

Good Stuff to Chew On: Consistency ... Creating a Positive Experience

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It is a fact of life that people tell others about experiences — both positive and negative — that stand out in their minds. If the positives outweigh the negatives (and I am sure there are very few of those in your practice), they will tell their friends about how much they loved that experience. As their dentist, you want them to remember all the good things about you and how well they are treated when they see you.

What have your patients learned to expect from you? What can they count on? For many patients, a visit to the dentist is very stressful, but knowing they can expect a predictable level of high-quality care from you and your staff eases that stress significantly and promotes customer loyalty. One of the best things you can do to assure the success of your practice is to create a reliable and positive experience for your patients whenever they are in your office. You want to capture their hearts. It will build trust and a sense of comfort. And they will be more willing to refer friends to the practice knowing they will receive a great consistent experience. Ultimately it will help make you far more successful!

The question is how can you create a consistent message that will end up delighting your patients? It's a little bit about the product you provide, a little bit about you and your staff, and a lot about attitude. You want your products and treatment to always be the very best and gentlest they can be. You, as the dentist, want to be cheerful and upbeat. And your staff needs to be welcoming and pleasant with an attitude that says they like what they do. And most important of all, place a high priority on creating a memorable service, one where patients are treated in ways that delight them. Here are some ideas that are, when you come down to it, pretty simple:

- Psychologists will tell you most people appreciate hearing their own name from others. Remember to greet all your patients by name and use their name when you talk to them during treatment.
- Talk about something you discussed the last time they were in — a vacation, a promotion, a special party or anniversary, etc.
- Remember those patients who are sensitive, then make sure you use warm water to rinse.
- If they have a neck problem offer to bring out that special pillow for them.
- Remember a favorite magazine and offer it to them while they wait.
- Ask about their dog Fido or their pet cat Fluffy or even whether their tropical fish have had any babies lately! And always remember to ask about their children!
- Consistency in staff is important as well. Many patients feel less anxious and more comfortable if they recognize faces in the practice. When you add new staff, be sure to introduce them as patients come in for treatment.

- Finally, if something goes wrong, apologize right away, but go the extra mile to make it right. If you're running late, give each inconvenienced patient a pair of movie tickets to compensate them for their time. If you made a mistake on their bill, give them a \$25.00 credit without being asked. The key is to develop a trusting relationship.

How do you remember what's happening in your patient's lives? Consider keeping a page of notes in their chart. Then, on the day of their appointment, discuss that special something for each patient in your morning meeting. It should only take an extra minute, but the dividends will be immense. Your patients will have that great, consistent experience every time. Soon, they will think of you as the gold standard of dental care and how a dentist should be. They will learn to settle for no less than the best. And for them the best will be you!

Quote of the Month

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~ William A. Foster

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