



MARKETING / OFFICE / STAFF

Practicing with Authenticity

Kelley Mulhern, DC

"Authenticity is the alignment of head, mouth, heart, and feet - thinking, saying, feeling, and doing the same thing - consistently. This builds trust, and followers love leaders they can trust." - Lance Secretan

To extrapolate from the above quote, patients love healthcare providers they can trust. One way to earn the trust of your patients is by practicing with authenticity. What does that mean, exactly? An authentic person is one who is genuine and truthful in their interactions; one whose words and actions are congruent. Build your practice with authenticity and watch it flourish.

The concept of authenticity is critical in every aspect of practice including new patient acquisition, daily visits, marketing, and retention. Practicing with authenticity requires a clear understanding of who you are, what drives you, and what you want your practice to be like. It also necessitates a clear understanding of who you are not, what kills your passion, and what you don't want in your practice.

Who are You?

In order to have alignment, consistency, and congruency, you must understand some key elements of yourself - personally, as well as professionally. Over the next few paragraphs, we'll look at some questions you can use to gain a deeper understanding of your authentic self.



What are you most passionate about? Are you an avid golfer? A proud parent? Do you live to educate people about their health? Take some time to consider the top two or three things you feel life wouldn't be worth living without.

What values do you hold most dear? Values are the ethical and moral compasses that guide our actions and behaviors. They are concepts such as honesty, freedom, integrity, responsibility, and compassion. Most people have a sense of what a specific value means to them, but it can be notoriously hard to articulate. One Google search produced a document that had almost 400 value words listed! Find a smaller list to give you a place to start. Next, take the value words and put them into one of three categories: extremely important to you, moderately important to you, and rarely important to you. Once you have your three lists, go through the words in each to see if they have similar meanings (to you) and can be further condensed. When you're finished, you should have a list of 3 to 5 words that are your top guiding values.

What image and reputation do you want to present? How do you want to be perceived by your community? Do your values and actions support that image and reputation? If you want to be respected as a professional in your community, dress the part. Don't show up for a meeting or a day at the office in a tank top and cut off shorts unless you want to be perceived as informal and relaxed. If you want to be known as the nutrition-guru in your area, but you constantly eat fast food, do you see how you may not live up to your reputation? If you want to focus on pediatric patients, make sure your office is childproof and kid-friendly.

What do you want out of your practice and your life? Do you want to make millions? Make a difference? Educate the masses about health and nutrition? Do you want one practice or multiple offices? Do you want to focus on a niche patient base or have a general practice? Do you love what you do and want to work 7 days a week, or do you want to work less and travel more? Figure out what you want, and then takes steps toward it each day.

Stay True to Yourself

We've looked at a few simple questions you can ask to better understand yourself - and there are dozens more! Now we're going to shift gears and look at a few ways you can practice with authenticity.

Don't fake your skills or knowledge. People can tell when you're not being truthful with them. If you're tempted to exaggerate or fake your skills and abilities, use that feeling as an indication you need to up your game. Go to seminars, read books, find a mentor - do what it takes to develop confidence in your current abilities or to develop additional skill sets.

Be your genuine self. Within the boundaries of appropriateness and professionalism, be yourself when interacting with your patients. Don't try to emulate your mentor or someone you saw on television. There's no one else on the planet with your exact experiences and knowledge. Those may be the reason the patient in front of you sought you out. As Marie Forleo often says, "The world needs that special gift that only you have."

Live in congruence with your ideals. Once you've spent some time to figure out which values mean the most to you, examine your life (and your practice) to make sure they're congruent with your values. For example, if transparency is important to you, but you don't have a published fee schedule, take steps to align your values and actions.

Build a practice that reflects you. Your practice is an extension of yourself. As such, it should (appropriately) reflect your core values, personality, passions, et cetera. Compare your values, personality, and passions to your practice. Is there a way to appropriately infuse your practice with them? For example, if you're a golf fanatic, can you reflect that in your office décor, sponsor a golf event, give a health talk at a golf club, or even use a small putting green in your marketing events? (For example, get a hole in one to receive a free product or discounted service.) Bringing your passions to your practice helps you have more fun, be more relaxed, and share your genuine self.

Hopefully the above questions and strategies help you to be more authentic in your practice and your life. Remember that self-awareness isn't a one-time event, but rather a continuous journey of reflection and understanding. Infuse your practice with your genuine self and watch your satisfaction (and that of your patients) increase.

