

## Adult Education and the Chiropractor

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In most communities there is a demand for knowledge in subjects which we chiropractors possess expertise. In fact, our educational background and approach to healthcare gives us special qualifications as teachers of health concepts. The point of this article is to encourage those who are inclined toward teaching, to become involved in adult education in their communities.

Adult education has many forms, but one common denominator is that most of the students are highly motivated individuals. In many ways, adult learners are a teacher's dream. They do not attend class because it is a requirement or because they need so many credits to graduate. Adult learners have graduated, and they have many other things going on in their lives (job, family, etc.). They attend class because they are interested in the subject being taught. They want to learn. Because of this orientation, adult education can be a very rewarding experience for both the student and the teacher. Each community has its own unique avenues of adult education. Many cities have their own community school designed specifically for this purpose. Local colleges, recreational departments, health clubs, and churches usually have opportunities for adult learning also.

Why would the chiropractic professional want to become involved in local adult education? One of the greatest rewards is simply the process of teaching a group. It is enjoyable to have a positive impact on people in this capacity. It is also quite rewarding to develop mastery of a particular body of knowledge. Because of your expertise, people directly seek you out and you are asked to speak before various groups on the subject you teach. Teaching a class generates a great deal of public exposure. Not only do you have direct contact with a different group of students each quarter, teaching will result in media exposure as well. Last year I had three different interviews on local television because of the interest in one of my classes. The general message of adult education involvement is this: "Here is a doctor who is taking the time to share some of his knowledge with the community." The profession as a whole benefits because as your community comes to know you through your teaching, your very character dispels the negative stereotypes of our profession, which have been propagated by the AMA, NCAHF, and other chiropractic "hate" groups.

How does one get involved in adult education? The first step is to come up with an idea of what you would like to teach. There may be some aspect of human health in which you already have a great deal of interest and expertise. This can be a good place to start, but don't limit yourself to this area. Make a list of 20 or 30 other possibilities. I enjoy teaching workshops on postural stress, "How to Work on Your Seat and Feet," and a ten hour course entitled, "Stretch Don't Strain," which covers not only stretching, but a variety of related lifestyle factors. The possibilities for classes are limited only by our imaginations. Consider some of the following: "Sports Injuries, and How to Avoid Them," "Back School," "Neck School," "Knee School," "Shoulder School," "Nutrition for Active People," "Healthcare Perspectives," "Stress and Relaxation," "Helping Your Child Achieve Fitness," "Running/Walking for Fitness," "Understanding Arthritis," "Osteoporosis: What you Need to Know," "Help for Headaches," etc. The class you want to teach may not even be related to health and fitness. In deciding what to teach, it is important to ask yourself a couple of questions. Is this class something people in this community will be interested in? You may be interested in "The Neurobiology of the Vertebral Subluxation Complex," but will enough people from the community

share your enthusiasm and sign up for the class? Another important question concerns your comfort teaching the subject. Is teaching this class consistent with the professional image you have chosen to project? If you have a very formal image, you will probably not be comfortable teaching a class on stretching or running, which would require a more casual attire.

The second step is to select an adult education organization in your community that you would want to be a part of, and present your idea for a class to the director. Most community schools are continually looking for new classes to satisfy the interests and needs of their students. If your idea is good, you should be welcomed with open arms. Before presenting your class idea, it would be a good idea to check to see that you are not duplicating a class already offered by the organization.

The third step is preparation. I would advise spending at least three months in preparation, even if you think you know everything there is to know on the subject. Do your homework. Read every significant book and article in print pertaining to the subject you will be teaching. Utilize your reference librarian and interlibrary loans. Become an authority on what you plan to teach. In structuring your class, always keep your prospective students in mind. They want substance, not sizzle; practical information, not just a bunch of academic details. They recognize and appreciate a first class teacher. Be one.

The final "how to" step is to do it. Teach. Invest yourself in your students and the subject you have chosen to teach. Consider teaching as an extension of your practice and share your knowledge with those in your community who want to learn. Our word, doctor, is derived from the Latin root, docere, which means "to teach." Be the "real doctor" in your community. By investing just one hour a week in local adult education, both you and the members of your community will benefit tremendously.

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