

Do You Practice What You Preach?

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Chiropractic has an interesting characteristic not shared by other health providers. Because we preach a healthy lifestyle to our patients, we are judged by whether we follow that same path ourselves. For example, if you are very overweight and are telling patients they have to exercise and watch their diet, this incongruence will lead to noncompliance. Patients have amazing observation abilities, and they are looking for any chink in your armor in order to discredit you. Remember, trying to sell what you do not own is severely frowned upon. Other examples of perceived incongruence are smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, untidy appearance, and using over-the-counter medications.

These are basic health decisions you are asking patients to avoid; yet many of you clearly show you don't follow your own advice. It is far more probable to have patients do what you do, rather than doing what is simply asked of them. The days of blind faith are over. Consumers are more educated - they ask questions, and most importantly, follow a leader who gains credibility by example.

Here are four strategies for leading patients on the path to wellness by example:

1. **Exercise:** If you have gotten lazy in your own physical fitness, use it as an opportunity to apologize to patients and start anew. You can create fun and challenging fitness contests for patients, and reward those who make the most progress. Most importantly, put yourself in the contest. With our busy schedules, it can sometimes be difficult to find the time and energy to get to a gym. Find a gym buddy who not only will push you to the max, but also will hold you accountable for the commitment you have made.
2. **Get adjusted:** Let patients know you get adjusted weekly. If you have a bottle of Advil on your desk, but expect patients to come in for an adjustment when they have a headache, you have no chance. Talk to patients about your own chiropractic experiences. Also, allow patients to watch you and your co-workers get adjusted. This way, they can see that your entire team is under care. Your family members should also get adjusted regularly; this includes your children. If you are not getting adjusted, what kind of message are you sending to your patients?
3. **Nutrition:** Don't leave a can of soda or a huge cup of coffee on your desk, and then expect patients to omit this item from their diet. Have a source of water for your patients at the office and encourage them to drink more. And don't forget to drink more yourself. Have a basket of fresh fruit in the waiting area that patients can have as a snack. Hang a bulletin board so you, your doctor, and your patients can post healthy recipes for others to try. Also post current articles on nutrition. As the saying goes, you are what you eat. Would you rather be perceived as an apple or a doughnut?
4. **Attitude:** Has a patient ever come into the office and asked you what was wrong with you? We all have our bad days, but the last thing we want is for our bad energy to rub off on our patients. You should always let them see happiness, excitement, passion, and love for chiropractic. If you find yourself in a funk, try giving yourself this simple attitude adjustment: Go somewhere private and spin in a circle three times while chanting "Attitude adjustment, attitude adjustment, attitude adjustment." You may feel a little dizzy afterward, but the outcome will always be a smile on your face and a different attitude. Attitudes are contagious. Treat all patients with respect, sincerity, and warmth, and that message will be

passed on to others. There are very few places where people feel as if they are the center of attention. Make each person's chiropractic experience one in which they know your entire team cares about them and their well-being.

Don't expect others to do what you won't do. Take responsibility for yourself and your actions, and others surely will follow. Your words, your body language, your confidence, your appearance, your posture, and your actions are all reflections of yourself. You have the power to influence others in either a positive or negative way through how you live your everyday life. Therefore, treat each patient with care and respect, and most of all, understand they are coming to you for health. Don't just tell them what to do - show them.

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