

The Importance of Staying Focused

Our world is so full of over stimulation and constant information. We live in a fast paced, ever-changing society. If you seek you will receive. This is exactly why it is important for us as practitioners to stay focused and communicate to our patients on following through with their treatments and/or herbal nutritional needs. We as practitioners need to set the bar.

Each patient that walks through our door should feel as though they are your ONLY patient! A friendly greeting, including a handshake, is the first step of our job with our patients. During the intakes it is extremely important to LISTEN to every word the patient says, as we all know every descriptive word they speak, means something in TCM and we don't want to miss anything. The way I look at it is we have a very narrow time frame for an opportunity to change someone's life for the better. If we are attentive to the observation of the patient and hear their descriptive complaints and needs, we are then able to reassure the patient that they will get better and they did come to the right place because we all know that TCM works, it's just a matter of educating our patient and staying focused on their needs.

When I say this, I not only mean when a patient says "I have cold hands and feet," for us to then be thinking of herbal possibilities, such as *Dang Gui Si Ni Wan*, but additionally we need to then put a warm blanket over them and put a TDP lamp over their feet at this time. I look at my patients as my patients and if they are "My Boss." I am working for them, and then hopefully, I earn their trust. If you have a happy patient, they may tell two or three potential patients. If you have one unhappy patient, they will tell 10 people.

I don't like people to waste my time and money. With that being said, I don't play with my patients' time or money. Punctuality is what you will get at my clinic. I respect my patients' time. People are used to waiting for doctors at doctors' offices, so give them a different experience at your clinic. I am not talking about the occasional 5 to 10 minute wait because the previous patient needed a little more attention on that day, but if they do have a 5 to 10 minute wait, tell the patient that there will be a "short" wait. I have learned if you tell people as what to expect they are much more understanding as well as being appreciative that you took the time to inform them.

If also tell my patients the expected appointment time, the number of treatments you feel they need for their treatment plan, as well as what nutrients are recommended for them. Additionally on the nutrients, I outline the dosage, the time of day they should be taken, including with or without food. As for herbs or supplements, I have a spreadsheet with all of my products and I also send my patients home with a suggested list of their recommended nutrients/herbs. I also send them home with an Acupuncture Answer Book to educate them on acupuncture (in basic laymen's terms), what it is, what it can help with and what to expect. I tell them "this is your book to keep. Feel free to read it and pass it on to someone who you feel could benefit from acupuncture."

After you have given them a free book, they feel like they should then buy something from you like the herbs/nutrients that you just suggested to them, which will obviously aid in their healing process. Patients need to be reminded and asked, "are you taking your nutrients/herbs as directed?" If so, pat them on the back and if not, this will reflect on their results and tell them that.

If they aren't taking the nutrients/herbs as suggested, that's on them and not on you. From my personal experience, if you are respectful, confident, and direct with your patients they will be compliant.

Upon my patients checking out, my assistants or I reiterate the number of treatments recommended and set them up for their next treatments and for all of their recommended treatments if they desire which most patients do. If that time of day is best for them, we strongly advise this, as time slots fill up fast.

Patients are coming to use because for many of them they have been to other medical doctors that, more than likely, have been in and out of their office in 5-10 minutes. Patients want to be heard. They have a story that needs to be told, so our job is first and always is to LISTEN to them.

I have learned so much by listening to my patients. Their complaints or needs give us clues on how to treat them and they also tell you about results they are getting that still seem to amaze me. I feel like each and every Acupuncturist should be as busy as they want to be because I can't think of one person, adult or child, who wouldn't immensely benefit from Acupuncture. Even in areas that are 'saturated' with Acupuncturists, you should still be busy. We just need to educate people on their results of Acupuncture and TCM and realize we are in the fastest growing healthcare field!

Someone once told me people won't always remember you by the results they get, but by how "kindly" you treated them. I didn't realize *exactly* what he meant until I saw a patient out in public that I didn't respond well to with the treatments and herbs. I ducked my head and tried to look unnoticed as I walked by her with disappointment. She smiled and told me the results she did get with acupuncture and said "although it didn't help much with my RA, I did get results with 'X, Y, and Z' and I have referred my friends and coworkers to you." Needless to say, I didn't feel quite as disappointed after that.

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