



Discover What Patients Really Want and How They Want It

You can be the most wonderful and caring person in the world, with superb technical skills and a great staff, but your practice will not reach its full potential if you and your staff fail to consistently influence patients to accept your treatment plans. Your ability to elegantly influence people is the key that opens the door to your success.

You want patients to identify their own needs. Put them in a position to say “yes.” It is important that you ask questions and listen. You must give positive reinforcement to begin the bonding process with yourself psychologically to the patient.

How do Patients Decide?

When it comes right down to it, there are three forces that push and pull on a patient’s “yes” decision:

- The pushing force of the pain (physical and emotional) they want to avoid.
- The pushing force of the emotional state they are in just before they take action.
- The pulling force of the pleasure they desire.

It is important to understand the dynamic interplay of these action forces and enter the process in three ways:

Discover the pain the patient is experiencing. Amplify it. And show the patient how case acceptance will relieve the pain.

In addition to a visual examination, use questions to probe for problems or pain.
“Are you happy with the appearance of your teeth?”

Once you discover a problem, amplify the emotional pain the problem is causing by asking follow-up questions. “Is the discoloration getting worse with time?”
“Are you ever self-conscious about the problem?” “Do you think the discoloration has any affect on your career?”

Next, solidly link the acceptance of the treatment plan to avoidance of the pain.
“We had a patient named Mary who was in a couple months ago. She had a problem similar to yours. Take a look at these pictures before we did her dentistry. This is how she looks today. She told me she’s absolutely thrilled with

the result and would recommend it to anyone who is thinking about having it done!”

Discover the pleasure the patient desires and link it to case acceptance.

Use questions to accurately discover the unique pleasure each patient is seeking. “How much value would there be for you if your teeth looked like this? Would you be more confident?”

Next, connect acceptance of the treatment plan to the gaining of the pleasure. “Denise, I want you to know that our entire team is going to do everything we can to comfortably provide you with the dentistry you desire so that you can have the attractive smile and confidence you deserve.”

Create a motivated emotional state.

Finally, help patients move into a motivated emotional state so that they will want to accept the treatment plan. When it comes to motivation, where do you need to start? With the doctor and staff! In order to influence others, the doctor and staff must first be influenced to be in an upbeat, motivated state.

Influence is the transference of emotion - and, you can't give away something that you don't have. Bob Dole is an honest and experienced politician. How good is he at transferring emotion? Very poor. How much does this hurt his ability to get his message across? A lot! Great influencers like John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan knew how to convey emotion in ways that got them elected. You need to do the same to get your patients to “elect” your treatment plans.

The Four Pillars of Dental Acceptance

Patients accept dentistry for their reasons - not yours. Therefore, find out what their reasons are.

Patients buy benefits - not procedures; benefits will always be non-clinical.

Patients accept dentistry based on emotions and justify with logic.

It is more important for your patient to feel that s/he is understood by you than it is for him/her to understand your treatment plan.

Validation: Does the Patient Believe You?

A common principle to remember: Patients accept dentistry when they perceive the non-clinical benefit to be of value to them. It is normal for you to think in terms of procedures and for the patient to think of the end result. There is a big difference!

The most important consideration for patients is their perceived value, not the cost. People spend money on what they see as value, not what you see as value. Take time to find this out for each patient.

Asking Questions

You can ask questions both in writing and orally.

Questions supplement - they don't replace a thorough examination and diagnosis.

Be careful about the number of questions you ask a person in any one time period. You don't want to overwhelm the patient.

Remember, we are not "telling" patients what their condition is. We are asking them questions so that they identify their own condition; that way they own the disease problem that is occurring in their mouth.

Summary

Ask questions that get your patients to tell you how they want to end up feeling about themselves, looking to others, preventing future problems or saving money in the long run. When you ask questions and really listen, you will be amazed how you increase the acceptance rate of your treatment plans.

Ask questions regardless of your position in the office. You can ask questions that get patients talking about the end benefits.

Remember, this is not about selling. It's about discovering what people really want and giving it to them with your services. When you have the ability to do that, you will be rich - emotionally and financially.