

## Avoiding Flavor-of-the-Month Syndrome: Let Basic Principles Guide You

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So often in our profession we get caught up in the different methods available to help us take care of patients and become successful. There are so many options to choose from that it's easy to become overwhelmed and spiral off in many directions. It's what I like to call "flavor-of-the-month syndrome." We have various techniques, consultants, seminars, workshops, schools and philosophies, all designed to improve our practice. Invariably, new and exciting things come along and we may abandon our core principles. Before you know it, there is just a chaotic flow of options and no principle "system" to follow to help guide us to our final destination.

Recently, I read a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson that really got me thinking about some guiding principles I have learned over the years in practice. Emerson said, "As to methods there may be a million and then some. But principles are few. The man who grasps principles can successfully select his own methods. The man who tries methods, but ignores principles is sure to have trouble." To be successful in health, fitness, business, finances, patient care and life in general, you must have a "system" that follows key principles. Here are some of the fundamental principles that have worked for me over the years.

### Relationships Matter



How you get along with other people and the relationships you build are critical to success. You are first and foremost in the *people* business. Chiropractic is a service industry and you must treat people like customers. They can choose to go anywhere for care, so you had better deliver outstanding service to keep them coming back. Simply delivering chiropractic and getting them out of pain is not enough. Give them an experience worth remembering. What motivates them to talk about your services to others? Wow them so they want to talk about you. What is your uniqueness?

### Little Things Make a Big Difference

The smallest actions and gestures often have enormous impact on your life. Going that extra mile speaks volumes about your business, talent, personality and intentions. In fact, it's often the little things that patients notice and that can put your business on the fast track to success. Small, seemingly insignificant acts are powerful catalysts of change and growth for your practice. Choose different methods of making someone feel special by doing the little things, but remember the principle is to always do it with positive intent.

### Speaking Is Marketing

Marketing in today's economy is nothing like it used to be. Simply posting an advertisement in the paper or phone book does not work. Get up, get out there and start marketing yourself. Giving free informative workshops to the public adds value to your reputation and follows the little-known secret of marketing: giving to get. The success of the workshop is dependent upon giving away information to get people interested in your product or service. Choose a workshop topic of interest to ensure maximum attendance. Keep the speech short and relevant, leaving time for questions and comments. The relationships you form by sharing information and improving the quality of another person's life can never be measured in terms of value.

### Staff Is Key

**Staff will make or break your practice**, period! Do all you can to make your staff feel valued and appreciated, for they are the lifeblood of your business. Develop a positive learning environment that fosters ongoing opportunities for continuing education. It is one thing to get great people; it is another thing altogether to *keep* great people. Staff should feel that they are all part of a team, not just employees who show up to punch a time clock. Do they have input into practice management? Can they approach you with new and innovative ideas to improve the practice? A productive, feel-good environment goes much further than you realize in building a successful practice. That positive energy will attract like-minded energy and you will discover many areas of your business changing for the better. Get rid of the "bottom of the barrel" staff who may be keeping your practice from expanding. These are the negative, dead-weight people who affect the energy of the entire office.

### X Rarely Marks the Spot

When it comes to finding the source of pain, not just the site, X rarely, if ever, marks the spot. So often it's easy to get caught up in treating symptoms and forget to look for causative factors outside the site of pain. Most of the time, the symptomatic area is just a compensation for an underlying, non-painful dysfunctional problem. Take the necessary time during your history and evaluations to look at every aspect of your client's complaint. Remain open to the possibility that some problems may be beyond your scope of practice and a referral could be necessary. Always second guess your initial diagnosis, especially if you do not notice a change in patient outcomes.

### Soft Tissue Is Always Involved

Fascia is always a component in every condition you will see. Invest in learning the soft-tissue system of the body and combine [soft-tissue evaluation and treatment](#) with your manipulation. This relates to the principle of X rarely marking the spot. When it comes to fascial restrictions and referred pain from adhesions, they can be very elusive and you must know the compensation patterns to ultimately correct the problem. Developing soft-tissue skills will enhance your practice and patient care results. This is a textbook example of methods versus principles. There are numerous methods to address soft tissue; I encourage you to find one that resonates with your techniques and philosophy. However, the guiding principle is to understand that soft tissue must be treated, regardless of the condition.

### Personal Development Leads to True Wealth

A formal education will help you make a living, but personal development will make you rich. And rich does not necessarily mean monetarily. You will be rich in friendship, happiness, work, play and family life. Take time to invest in yourself. Read books, listen to CDs, take seminars and workshops, reach out to others and find mentors to guide you. The only book that will never help you is the one you don't read. Reading is fundamental to success. Reach the top level of success by standing on the books you have read. One sentence or paragraph from a book can have a life-changing impact on you. Are you taking the time to read and become better at what you do and who you are? I guarantee your competition is.

Principles come down to what's inside of your core belief system. Find out what that belief system is for you and dedicate yourself to mastering methods. Be true to yourself; have faith; work hard; be persistent; do your best every day; and go above and beyond - and then some - in all that you do. If you have weighed all your options and it makes sense, believe in yourself and follow your gut. Your gut doesn't lead you wrong. It is often scary, but it puts you on the right path. And in the words of success guru Zig Ziglar, "I will see you at the top!"

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