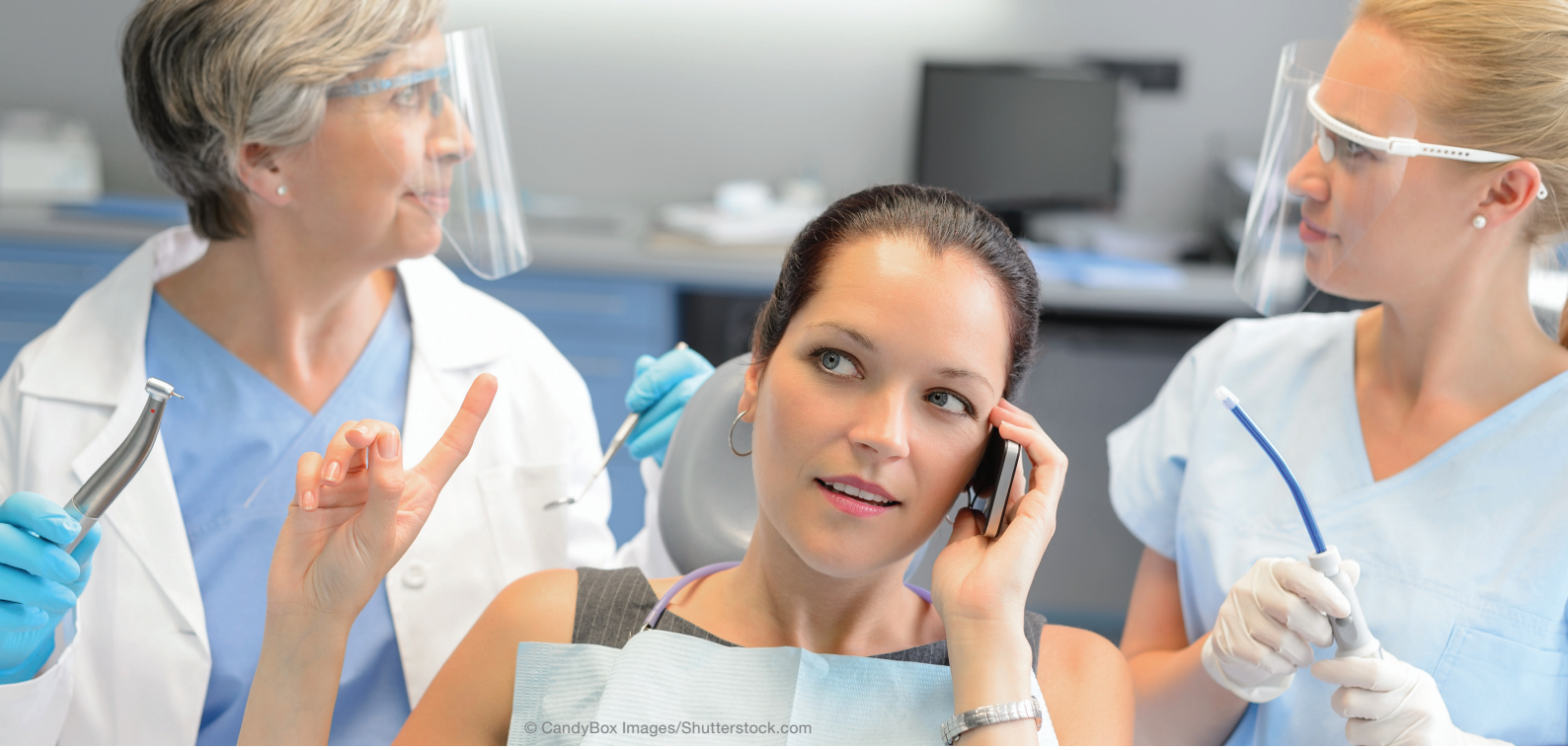


Successful communication in your daily practice

Part XIII: How to deal with rude patients

Dr Anna Maria Yiannikos, Germany & Cyprus

Hi! My name is Dr Anna Maria Yiannikos. Today, I present you the thirteenth part of this popular series, packed with communication protocols for your clinic or practice. This series covers the most common and challenging scenarios that might arise in your dental practice and presents successful ways to manage them in order for you to enjoy greater peace of mind and to reach another level regarding your experiences with patients. Each article of this series teaches you a new, easy-to-use protocol which can easily be applied and implemented into your own dental clinic's workflows and procedures right from the outset.

Have you ever wondered what the essential ingredients are for solving problems that you might encounter in the day-to-day interaction with patients? I'm here to teach you. There are plenty of issues—many of which we have already thoroughly discussed in previous parts of this series—which might put you in a difficult position, possibly even make you lose sleep, or lead to your self-confidence being seriously shaken. Imagine the feeling that you are able to overcome every problem that you could possibly face and that you can properly serve your patients by offering them the best solutions for their medical or aesthetic problem. How amazing would that be? Because let's face it: we are not only dentists, but also entrepreneurs, and we have to look at our clinics and dental practices as businesses that we have to run. Are you ready to find solutions for all of these problems?

Today's challenging topic is: how to deal with difficult and rude patients. Do you feel anxious and stressed out every time they visit your practice, or do you grow increasingly nervous with each day an appointment with a rude patient is drawing nearer in your calendar? Do not despair—in the following I will teach you five crucial and practical steps that will help you to stay calm and focused when faced with a difficult situation involving a rude and/or impolite patient.

5 essential steps

1. Think before you speak

Being the leader of a dental clinic, engaging in conflict with your patients is never a good idea. You should therefore always give yourself a moment to reflect and think

about the situation you're in before you start to speak. Allow yourself time to consciously breathe in order to balance yourself and take control of the interaction. Envision yourself as the conductor of an orchestra who is responsible for making the individual players follow your desired path. It is vital that you never ever engage in a discussion or start treatment on a patient if you are angry about him or her, or about the situation involving this particular patient.

2. Don't take anything personally

Rude or impolite patients are mostly angry with themselves, rather than with you—their dentist. Remember that it is only human to project one's self-discontent onto others. Whatever these patients say to you, it is most likely something that only has more to do with themselves, rather than with you or with something you might have done wrong. Here's a trick: try to imagine these patients as being physically very small before and during your encounter with them. In this way you will be able to take control of situations like these more efficiently.

3. Be proactive

Be sure to send out the treatment protocols of rude patients immediately after having finished their treatment sessions. Here's why: usually, these types of patients have issues with trust. Being rude or impolite is often only a protective shield protecting them from being hurt or disappointed. It is therefore vital to do everything you can in order to make them feel safe, and to show them that they have no reason to be suspicious.

4. Be brave, be vocal!

If patients are being rude to you—be brave and call them out on it! Figure out what could be the worst possible scenario while assessing the situation. With this risk management tip, you will immediately be able to acknowledge the fact that you could master any arising circumstance. Express your feelings verbally and tell your patient that he or she is being rude to you. You might be surprised about how ignorant the other person is towards the entire situation. Listen to what they have to say in defence. Show empathy and react with phrases like 'I understand you', instead of saying 'you are right'. It would be a pity to not see the forest for the trees!

5. Be calm and humane

Good interpersonal skills are essential for building lasting relationships. Therefore, always speak the truth without letting hurt feelings get in your way. Try to get to the bottom of a concrete issue by asking your patient questions, sit down with him or her and work out a solution that works for the both of you. A true win-win situation. At the end—make a gesture. For instance, offer your patient a warm handshake to show your positive attitude towards resolving the problem and departing with him or her on good terms.

How easy was that, right?

Use the above-mentioned steps as a protocol in your daily practice and you will soon notice that you are in control again and have greater peace of mind. With these five steps at your disposal, you will know exactly how to resolve a difficult problem and how to establish a customer-oriented service culture. In addition, I am confident that—if implemented correctly—these tips will help you achieve a significant increase in income. Just try it and feel free to share your thoughts with me!

I am sure that you are looking forward to the next issue of laser magazine with great anticipation, where in the fourteenth part of this series I will take a deep dive into yet another fascinating topic, namely: how to reject a patient (politely) without putting the reputation of your practice in jeopardy as a consequence. I will present you with the five most important steps that will help you remain calm and balance your stress levels. Until then, remember that you are not only the dentist at your clinic but also its manager and leader.

In case you have any questions or requests, if you would like to have further information on this topic, or if you simply need guidance in solving certain situations, don't hesitate to get in touch by e-mailing me at dba@yiannikosdental.com or visit our website, www.dbamastership.com. I am looking forward to our next step towards business growth and educational development. Let's keep in touch!

about the author



Dr Anna Maria Yiannikos (DDS, LSO, M.Sc., MBA) is one of the first two women worldwide to have obtained a master's degree in laser dentistry. She has owned a dental clinic for 30 years now and leads the innovative Dental Business Administration Mastership Course at RWTH Aachen University in Germany. She is an adjunct faculty member of the Aachen Center for Laser Dentistry.

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