

## How to Give Patients a "Wow" Experience

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It's essential to the success of the team and the practice for chiropractic assistants to understand their roles and responsibilities. It's all about creating the "wow" experience that will maximize patient satisfaction and retention. Here are a few straightforward ways chiropractic assistants can help cultivate lifelong patients who will be loyal to your practice and refer friends and family.

### Enthusiasm and Positive Energy

Enthusiasm and positive energy are ways we communicate our purpose on a daily basis. From the moment your patients walk in the front door, they can feel your energy. Enthusiasm and positive energy are like magnets and attract patients - sometimes without even having to use words. Low and negative energy can turn patients off.

People usually make decisions based on their feelings. One of your goals as a CA is to create and build positive relationships with your patients. You do that in many ways, such as the way you greet patients, the ambiance or atmosphere of your office, the services the practice offers, your professionalism, the way you dress, your etiquette, your time-management skills and your respect for your patients. All of these have the potential to make a patient feel special.

Your energy must be caring and your attitude positive. You must be focused and present while you are at work. That may sometimes mean leaving personal problems outside the office. This is not always an easy task, but it is required to be a professional and to create an exceptional experience for all.

There are specific ways to keep your energy positive, and they're inherently related to your overall confidence. Know your purpose, use positive gestures, smile, read motivational books or listen to motivational CDs, listen to music that makes you happy, and do nice things for others. Most importantly, do not use negative self-talk. Remember to always believe in yourself, because the way you think determines your true outcomes in life. There are a number of ways to become more confident, including the following:

- *Having a willingness to learn* (which then allows you to educate patients).
- *Role playing.* How do you handle getting patients scheduled to attend health care classes (wellness workshops)? What do you tell a patient if the doctor is running late? What if a patient becomes upset? How do you handle a scheduling problem? How do you make multiple appointments?
- *Practicing what you preach.* Is every chiropractic assistant treated as a new patient when they are first hired? If so, they will know exactly what an exam, consultation and report of findings consist of, and they will understand and learn the value of chiropractic. This will allow you to confidently explain chiropractic to potential patients and engage in conversation with existing patients.
- *Consistent training.* This should be done routinely in and out of the office. Seminars allow for

networking with others while being able to share stories of successes, challenges and strategies. Staff meetings are a great time to role play, problem solve and educate. With proper training in the office, CAs will be able to fulfill their responsibilities in an environment in which they can grow both professionally and personally.

### Office Organization/Appearance

This is critical. Patients will not want to come to a disorganized, messy, stressful office, nor will they want to refer others. Making a positive first impression, especially on new patients, is definitely important. Your goal should be for every patient to have a great experience in your office. To do this, you must have an "A" team. It is essentially about being prepared and organized. Remember, you don't get a second chance to make a first impression!

What does your office look like? If you were a new patient entering your office for the first time, what would you think? A great exercise is to take a pad and pen, walk out of your office and then re-enter as if you were a new patient. Write down your observations (good and bad).

Is your office sign old and discolored, or is updated and impressive? How does the outside of your office look overall? Is it well-maintained and nicely landscaped? Are there plenty of parking spaces in your parking lot and is there easy access into your office?

When a patient walks into your office, what do they see? Is it neat, professional and inviting? What colors are on the walls, carpet and countertops? What is the reception area like? What do the bathrooms look like? Is there reading material? Does your office have healthy and informative information for others to take home? Take a walk through each treatment room and the rest of your office, writing down anything that doesn't look nice and clean. Lie on the adjusting tables and look down - what do you see? Again, first impressions are not always accurate, but they do matter.

What type of music do you play in your office? Music should be soothing or happy so patients feel good. What does your office smell like? Is your office staff neat and organized? Are you always prepared for a new patient with the correct paperwork, neatly organized, or are you searching for all the forms while the new patient is standing at the front desk? And what about your team? Is your team so stressed out that patients feel the tension when they arrive, or are team members happy and enthusiastic, ready to greet each and every patient with a smile?

Your office is an extension of you and your doctor(s). New patients will judge you on their first impression of your office. A stress-free, well-organized, clean and professional office is where patients want to go. Take the time to do this exercise, make changes, and see what happens and who takes notice!

### Patient Education

Patient education is a must. Your ability to educate is directly related to your statistics. Patients and staff learn in different ways. Some are visual learners, some are auditory learners and some learn by feeling. You should take this into consideration when educating your staff and patients. Start with the staff and teach them the chiropractic philosophy. Learning the importance of chiropractic for the team reinforces the doctor's teachings. If the staff "gets it," they can pass it on to the patients.

When a patient begins care in your practice, the CA can support the doctor by giving the patient confidence in the doctor's ability to care for the patient in a professional and quality manner. It is important that the staff believes in the chiropractor and in their ability to change lives. Your patients are very perceptive, and they form their opinion about the doctor before they have even

met them. It is the team's job to support and encourage the patient during their lifetime of care. It is also a great idea to discuss patients' progress during staff meetings so everyone can help in their care. This is where simple scripting can be used with a new patient - before care is started and during care (see table below).

Educating Patients About the Practice: Sample Scripting
"Dr. __ has been successful in treating patients with your identical symptoms."
"Dr. __ has been practicing for __ years and has an excellent reputation."
"I have been working with Dr. __ for __ years, and it is fabulous to see the results and the difference we make in so many of our patients' lives."
"Dr. __ has a working relationship with many primary care physicians. They refer patients to us and we refer to them all the time. If you need medical care, you can be sure that we see that you get it."
"I want you to know that not only have you chosen a very reputable chiropractic office, but Dr. __ was recognized as chiropractor of the [month, year, etc.] by __."
"Dr. __ is excellent, and you will be in great hands."
"If you have ever been adjusted, you are in for a real treat."
"You didn't get this way overnight, so you won't get better overnight."
"Every visit builds upon the next, so it is important to make the commitment to follow through with your care plan."
"Dr. __ has many different ways to adjust patients, so give [him/her] a chance to see what works best for you."
"It is not unusual to get worse before you begin to feel better. Some of our patients see immediate results; with others, it takes a little longer. Please don't be discouraged if you don't see immediate results."
"We have noticed that patients who attend our wellness workshops get better faster and stay better longer, especially when they bring a family member or support person with them."
"Chiropractic adjustments give the body the tools to heal itself."
"Keeping the nervous system in good working condition will help maintain optimal function of your entire body."
"Our staff is rarely sick, even though we are exposed to many people with cold and flu."
"Our staff gets adjusted regularly, too. Adjustments are part of our benefits package."
"At least 65 percent of our patients come to us on a monthly basis to stay healthy and feel better."
"Most of our patients are referred to us by existing patients."
"Did you know that Dr. __ speaks regularly at local schools, corporations and organizations on health, wellness and safety topics?"

Part 2 of this article (July 15 DC) discusses quality control and stress maintenance as ways to maximize your patients' "wow" experience.

