

Put Focus on Your Patients and Lead Your Practice Forward

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When doctors help high numbers of patients consistently for years with excellent results, other doctors want to know their secret.

What is the one factor high-achieving doctors have in common? After three decades of interviewing the best and the brightest, I've found one commonality in this group of ultra-high achievers: *focus*.

I once grilled a doctor about his huge following, asking, "How do you help so many people?" He paused, then replied, "One at a time."

He explained he worked on each patient at the exclusion of everything and everyone else around him, until he was done. Working this way was essential to his success.

I've watched leaders in our profession practice and have received care from them as well. The level of concentration they bring to their art has always impressed me.

B.J. Palmer, in particular, had this quality. Old films from the 1920s, showing him adjusting patients, reveal a man who was absolutely centered. One gets the feeling that if the entire world fell around him while working, he would have continued serving his patient.

Why Is Focus So Important?

Where is your mind when you adjust? The old-timers called extreme focus "being one with the bone." Isn't this the kind of care you would want to provide and receive?

Patients need focused care. They often come to you after experiencing little success with other doctors; they deserve your absolute attention. If you can put everything aside and lend your full attention to them, this may allow them to heal. This amount of caring can be profound and restorative in and of itself.

In remembering the best adjustments I've received, the intense focus, the level of concern, and the precise delivery was life-changing. Our patients will recall the same about us. A few moments of *laser beam* focus can create a memorable event in patients' lives.

When patients are cared for this way, they will repeat their story and chiropractic will keep growing. Isn't this what you want for your practice and profession?

Let Your Life's Work Become a Work of Art

Something magical happens when we are totally involved in our work. It's often been described as "being in the flow" and is one of the aims of the truly successful. Extraordinary people lose themselves in their work. Like great artists, they are in a meditative trance while working, yet they are fully present.

The greats in every field love to experience this state; in a chaotic world, they enjoy moments of absolute clarity through focus.

How to Get There

Often, growth in practice is counterintuitive. A close friend urged me to cut back my hours, saying that if I did, my practice would grow. Although I was convinced he was wrong, I finally reduced my hours. Suddenly, my practice grew. It grew so much that I did it (cut hours) repeatedly. This worked because shorter hours demanded more focus and higher energy. Allowing too much time to get things done decreases the quality of care by letting distractions into the workplace. If you must focus to get the job done, you get organized and do it.

Another counterintuitive way to develop practice focus is through rest. People who don't relax can't muster the intense focus necessary to build a great practice.

These same doctors will protest about the high cost of having someone help them around the house and do it all themselves. By not resting adequately, they lose their clinical edge and it costs them - and their patients, dearly. Intense focus demands a recovery period to recharge and perform at higher levels.

B.J. Palmer often napped in the afternoon. During the remainder of the day, he ran a college, sanitarium, cafeteria, two radio stations and one television station, wrote many books, and developed our great profession. Rest allowed him to be this productive.

Are you well-rested? Discipline yourself to nap, meditate, take breaks and play. Regenerate with regular vacations, seeing friends, and having fun.

[pb]Get Organized So You Can Focus More on Patients

Here are three rules for providing quality service:

1. Patients always come first.
2. The doctor's time is "prime time."
3. Delegate everything.

Patients Always Come First

In times past, patients expected to wait for a busy doctor and would tolerate a poorly run clinic. Years ago, seeing a doctor required hours, but patients waited willingly because it was "normal."

Today, this arrogant behavior is not well-tolerated. Offices are usually better run, and the best offices provide the finest service. When a patient shows up, everything stops. The assistant hangs up the phone or at least signals the patient that it won't be long. The doctor drops their pen. All extraneous conversation stops and patients receive the attention they deserve.

In the best practices, doctors and their staff anticipate every question and need patients may have. They are led through a seamless experience and receive appropriate care without much waiting. Ideally, the patient walks away thinking, "Wow, these people care about me. I can't wait for my next visit."

The Doctor's Time Is "Prime Time"

Assistants in a busy office maximize a doctor's time by minimizing interruptions. Experts in efficiency note that every time someone is interrupted, the time to complete a task doubles. They

also say that interruptions multiply the odds of errors dramatically. In the best offices, phone calls, extraneous conversations and other interruptions are tactfully limited, so the doctor can offer their best. The staff dutifully runs interference for the doctor, so there are no distractions. Does your practice work this way?

Delegate Everything

Ideally, all work that does not require licensure should be delegated. Assuming they can do everything better, doctors can find delegating the most difficult thing to do. Most doctors would rather do it all themselves than allow any aspect of care to suffer.

But when doctors won't delegate, quality eventually suffers. It is inevitable. The greats throughout the centuries all received support from qualified staff. Michelangelo and Leonardo had others stretch their canvas, mix their paints, and hand them brushes. They reserved their attention to the details only they were qualified to perform. Working this way, they contributed a vast body of work to the world.

Learn to hire well, train and delegate. Give aspects of your work to people who can do it and monitor their work. Manage so that you can focus on what *you* do best.

Conversation

No discussion of focus would be complete without covering what to say as we attend to patients, and when to say it. This is often when we lose our focus.

There should be no conversation immediately before, during or after the actual adjustment. Conversation should abruptly stop to allow absolute focus on this event.

Before and after the adjustment, focus and talk about the patient's needs, issues, and benefits of care; answer a question; explain their progress, results, how they adjusted, and how they might feel; and give instructions and suggestions for self-care strategies.

As a rule, the focus of the conversation is on *them*. Is your "table talk" like this? If it gets off track, does it always come back to the patient?

Focus to Build Your Practice

The chiropractic champions have one thing in common: uncommon focus. They offer exceptional care and enjoy extraordinary results through this discipline. This is why patients flock to them. In the end, both doctor and patient benefit.

The patient enjoys wellness and the doctor enjoys their art. Do whatever it takes to center yourself on your patients' needs. Retrain staff, rest more and lead productive conversations. In short, lead your practice forward by managing your attention.