

## How Chiropractic Helps Patients During a Recession

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Most chiropractors are fortunate to work for themselves. With the exception of doctors in the military or associates, [most chiropractors are self-employed](#). During difficult economic times, many of us are exempt from work-force reductions; when you work for yourself, you can't be fired.

Recessions also generate fears of job and income loss, especially for those who rely on an employer. Such fear can lead to significant stress and illness. Stress often manifests itself in the musculoskeletal area, which thankfully can be helped by a chiropractor. Thus, these challenging times actually can yield tremendous opportunity for doctors of chiropractic.

I have lived through 13 recessions. I remember an especially difficult time in 1976 when I practiced in Redwood Falls, Minn. Our small community was dependent upon farming for much of its economic prosperity. That year, in addition to the recession, we experienced the first [major drought](#) since 1931. I had just built a clinic, bought a new home and committed to another investment, and then it quit raining.

A farmer in our community died in his front yard, and his death was indirectly attributed to fear and stress. He had told his wife that he only had two years of corn in reserve (a devastating circumstance), walked out in the hot sun and passed away. While this was an extreme example, all of our patients were experiencing stress at unprecedented levels. It became evident that my job was not only to adjust them to bring physical relief, but also to offer an empathetic ear and an environment of relative calm.

An [economic crisis in the 1980s](#) reinforced my emerging view that chiropractic was a healing method that extended beyond the physical. This recession involved a credit crunch similar to the one our country is currently facing, but it was coupled with dramatic increases in the price of farm land. Farmers were mortgaging existing properties in order to expand their crops, and then the price of commodities dropped. Many farmers not only lost their farms, but also their homes. The stress and tension in our community was palpable. I remember the newspaper editor visiting my office for an adjustment and commenting that our clinic seemed to be the only place where no one was panicking. We maintained a calm, soothing and supportive environment, and ultimately became a sanctuary for the community.

What I have learned through these recessions is not to perpetuate fear, but rather to promote optimism and encouragement. Become a friend to your patients. Listen to their concerns, give them advice as appropriate, offer them a reprieve from their anxiety. At these times more than any other, our bedside manner is as critical to patient care as our ability to deliver an effective adjustment. Your clinic is a healing environment, and you should always be poised to heal the body and the mind. Providing respite in these stressful times will not only accommodate your patients' needs, but also help you maintain a thriving practice.

