

Just a Thought

WHERE ARE CHIROPRACTORS FROM?

Barbara Klein

If men are from Mars and women are from Venus, where are chiropractors from? Non-progressive members of the AMA might guess Uranus, but that grade school joke would be quite immature here. Like most earthlings, we chiropractors may have certain similar tendencies, but our personalities, values, ethics (and oh yes, techniques) are widespread. Categorizing personal strengths and weaknesses however allows us to examine behaviors with a common reference point.

In case you have been living on another planet, the popular book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* explores the differences of men and women. It espouses that understanding the myriad of divergences in the sexes can create greater insight and communication. And what could be harder than understanding the opposite sex? Ooh, ooh, I know the answer to that one: how about understanding ourselves and our own moods? Knowing our moods can assist us when dealing with patients, clients and business associates. Oblivious to our moods, we can hinder or jeopardize those precious relationships. What are chiropractors even more proud of than being called bone crunchers (only bones close to the tongue in cheek, naturally)? The relationships with our patients.

John Gray, the author of the *Martian/Venutian* book describes in detail the concepts of Martians (normally men) pulling away, emotionally retreating and entering their "caves." Venutians (normally women) conversely never pull away but instead dive deep into the depths of their periodic "wells" of depression. He escapes condemnation of sexism, albeit barely, by clarifying that these roles are often reversed.

Should you say or demonstrate emotions to a patient such as "I can't care now, I am in my cave" or "deepest regrets, but I've taken a dive into the depths of my well?" Only if you are looking for a friend and confidant, not if you are cultivating a patient base. It seems cathartic and healthy to release our emotions and be ourselves, but the professional office may not be the correct stage. "Being ourselves" may be best reserved for friends, family, and CAs. (We all secretly know CA stands for "Courage Award" for dealing with the moods of that other initialed professional in the office.)

Patients are aware that we are not God (surprise!). They do not expect us in top hat and tap shoes (on stage) and they know we are human. Now the big but: they would prefer us "on stage." This does not mean phony, insincere or histrionic, but rather outgoing, entertaining, upbeat and attentive. Be aware of our Martian tendency to retreat into our cave occasionally or our Venutian propensity for depression can alert us to our moody behaviors with patients. It allows us to acknowledge these moods to ourselves while momentarily suppressing a natural reaction until it can be dealt with (or indulged) at a later, personal time.

Patients (surprise) can be moody also, often attributing their moodiness to pain, and rightfully so. Their moods can also be natural Martian/Venutian biorhythms. This could be a familiar scene. You run out to your CA after the last patient has left and ask, "Did I do something to Mrs. H?" "Did we have billing problems with Mr. B?" "Did Ms. M. say anything about how her treatment is going, or if she isn't happy?" "Did Joe say what's bothering him?" Your patient was not their "normal self"

today and you fear that it was something you said or that it relates in some way to the office. Sometimes we may "say the wrong thing." But unless you are a natural born Don Rickles-like character, chances are it was the patient's time for their "cave" or "well." Most likely at their next visit they will be, what you consider, "themselves again."

Remaining consistent in your behavior as a doctor (pleasant, upbeat, professional and sympathetic when clearly appropriate), allows the patient to come back "as usual." Over emphasis on their bad day(s), or moods may cause embarrassment or irritation. Cave dwellers particularly may not even recognize their behavior as a "mood."

John Gray continues his fable of Martians and Venutians by explaining that each understood the other's differences while they lived on separate planets. When they built their spaceships and moved to the earth, amnesia set in. They forgot they were creatures of different habits. Only then did trouble arise in establishing relationships or communicating in a beneficial manner. Being of a melting-pot culture, I recognize few people who are completely Martian, completely Venutian, completely Gonsteadian, etc. It is helpful however to recognize patterns in the behavior of others (or ourselves) and respond to them with more understanding and insightful tools. (Yes Martians, the Venutians can use tools.) Patients may be from Mars or Venus, but with the appropriate interactions, along with wonderful treatment, they may think chiropractors are from heaven.

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JULY 1996