

The Yin and Yang of Practice Building

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"Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time."

- Benjamin Franklin

Practitioners of Asian medicine are familiar with yin and yang, the fundamental concept on which the medicine is based. Yin and yang are the two poles of life: heaven and earth, light and darkness, invisible. The blending of these forces gives rise to all that is manifest (*qi*). Yin and yang are differentiations of the One, and the parents of all creation. The principle of yin and yang is at work in all of life, from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy. Let us explore how it applies to building and sustaining a successful health care practice.

The yang aspect of practice management can be described as dynamic energy. It is the active, "go out there and make it happen" energy that fuels the passion and enthusiasm necessary for any successful venture. Nearly all practice management and success seminars focus almost entirely on this area. Steven Covey, in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, refers to this as the realm of technique-specific sales, marketing and "relationship building" methods for business success. Countless books have been written on this subject. A few books are excellent; they detail the nuts and bolts of how to "put yourself out there" intelligently and effectively. Relative to a health care practice, these are excellent expressions of the yang aspect of practice management. They include public speaking; writing articles; promotional literature; print advertising; direct mail; health fairs and expos; and networking. These external methods and techniques are useful parts of a successful approach to growing a strong practice.

The yin aspect of practice management can be thought of as magnetic energy. As Covey points out in *Seven Habits*, technique without authentic presence is shallow and superficial, and leads to a flash-in-the-pan business. Three of his seven habits (think win-win; seek first to understand; and synergize) are technique-based, and three are "character habits" (be proactive; begin with the end in mind; put first things first) that cultivate integrity and personal power. Since yin is magnetic, receptive energy, it would be useful to look at how magnets work.

A magnet does not reach out and grab metallic objects. It draws to itself that which is responsive to its particular creative field. There is a perfect, specific design to that which is attracted to a magnet. A mass of iron filings - the most malleable and responsive of all substances drawn to a magnet - arrange themselves in a beautiful geometric pattern. This occurs without any conscious effort on the part of the magnet. The magnet does not place an advertisement that says, "Iron filings wanted," nor does it say to the filings, "You move over here, you move over there." It does not network with groups of different metals to cultivate relationships with iron. It simply is, and naturally expresses its true nature. Then, without effort or struggle, all that resonates with the magnet - all that rightly belongs in close proximity to it - is drawn to it.

"All people will come to him who keeps to the One,
For there lie rest and happiness and peace."

- *Lao Tzu, Dao De Jing, chapter 35*

So it is in life, and in a health care practice. As a practitioner grows, matures, and becomes more in touch with (and expressive of) his or her true nature, all of the patients that could receive help from that practitioner are naturally drawn close, and those who are for the moment unresponsive - unable to receive that which the practitioner offers - are naturally repelled, like two magnets of the same polarity. Even more, it is life, not the practitioner or his/her marketing consultant, that beautifully orchestrates this, according to life's perfect design.

"One can have no greater mastery than mastery of oneself."

- *Leonardo DaVinci*

The practical "how" of cultivating magnetic yin energy relates to daily spiritual practice. It is essential for a health care practitioner to have a daily spiritual practice. It is not for the author or anyone else to say what such a practice should look like, but it is for each practitioner to seek out and find what works for them. It can be part of, or outside, a religious context. The important thing is to find a spiritual path or practice that most deeply resonates with the highest truth you know. Elements of spiritual practice common to most traditions include meditation; prayer; writing a journal; inspirational reading; and joining with like-minded people regularly. For practitioners interested in working with people at a level deeper than taking symptoms away with a technique, this is fundamental. A practitioner can only reach someone to the depth the practitioner has gone himself. If you want to do deep work, be deep. The "deepening" process is what is referred to here as daily spiritual practice.

"Character may be manifested in the great moments, but is made in the small ones."

- *Phillip Brooks*

People come to you not because of what you do, but because of who you are. This is a generalization, because some people will call and come in after seeing your ad, flyer or business card. What will inspire them to come more than once or twice, however, is your presence and the connection they feel with you, which is the basis of the therapeutic relationship. Become someone people want to be in the presence of. It is not something that can be manufactured or put on. It is being true to the highest truth you know at each moment. As you continue to refine your expressions - your thoughts, words and actions - to more accurately reveal the truth of who you are at your core - your true nature - then your work will deepen, your practice will thrive, and your life will know greater peace and fulfillment.

"A business that makes nothing but money is a poor kind of business."

- *Henry Ford*

Business is not about business in the usual sense of money and profit. It's about people. Success in business entirely depends on cultivating healthy, positive, loving long-term relationships with people. Building and sustaining a successful practice combines the yang, dynamic energy of outer

action, with the yin, or magnetic energy of inner development.

"Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value."

- *Albert Einstein*

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