

Dr. Elizabeth Kravig – A Dentist Story

A little bit of good advice can make a really big difference.

Have you ever stopped to think about the path you've taken to become a dentist? What first drew your interest to it? What about the people, places and events that all played a role along the way? If any one of those things had been absent, would you even be involved in dentistry at all? Dr. Elizabeth Kravig's career journey is marked by such moments, and they've mostly taken the form of people – people who offered help and advice that drove her to becoming the successful dentist she is today.

Dr. Kravig was born and raised in northeastern Nebraska, in a small town near the Iowa border called Wayne. With barely more than 5,000 people, Wayne is a textbook example of the American heartland. It's a quaint and friendly town, rich in history and community pride, and surrounded by the picturesque prairies and endless skies of the Great Plains. It's a fine place to grow up, and Liz remembers it fondly.

Dr. Kravig learned at an early age the importance of hard work and study. Her mother was a secretary, while her father was a professor at nearby Wayne State College, where he taught sociology and criminal justice. Quite the academic herself, Liz always had an affinity for math and the sciences. She was particularly drawn to medicine, no doubt spurred by her youthful ambition to be a veterinarian. In high school, when the time came to start seriously considering her higher education goals, she realized being a vet might not be the best idea, given that she was in fact "allergic to pretty much every animal on the planet." So veterinarian was out, but she still had every intention of going into medicine.

During her senior year, Liz's high school held a medical profession day. She and her fellow students were taken to the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha and given the opportunity to speak with students from the various medical schools. When Liz began chatting with some students from the dental school, they offered a very convincing argument that dentistry was the way to go. Despite learning a lot of great things about many medical professions, something about what those dental students had said stuck with her, and helped push her down the path toward becoming a dentist.

With her interest sufficiently piqued, Liz dug deeper. She initiated several conversations with her orthodontist and his assistants, trying to glean every bit of information that she could. During high school, she also underwent an oral surgery procedure to expose an impacted canine. But instead of trying to put that moment behind her, she was

deeply interested in it and wanted to learn more. With every passing moment, Liz became more and more enthralled by dentistry. A career in the field was looking very likely.

Ever the logical mind however, she at least wanted to see what else was out there. As she enrolled at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, she kept her options open. But it turns out the University of Nebraska College of Dentistry was also on the Lincoln campus. One day at the start of her sophomore year, Liz met with the admissions director. During their conversation, the director gave Liz advice to help maximize her chances of getting into dental school, including recommending an intro to dentistry course for undergraduates. "I enrolled in the class the following semester and loved it," said Dr. Kravig. "I decided there and then to become a dentist." Finally, it was settled.

Needless to say, the future Dr. Kravig was accepted into the University of Nebraska College of Dentistry. While in her third year of dental school, she attended a cocktail hour hosted by Midwest Dental at a hotel in downtown Lincoln. "It was a great event, and by the end I was definitely interested in exploring a possible career," Dr. Kravig said. "My main condition was that I wanted to be somewhere near Chicago. The team at Midwest Dental said they would make it work."

When Liz officially became Dr. Kravig the following year, Midwest Dental had a career opportunity waiting for her at their office in Union Grove, a town of about 5,000 people in southern Wisconsin near the Illinois border. "It was admittedly a bit further from Chicago than I had originally hoped," said Dr. Kravig. "But it turned out to be even more perfect than I could have imagined."

When Dr. Kravig joined the Union Grove office, she was taking over for another dentist who was departing. "At first, I was a little nervous about leading this practice on my own right out of school," admitted Dr. Kravig. "But I was never really on my own. Midwest Dental's system of support is incredible. They have experienced dental directors on call that I was able to contact with clinical questions, and other folks assisting with the daily operations of the practice. There is always someone available to help me, no matter what I might need."

Although leading a practice is a big responsibility, Dr. Kravig stepped up to the opportunity and turned it into something great. "My early days with Midwest Dental actually helped me to grow into my new career and develop my skills in a very short time, and now I'm way ahead of where I thought I would be at this point," she said with confidence.

Dr. Kravig's career with Midwest dental has been a huge benefit for her home and family life as well. Liz's husband, whom she had met in undergrad and married during dental school, is an art teacher. Around the same time Dr. Kravig joined Midwest Dental, her husband was invited to student teach at the Union Grove high school to complete his degree. In an even more serendipitous turn, the current high school art teacher retired shortly after, and the job

was offered to Dr. Kravig's husband. Now both of them had steady jobs in the same town, which was a good thing because they became parents soon after that.

"When I became pregnant, I was a little concerned about how it would impact my practice and my career," Dr. Kravig said. "I nervously called the HR department to let them know, but was immediately relieved by all the congratulations and reassurances I received." Dr. Kravig was given a full 12 weeks off when her child was born, and Midwest Dental took care of everything in her absence.

When Liz came back from leave, her practice was waiting for her, just as she had left it. But she decided she wanted to work a bit less to be with her new baby. "I figured that working fewer hours after being gone for three months was a lot to ask, and I was once again slightly nervous when I made the call," Dr. Kravig admitted. "But Midwest Dental came through and made it happen with no issues. I knew some other women in private practice who couldn't get more than a couple weeks off for maternity leave before having to come back full time. But Midwest Dental has gone above and beyond to keep me happy, and I gladly admit that I am!"

Today, thanks to Dr. Kravig's efforts and tremendous skill, the Union Grove practice is flourishing and has grown to a two-doctor practice. As for Liz herself, she now has three children, and life couldn't be better. "I really can't imagine being anywhere else," Dr. Kravig exclaims. "Midwest Dental has stepped up and helped me at every turn, and both I and my family are so much better for it."



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