

Successful communication in your daily practice

Part VIII: How to take away the patient's fears

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Hi! I am Dr Anna Maria Yiannikos and I am excited to welcome you to the 8th part of this loved series filled with communication protocols. This series includes the most popular and challenging scenarios that might occur in your dental practice and presents successful ways of how to deal with them—so your patients will always leave your practice feeling satisfied and thinking: "My dentist is THE BEST!"

Each article of this series will teach you a new, easy to use specialised protocol, which can easily be customised and adapted to your own dental clinic's requirements and needs right from day one.

I am here to provide answers to the communication problems you might come across with your patients in your daily practice. These problems can put you in a difficult position, make you lose sleep or, even worse, make you lose faith in yourself and your abilities, which is very common in our field of expertise. Today's challenging topic is… how to transform an anxious patient into a loyal one.

5 revolutionary tips

I am going to share five revolutionary tips with you that guarantee the transformation from an apprehensive patient into a long-term friend of your dental practice. You should always keep the following points in mind when dealing with fearful patients!

1. Prepare yourself

Before your patients arrive at the practice, make sure to inform yourself and develop and in-depth knowledge of each patient's individual fears. Also check with your assistants whether they are aware of the patient's anxieties. In case you are already sitting down with your patients during an appointment, pay particular attention to their facial expressions, their body language, and their reactions in general—if they, for instance, start sweating for no apparent reason.

2. Do not make your patients wait

Let's state the obvious: No one likes to be kept waiting. In addition, being kept waiting in the waiting room for longer than necessary only results in anxious patients getting even more anxious. Every minute they spend alone with their fearful thoughts is a harmful minute.

3. Talk to your patients

By speaking to your patients and engaging them in conversation, you can make them feel more at ease. Use encouraging phrases like 'bravo, the step that you took today is so essential for your health!' or comforting ones

such as ‘don’t worry, I will explain everything you want to know as detailed as possible’ or ‘I will inform you ahead of time in case you are about to feel any sensation or discomfort’. However, do avoid criticism regarding their individual fears by any means possible. For instance, refrain from derogatory or patronising phrases like ‘come on, behave like an adult’. Moreover, discuss the treatment plans with your patients in detail before you start with the therapy. Encourage them to ask questions by saying ‘is there anything more you would like to know? I am willing to give you anything you need in order to make you feel as comfortable as possible’. Take your time to win their trust.

4. Give demonstrations

Take away the patient’s fears by demonstrating the tools that you are about to use in the upcoming treatment. For instance, if you would like to use a drill, a laser, an ultrasound or an airflow—demonstrate the sounds of these tools beforehand. Furthermore, remember to minimise the time your patients spend in the dentist chair. If your patients are already anxious, they most likely want to spend as little time in there as possible.

5. Motivate your patients

After the treatment is finished, advise your patients to immediately book a follow-up appointment and motivate them to take part in a pleasant activity that same day. This will help them to associate their dentist visit with a positive experience. Thus, they are more likely to attend another appointment shortly thereafter, fostering a loyal dentist–patient relationship in the long run.

Isn’t that easy?

Implement the above-mentioned steps into your daily practice and you will notice a significant increase in the number of your patients. If fearful patients had a positive experience at your dental clinic, they will share the story everywhere and with everyone, from friends and relatives to colleagues. If you want to attract more patients, there is no way that is more effective than the sheer power of the spoken word!

This is very useful insight, wouldn’t you agree? I am sure that you are looking forward to the next issue of laser magazine, where I will present the ninth part of this unique series of communication concepts and touch on even more beautiful and interesting topics. Are you curious about what’s next? We will take an honest look at how to deal with your own delays and, in addition, how to transform someone who is constantly complaining into a loyal patient. This is a common and challenging situation that we as dentists face in our clinics on a constant basis. In this regard, I will provide 5 essential tips that will help to cope with these situations more effectively.

Until then, remember that you are not only the dentist of your clinic, but also its manager and leader. For further questions and requests for more information and guidance, keep in touch by sending me an e-mail to dba@yiannikosdental.com or via our website www.dbamastership.com. I am looking forward to our next trip of business growth and educational development!

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Kurz & bündig

Viele Menschen auf dieser Welt haben Angst vor dem Zahnarzt und drücken sich oft gekonnt vor wichtigen Untersuchungen und Behandlungen. Im achten Teil der Serie „Erfolgreiche Kommunikation im Praxisalltag“ stellt Dr. Anna Maria Yiannikos fünf Tipps vor, die leicht umzusetzen sind und es Zahnärzten ermöglichen sollen, Patienten die Angst vor dem Zahnarztbesuch zu nehmen und sie in langfristig wiederkehrende loyale Praxisfreunde zu verwandeln. Als ersten Schritt betont die Autorin die Wichtigkeit der Vorbereitung eines jeden Zahnarztes. Um Ängste effizient in Angriff nehmen und neutralisieren zu können, muss sich der Zahnarzt im Vorfeld umfangreich über die individuellen Ängste seiner Patienten informieren und während des Gesprächs im Behandlungszimmer besonderes Augenmerk auf ihre Reaktionen und die Körpersprache legen – Sensibilität ist hier gefragt. In den folgenden Schritten geht die Autorin darauf ein, dass es wichtig ist, ängstliche Patienten nicht warten zu lassen, mit ihnen zu reden, die zu verwendenden Instrumente im Vorfeld zu demonstrieren und die Patienten im Anschluss an die Behandlungen dazu zu motivieren, den Tag mit angenehmen und entspannenden Tätigkeiten zu verbringen. Am Ende profitiert natürlich nicht nur der Patient, sondern auch der Zahnarzt von den in diesem Artikel dargestellten Maßnahmen. Ein ängstlicher Patient, der bei einem Zahnarztbesuch eine angenehme und positive Erfahrung macht, wird dies vermutlich innerhalb der Familie, des Freundeskreises oder seines Arbeitsumfelds weitererzählen – und die Praxis kann somit neue Patienten gewinnen.