

# Don't Kick the Dog!

BY JUDY KAY MAUSOLF



I wrote an article in my July *Show Your Shine* newsletter called *Don't Kick the Dog*. I received so much feedback from it that I felt the need to share it with my ProDentist practices, too! You can find the original article at [www.PracticeSolutionsInc.net](http://www.PracticeSolutionsInc.net) and click on Resources/Newsletter Archive to read July's newsletter, *Don't Kick the Dog*.

"*Kicking the dog*" refers to oppressive, or aggressive, often displaced behavior towards others. The dog is an analogy for the people who are important and loyal to us such as employees, co-workers, friends and family.

Some of us are in the habit of kicking the dog whenever we get frustrated because something didn't meet our expectations. It is important to remember that the dog is a loyal co-worker, friend or family member. They are the ones who care about us and can and will help us most! You may have heard, "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." When we're trying to accomplish

something, we'll have more success by using sweeter (i.e. politer, nicer) methods than by being angry, frustrated, rude, or cruel. Why would anyone go out of their way to help us achieve our goals if our behavior is oppressive or disrespectful towards them?

So, why do we kick the dog when we know it will only produce negative results with the most important people in our lives? Yet most of us would never ever treat a stranger this way. In most cases it is not because we are a tyrant or a mean person. This oppressive behavior happens when we become too comfortable and familiar

with the person and our tired or stressed. We take the filters off of our conversations. What I mean by taking the filters off our conversations is we say or show (body language) exactly how we are feeling at the moment without respecting how it might make the other person feel. We respond based only our feelings instead of thinking before we respond. We get so wrapped up with our feelings of frustration or anger we lose sight of how important and valuable that person is to us. We assume they will always accept us or put up with our behavior so we don't show them the respect or hold them in the high regard that they deserve. If we really thought about how much we cared about each other before we started our conversation...we would have a lot more respectful and caring conversations instead of ones filled with anger or frustration.

This same thought process of value and importance also prompts healthier conversations with friends, family and yes even our spouse! Haven't most of us experienced at least one occasion where we regretted our words once we had taken back control of our emotions? If we take at least 30 seconds to breathe deep than focus on how much we care about and love that person we will have a much healthier and more respectful conversation. Taking the 30 seconds to breathe allows our Prefrontal Cortex, the thinking part of our brain, the time it needs to take back the control of our emotions.

But what if it is already too late and we have already kicked the dog? Maybe even more than once. This might sound familiar... let's say something happened to throw the schedule off and our assistant isn't doing what we think they should be doing at the time. So we sigh heavily, roll our eyes, and shake our head from side to side out of frustration. Our tone of voice is sharp with underlying hint of anger as we say, "I need this!" We have just kicked the dog!

**Now what do we do to repair the damage?** In many cases we probably won't have time at the moment to get into a deep conversation. As soon as we catch ourselves kicking the dog it's time to take 30 seconds to breathe deep. We can change our energy and mindset by thinking about how much we care about the other person and what we appreciate about them. It is important to be mindful of our tone of voice and body language before we speak. Here are the magic words; "I am sorry! I did not mean to react that way. I am not quite sure what happened today to create the bottleneck in the schedule. I would like to speak

with you later today about how we can work together better in the future." Schedule a specific time the same day if at all possible. Meet with the team member even if they say it's not necessary. I have found that conversations get brushed off and avoided when everyone gets in a better mood. The mindset is why rock the boat when everyone is happier for fear that a conversation will only stir the pot and cause more stress and upset. Regardless of whether everyone is happier for time being...it is imperative to meet and discuss future expectations on how to work together more successfully. Otherwise, there will be no opportunity to address what caused the frustration in the beginning. Which means it will happen again and again...resulting in more frustration, anger and kicking the dog again!

There will be days that become just one of those days! The one's where no matter what everyone does the wheels still fall off. Instead of kicking each other out of anger and frustration do one or more of the following positive energy producing actions. I refer to them as positive energy producing actions because they instantly reduce stress and transform negative energy into positive energy.

- Just breathe deep for 30 seconds.
- Think about what you appreciate in the day and identify 3 potential positives. (it's never all bad, it just seems like it because of where we choose to focus).
- Stack the deck in your favor by having 3 positives that are already in your life such as your health, family, job, pet etc., in mind and give thanks.
- If possible gather as a team in the lunch room or back office. Turn on some music and crank up the volume! Sing and dance for one song.
- Practice positive body patterns such as smiling, laughing, clapping, high-fiving, singing, dancing. Or the most powerful of all is the victory pose. I like to shout the word TA-DAH when I practice the victory pose!
- Whenever you are starting to feel stressed all you have to do to change your energy is practice a positive body pattern in appreciation for what is already in your life that is good and you will instantly feel better.

Implementing these actions will help the entire team get happier, healthier and higher performing! A TA-DAH a day keeps stress and negative energy away!



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Contact Judy Kay today if you would like to learn how she can help you build a cohesive team that support each other and the practice, become better leaders, and deliver service with more passion and fun!