

What You Really Need to Know About Acupuncture and Practice Principles to Be Highly Successful

John Amaro, LAc, DC, Dipl. Ac.(NCCAOM), Dipl.Med.Ac.(IAMA)

In the July 2005 issue of *Acupuncture Today*, I wrote an article entitled "How to Be Extremely Successful in the Practice of Acupuncture and TCM." In that article, I laid out a number of specific rules of practice principles which helped to shape my own successful practice over the years. At the end of the article, I wrote, "As I sit here, I am suddenly struck with a host of additional thoughts which are vital for success. Anyone interested in knowing what they are? Drop me a note. Best wishes for a fantastic practice."

Frankly, I didn't anticipate what the next days, weeks and months were to bring, with literally hundreds upon hundreds of requests by LAc's for me to share further practice success principles. The e-mails came from virtually around the globe, as *Acupuncture Today's* articles have a very significant presence on the World Wide Web, reaching thousands of practitioners and researchers throughout the world.

In my years of writing for *Acupuncture Today* I have never received more requests for additional information or comments on any other topic than this one. I must admit to having felt a great sense of remorse, sympathy and frustration as I read letter after letter from my colleagues in acupuncture expressing extreme anxiety and desperation with their practice success (or lack of it as the case may be). They were reaching out for help with graphic descriptions of their practice, detailing, in the majority of cases, how they were only seeing four or five patients daily; a great many of them were not even seeing that many. New patients were rare, and clinic overhead was far beyond the income generated through the practice. Numerous practitioners expressed that they would be out of practice soon if something significant didn't happen immediately. Many stated that they were forced to work a second job to help defray costs and enhance living expenses. The call for help was deafening. If I had only received a few letters of desperation I could understand, but to receive hundreds was absolutely unbelievable. How could this be? Acupuncture is without question one of the most sought-after healing arts in the country. What I was unfortunately discovering about so many practitioners was far removed from what I had ever known, or could imagine existed.

As I lecture around the nation and the world, I have had the opportunity to meet a variety of practitioners in my programs, from those who have achieved the highest degree of success, to those who are holding on by a thread. It has been my observation that the typical practitioner who has achieved overwhelming success as demonstrated by a large lucrative, referral practice always seems to stand out from the crowd. Their *qi* energy is full, radiant and magnetic. They laugh, and are happy and relaxed. They express an overall confidence (but not cockiness) in their entire demeanor, and always maintain eye contact when speaking in casual conversation. Interestingly enough, many of the

most successful practitioners I have met in any of the healing disciplines - including acupuncture - are not necessarily what I would consider the most academically or clinically gifted practitioners. However, they invariably have an incredibly radiant personality. You just feel good being in their presence.

In virtually every program I have taught dealing with clinical effectiveness and practice enhancement procedures, there always are several practitioners who are attending out of sheer frustration, and are attempting to find the magic bullet that is going to save their practice. They are looking for something tangible they can initiate into their office procedures that will somehow magically transform them into finding success. Their desperation is so apparent upon meeting that they literally fill the room with negativity, as they radiate immense fear and anxiety. No wonder these individuals are having a tough time succeeding. Fear has totally paralyzed their *qi*, and everyone they meet picks up on this destructive emotion, which is the exact polar opposite of confidence. This same fear and anxiety was very apparent in most of the e-mails I received describing their failing practices and requesting more principles of success. Meeting a person with negativity and fear is like being introduced to a smoker: there's a smell.

In personal discussions, I invariably find these individuals to be competent, knowledgeable and diversified practitioners. Why, then, are they failing? To me, the answer has become obvious; they are just radiating more fear than confidence. I personally wouldn't want to go to a doctor who radiates fear - would you? Obviously other people don't want to, either.

Is there a cure for such a pathologic condition? Yes. It is easily treated, and the prognosis is excellent. Just understand the most powerful thing you can do in your life, not just your practice, is to breathe! Breathe not just from your nose to your throat, but to the deepest and lowest lobes of your lungs. One of the best ways to perform this breathing is to participate in daily physical exercise; such breathing then happens automatically. However, if you do not exercise, just consciously breathe deeply, with thought and focus, for at least five minutes three times a day. Once you have established breathing in your life, you can accomplish anything.

There is nothing more powerful to circulating *qi*, balancing the chakras and maintaining integrity in the electromagnetic system of the body than to simply breathe deeply and fully. Of course, "breath of fire" is the breathing that propels people to the highest realms of success. This particular breath is performed by exhaling forcefully, stronger than a shallower inhalation at one breath per second. It should be performed several times per day while maintaining visualization of what you want. This is the breathing one utilizes naturally when you are trying "to catch your breath." This is extremely powerful.

Understand that the human body and mind cannot distinguish real from imagined. Therefore, tell yourself multiple times a day that you are successful, healthy and wealthy. Tell yourself that your practice is overflowing with patients and people who constantly seek your expertise. Tell yourself that you are clearly one of the best practitioners someone could go to. You are passionate, compassionate and competent, with the background and facility to help a multitude of patients. When I first began my practice, I would leave my appointment book open on the desk to display the entire week, which I had filled in each day with about 25 appointments with names I just extracted from the phonebook. I looked at this every time I was in the front office. When a real patient actually wanted to make an appointment, only two or three slots in the day were available. Before long - within three months, if memory serves me correctly - I had created in reality what my mind and imagination had fabricated.

After that, my practice just naturally grew. I never doubted it could happen!

Be aware of the appearance and physical layout of your office - and more importantly, be aware of your own appearance. If you hear the word and visualize a "cowboy," "chef," "nurse," "soldier," "Boy Scout," or "doctor," you instantly draw a mental image of these individuals. When you visualized a doctor, what picture did you create in your mind? Is this the same image you have of yourself, and is this how patients see you? Remember, if you are going to be in the health care field, you better fit the image of a doctor that people hold in their mind. Some acupuncturists will undoubtedly counter with, "I'm not a doctor." That may be so, but your patients see you as such. Dress, act and think the part.

Remember: It is much easier to have fun than to be miserable, and it is easier to laugh and smile than it is to frown and exhibit fear. It is actually easier and more natural to be a success than a failure. Look around us. The universe is pretty successful, and since we are a microcosm inside of a macrocosm, we really have to work at being unsuccessful.

Throw your *qi* into the ether. Allow it to coexist with universal energy and reap all of the benefits confidence, competence, passion and compassion bring. Develop your confident personality by eliminating fear. It is virtually impossible to fail in the practice of acupuncture. If you are failing, it is only because you have created it yourself. Therefore, you are the cure. Failure is very easy to treat and to cure by simply expressing confidence.

May this be a fantastic year of the yang fire dog. This year has the potential to be incredible for success and finance. A famous Asian proverb for this particular year is, "He who has moved the mountain, is he who began by removing the small stones." The best to all of my colleagues in the acupuncture and TCM profession in 2006. I hope to hear of your success, so please drop me a note.

JANUARY 2006