

SERVICE starts with the TEAM!

| BY JUDY KAY MAUSOLF



I often find there is a misconception about service; a belief that service starts with the patients and doesn't really pertain to the team. In other words: we must provide exceptional treatment to our patients, but not so much to each other. It's as if there is an entirely different set of standards for patients than there is for the team, pertaining to attitude, behavior and communication: what I refer to as the "ABC Standards".

I have the privilege of working with dental teams nationwide to help them create a happier, healthier and higher-performing service culture. I witness some team members (including doctors and managers) treating other team members poorly. That same poor behavior towards a patient would be grounds for dismissal.

We make excuses for our behavior. We use labels and say "this is just how we are". For example, I am direct; which really means that I say whatever is on my mind without any regard of how I might make you feel. Or I say that I'm not a morning person; which really means others should just understand my moodiness in the morning.

What confounds me is watching the same "direct" or "non-morning" person flip a switch and turn it on for

their patients. It is like watching a Jekyll and Hyde transformation.

We believe it is acceptable to turn the respect and kindness filters off for each other. After all, we wouldn't want to be fake, would we? We also know they will just accept or put up with our poor behavior. We frequently even turn it off for the people we love the most, like our family. I find it thought-provoking that we put filters of kindness and respect on for strangers and acquaintances, but don't do the same for the people we care about and love the most. Something seems a little backward with this behavior.

It's time to put the filters back on and start service with the team. I teach the Golden Standard: treat each other as well or better than you treat your patients. Note: that doesn't mean lessening the standard for patient service.

Creating ABC Standards for how staff treat each other will help cultivate a service culture that is happier, healthier and higher performing! ABC Standards increase clarity, unity, congruency, level of service, and your business reputation;

SERVICE CONTINUED | PAGE 31

...SERVICE CONTINUED

while preventing the chafing and disagreements from assumptions and opinions of who is right and wrong.

Have a team meeting with the entire staff to discuss ABC Standards for your practice. Ask each team member to share what they need from each other to be able to work together better. I find that writing down the responses generates more participation. Some examples might be:

BE LIKEABLE

- Be courteous
 - ✓ Ask instead of tell
 - ✓ Say please and thank you
- Be nice
 - ✓ Be friendly
 - ✓ Be kind
 - ✓ Be pleasant
- Be happy
 - ✓ Smile and greet each other warmly
 - ✓ Be optimistic
 - ✓ Use positive words, tone, body language
 - ✓ Be cheerful

BELIEVE IN POSITIVE INTENT

- Give benefit of doubt
- Don't assume negatives – ASK

BE HONEST

- Be specific
- Don't generalize
- Don't exaggerate
- Be considerate
 - ✓ Always ask yourself, "How can I be honest and say what I need to say, while respecting how it might make the other person feel?"

BE COMPASSIONATE

- Be understanding
- Be supportive
- Be sympathetic

BE TRUSTWORTHY

- Do what you said, when & how you said
- Only promise what you can deliver
- Don't gossip

HAVE AN OWNERSHIP MENTALITY

- Be self-motivated
 - ✓ Be self-disciplined
 - ✓ Do the right thing
 - ✓ Own your mistakes
 - ✓ Be patient, practice & team-focused not me-focused
- Be helpful
- Ask before helping
 - ✓ What do they want help with completing?
 - ✓ How do they want it done?
- Delegate clearly and specifically

BE RESPECTFUL

- Listen first
- Don't insult or put others down
- Don't judge & criticize
- Treat others how they want to be treated
- Address concerns only with the source
- Forgive each other
- No gossip
- ✓ Don't spread gossip
- ✓ Don't listen to gossip

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

- Model the waddle you want to see
- No double standards
- Be reliable
- Be consistent
- Be on time
- Be accountable

BE APPRECIATIVE

- Thank others
- Be grateful and show gratitude

BE FUN

- Laugh a little
- Be lighthearted
- Be good-humored

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(If you would like to receive a copy of my ABCs Sample Standards please email me at JudyKay@PracticeSolutionsInc.net and write ABCs Sample in the subject line.)

Create a document titled Team ABC's Standards Document with the team standards. Print it out, frame it and put it on display where everyone can see it daily. A lunch room or locker room often works well. Your daily huddle is a great opportunity to create accountability. Hold a discussion daily about how each person did—as an individual and together as a team—supporting the standards. Where did they rock it and where can they raise it? The more often you discuss your standards, the more real and alive they become.

It is crucial that the ABC Standards are adhered to by the leadership team. Staff will look to leadership and

mimic their behaviors. Never create something you are not comfortable supporting. Everything starts and stops with leadership. It's time to model the waddle to a happier, healthier and higher performing team culture! ■

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