

Building an Anti-Stress Practice

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I don't know about you, but I am feeling very stressed right now. There is too much going on (*yang*) and not enough quiet time (*yin*) in my life to compensate for the activity. I am stretching myself, filling my life with a bit too much of a bit too much. Apparently I'm not alone because when I googled the question "How do I deal with my stress?" there were 584 million results. That's as many results as there are people on the North American continent: Canada, the U.S. and Mexico!

There are more kinds of stress than could fit into a super Wal-Mart.

Lots of people make money off of other people's stress. I do. You do too. I have always struggled with the capitalist system, paying me when people feel bad or stressed and not paying me when they feel good and peaceful. This isn't how our professional ancestors did it, quite the opposite. If one was employed in the home of a noble or royal family, a typical place of employment for our predecessors, payment was dolled out for overall care and wellness maintenance, not just illness relief. We had to succeed in keeping people well if we wanted job security. Patrons praised us if their families remained alive through the many epidemics that ruined multiple generations throughout Asia. The goal of our professional ancestors was to keep patients healthy. We can use our professional history to make the breakthroughs we need to overcome stress today.

What stress are you feeling right now? Is your practice maintaining itself? Do you need to build your financial bottom line even while the economy stinks? As we end yet another year, would you like to pull a financial rabbit out of your hat? What about a new approach to stress? Not yours, your patients'. Can you create an innovative way to help your patients through the end of the year stress, the lousy stock market stress, the mediocre relationship stress, the just recovered from a serious illness or injury (using the help of an amazing acupuncturist...you!) stress, the still looking for a job stress, the how to pay for Christmas and other winter holidays stress? Could you solve everyone's problem by relieving stress just as our professional ancestors did? Can you support patients in remaining healthy, as has historically been our duty?

The word stress has gotten a great deal of marketing support over the last five decades. The campaign was intentional and successful. Now, everyone knows what stress is and wants to get rid of it. You can take advantage of the press stress has gotten by helping your community get rid of stress, and, the help you provide will, in turn, help you. There is a win /win here.

One of the most successful business models I have seen for our industry incorporates the community acupuncture concept, which has similarities to the treatment styles of many Chinese hospitals. What if you offered anti-stress treatments for far less than your usual work by using this concept? A dear friend and his wife use this model as a marketing tool. They offer \$20 treatments in a group setting. Patients come to their clinic at specific times each week, one evening and one afternoon, to lie on treatment tables in their teaching room. Patients get no private time with the clinician but do enjoy the

peaceful environment and the unique opportunity to receive a simple treatment for very little money, in a group setting. If patients want a more thorough diagnosis, herbal prescriptions or treatment plan, they must take on a full visit, in privacy, for the "retail" price.

Many patients who couldn't otherwise maintain a consistent acupuncture experience love this option because they can get a full treatment monthly or bi-monthly, but still get support and improvement in between. Patients are very happy with the work because it successfully lowers stress.

My friends have developed a strong patient base of people who would not have considered OM treatment an option. In a location that should have this prolific couple struggling because of its size and rotten economic circumstances, they are busy, eating well (between patients) and sleeping just fine because their practice is growing every month. All of this is because they are so good at lowering stress.

Kill Stress With Consistency

Wouldn't it be great to be able to depend upon a specific amount of revenue each month? Income inconsistency is an issue many of us struggle with and stresses us out to no end. You might consider implementing a plan to insure that your income is stable.

How about creating a package of private treatments, group treatments and classes? If you are teaching to one you might as well teach to 20. It costs no more to do that and you can easily offer a class a night or two a week. By offering a one-time monthly fee, (with a three or six month minimum) patients could take advantage of numerous options and you could depend upon the money. So let's say you charged \$150 or \$200 per month and for that patients could come to up to eight classes, get one private session with you and up to two community treatments. If you have 10 patients committed to this plan you can depend upon \$1,500 or \$2,000 for the month no matter what. As patients purchase multiple months up front, you are assured the revenue. You can breath deep with revenue you can depend on! You know your community and what dollar amount would be considered a good deal, so please don't use my numbers. Use numbers that work for you. The idea is to give a great deal so that your practice is humming. The buzz will get out that you are the anti-stress guru and that your prices back that up.

No matter how we feel about it, most of us are entrepreneurs and it behooves us to think that way. What is the great idea, the idea that sticks in people's minds that will keep them coming to you even when doing so contradicts mainstream thinking or economic trends? Stress relief is a good one, but there are others and you can discover those if you lean into the idea that you are in the business of providing a service and need to market yourself as such. Some things that I have done to lower my stress and help me think outside the box are: read books and magazines, learn about selling my services online, social networking, hostessing parties for the practitioners and physicians who refer to me, take business coaching programs and hire private business coaches. I am in a great course now called "The Strategic Coach." This is a program for about 3,500 entrepreneurs in Europe, Canada and the U. S. is built around the teachings of a gentleman named Dan Sullivan. They have helped me tremendously in gaining an understanding about business and can be accessed from anywhere this newspaper may be read. A great website for practice building support is www.practiceboomers.com. There are other options as well.

Your practice can heat up, as the season gets cooler. Your skills as a businessperson will benefit by entrepreneurial thinking, as will your bank account, as will the community you serve. While our roots

are planted in the soil of this medicine, the branches that bear fruit arise from our business skills.

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