll just afford us to do some other things.

Dr. David Phelps

No pressure, Becky.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

It's fine regardless, even if it didn't.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Well, it's the one thing that Schuyler and I are actually trying to work through kind of our relationship dynamics when it comes to earning money. I have told Schuyler that I love working. I'm really pumped and super excited about this. And if there's a financial aspect that comes with it, I...

I've been trying to connect with Schuyler that it's okay for him to not do something right away. I want, know, which I think is a difficult space for him to be in. You know, I think just from a marriage dynamic, he still feels the responsibility to, I think, kind of be the breadwinner within our household. But I would love nothing more for whatever I do to pay for all of his fishing trips for the rest of his life.

I mean, because I know how much he loves that. know, mean, Schuyler has been nothing but my champion in everything that I've wanted to do. And so I'm yeah, a part of I'm doing this. I'm doing this my next for me, but I'm also doing it because I just would be thrilled that it provides him his passion. Yeah.

Dr. David Phelps

where you just create a lot of envy across the face here. You're both very fortunate. You both have created something that's, I'm not gonna say it's magical, you just, know, with intention into what you've done. So kudos to both of you. Couple last questions here as we wrap this up. This has been great. Thanks so much for the insights. I think it'll be helpful for a lot of people just to hear how you've given yourself permission to really live your life as fully as possible and give yourself permission to make changes. Let's talk a little bit about, and not so much,

for you too, because I don't think you really have done this, but the cost of indecision. I see it a lot with people who, again, hardworking, diligent, responsible, almost to a fault, and not be willing to try anything different or even come close to doing what you did by taking a year off or gosh darn, even taking a couple months off. It's scary to do because we feel obligated to make sure we're responsible and things won't go right without me or I'll be missing something. The cost of indecision, painted with a broad brush.

And do you think that's something that people should look at? And particularly, if there is a cost to indecision, who's paying a price?

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Yeah, mean, is you know, I mean, is there ever going to be a perfect time? You know, there there never is. I mean, there was. Yeah, I mean, it's just it's I think time flies by so fast that the next thing you know, my gosh, it's been another five years. And at what cost? You know, I watched it. A kid, you know, I didn't spend enough time or I didn't go to the sports or I didn't do this. And I mean, for me, it's it's I see my parents aging quickly.

You know, and it's kind of like, man, I want to spend some time with my parents. don't don't see them enough. That's that's the one touch point that that we have. Our parents are still alive. But yeah, there's there's there's never going to be the perfect time. There's just going to be a better time. And so capitalize on the better time. And it's just I think in today's pace of the world, it's so hard to just sit in and be vulnerable and figure out what what feels good to us.

because we have so many expectations put on our shoulders. mean, Skye's, Skye, I'm the much more like, my gosh, this has to be the perfect time. Skye knows that we're always going to land on our.

Dr. David Phelps

Mm-hmm.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

It's just the way we're wired. Since you go back to school days, we were always overachievers. I think most of us in the dental profession are. That's how we got to where we are.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

But yeah, mean, it's, yeah, I think, think too, you we spent so much time being busy, but it's hard to really sit down with that clarity. But that's the one thing that, yeah, this group has actually been able to give us that time and that space, you know, Freedom Founders has, it's given us so many more avenues to think. Yeah.

Dr. David Phelps

You talked very early on our discussion today about clarity. I think clarity is everything in life, but we get so busy in our lives with other obligations and things that we feel like, and maybe some things are very important, but we lose, I think we lose clarity in process, right? And it's just, it's just go, go, go, go, go, and maybe try to make some linear improvements, but to what end? What end do these, whatever linear improvements we're trying to make, squeeze more into the schedule, add more adjunctive services.

expand the opportunity, you know, we can do all these things that we think are gonna be the thing. And most of time they're not.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

I know, Sky, you said, you know, as we've gone through this ups and downs and oh, should we sell, should we stage? What are we going to do? And I loved it the day that Sky looked at me, he said, he's like, babe, he's like, I'm not interested in reinventing this wheel. And I said, all right, great. On the market it goes. Yeah.

Dr. David Phelps

And what great feedback you got without having to make that decision, you know, to put it out in the market and realize that there, at least today, there is a lot of interest for your practice. We don't know two years from now what the environment will be. It could be different, but still, you still got options, right? You're not locked in to a burnout phase that I don't think you're going to let yourselves ever do that. You know, when that feeling comes, it's like, okay, we got to make a move here and it's going to happen.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Well, I wonder too how many people don't even know their options, know, who make assumptions about, you know, what their practice is worth or are there, you know, I mean, just because you put it on the market doesn't mean you have to sell it, you know, but maybe just

what are your options? then and then when we I mean, because we were like, it's going to take two years and here, bam, you know, here it comes. That's when our our minds really had to get clear. And I wonder if that if more people kind of dip their toe in the water.

would that provide kind of the next level of clarity thinking, you know, because things have come to the surface.

Dr. David Phelps

Looking in hindsight, if we would go back five years or if you were talking to having a conversation with a dentist, couple who you seem like they were five years from where your decision tree is now, they were looking ahead and saying, you know, we see a point where we'd like to have our freedom and options, whatever that is defined by them. What advice would you give them? mean, outside of becoming a part of the Freedom Founders Community, of course, but outside of that, what should...

What kind of conversations should they be having that maybe we realize that most people don't have because they just don't know where to go with it?

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

Well, think, I don't know, I think it depends on, you know, people are planners and visionaries and other people live more in the moment. I know that I commented earlier that just kind of, you know, live during the day and I don't have a five year plan, but Rebecca and I, we've gone through this process, you have had opportunities where we sat down and said, you know, where are we going to live when we're 60 years old and 70 years old? And so it has stemmed some of those thought processes and it kind of took us.

you know, making a big life transition or change, you know, to start to think and discuss those things. But, you know, in hindsight, it's, we maybe should have had these discussions five years ago and started to maybe formulate some sort of a plan in a direction as to what, is the next 20 years of our life's going to play out in there? Because yeah, some of it is fun to just do it on a whim and be like, okay, you know, take us which way the wind blows. But at the same time, you know, we've got to be grounded a little bit in some sort of direction moving forward. But yeah, I think this

having those discussions and it took this event to trigger that between Becky and I and maybe other people could just sit down and have that discussion as a couple. Yeah, we needed an impetus to do that.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

think for me, if I were to reflect back to myself five years ago, I would have requested of myself that I maintain the touch points of who Becky is because I became so wrapped up in this practice that I lost my identity and I forgot the things that are important to me and that I like to do. And I think that's also a part of people's fear of transition because they've wrapped so much of themselves up.

in this profession and these practices because, I mean, we've always said that this practice is our child, it is our baby. And I think we took that a little too seriously. And so when the unwinding has to start, that can be really scary because what do like to do? Who are you? I

mean, there would be some times that, I mean that...

On the weekends, know, okay, I finished some of the stuff that dribbled over into the weekend from the practice and I'd be walking around the house. like, I kind of forgot what I even enjoy doing, which was really awkward. And so as people start to ramp up, well, I mean, wish, yeah, all of us need to maintain touch points of who we are, I think through all phases of our career. But as people start to enter this last phase and the exit phase, man, remember who you know, or dentistry maybe took it over.

So.

Dr. David Phelps

I think a lot of people could benefit from going back, not just in terms of their career path, but that's dentistry or other, but just what was the exuberance and inspiration that they started out in life with, like most all of us started out with. And then there is a waxing and waning of that as we do start to lose what really brought us into what we do today. And it's easy. It's easy for that to happen. Very easy. Well, Becky and Skye.

Thank you so much for the time today. I appreciate you, you know, just being open about yourselves and the path you've taken. It's novel. I wish it wasn't so novel. I wish more people could experience what you've done and you're not through. ■ Your journey will continue on and it's going to be fun to watch the iterations of that going forward from where you are today.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Thanks so much, David. We I mean, truly, really wouldn't be here without you and without Freedom Founders. So thank you for everything that you've done.

Dr. Schuyler Van Gorden

giving

us the wisdom and the courage to make these moves and transitions so we can move on and get on to our next in life, which we're excited about.

Dr. David Phelps

It's going to be great. Thank you.

Dr. Becky Steinbach

Alright, take care.

Dr. David Phelps

As I had the pleasure to get to know Becky and Sky over the last two or three years and understand their backstory, which you just got to hear, it really gave me that feeling of true freedom and the ability to pivot, to adapt, to kind of figuratively burn it all down and start over again. Now that's not easy to do, granted, particularly if you have children, more responsibilities than yourselves, which Becky and Sky don't, but they still were willing to look at their life

from the lens of what's missing, what's not there, what are we doing this for during the maelstrom of the chaos of a traditional practice setting that they each had that they both

realized wasn't making them happy. And it takes some time off to re-energize, to re-evaluate, to renew their spirit, then come back once again and rebuild in a different way. That's what drew me to Becky and Sky because that's, I think, the authenticity that we have to bring to the table when we're looking at our own lives.

and to be real about what hasn't worked, even though we're all successful, but how is success measured? How are we really defining success? And it really has to be about who are we to ourselves and to the people that we care about. And if we're not doing that, then what are we doing? The world is full of information at our fingertips, resources, videos, podcasts, books online, hard book covers, Kindle, whatever you want. It's all there today. And there's no reason why we can't access it.

that information. But what's missing from information only is, I think, connection. Connection to real people, to the stories, to the personalities that people bring. And it's those connections that give me meaning to my life. I can take all the resources, the tools, the AI, everything that's out there and put it to use to provide services or products or whatever I might do in my life. But in the long run, it's really who you do things with.

How are you adding to other people's lives? The people you work with, the people you associate with, and the customers, patients, or clients that you serve. Are we doing that in a true form or fashion? That's what I think is important in our lives today. And I would say that being around a community of people that have the same values and same beliefs and same focus on purpose is what helps keep me aligned and not going wayward or straying off course, which can happen very easily. The right people, the right values, the right focus. have been the keys in my life.

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If you're inspired by today's conversation and you're realizing it's time to take ownership, not just of your health, but your time, your practice and your future, then you're not alone. At Freedom Founders, we help dentists and professionals like you build a life where freedom isn't just an idea, it's a reality. If you're ready to explore what that could look like for you, schedule a discovery call with our team. Let's talk about your goals, your vision, and how we can help you create the roadmap to get there. Start your journey at freedomfounders.com.

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