

“If you love your patients, you won’t hurt them.”

Recently, one of my colleagues said this during her presentation to a group of fellow dentists and it really resonated with me. On looking back at my four plus decades of being a dentist, I can say that the healthiest transitions that have occurred with our patients, and the best treatment I have performed is on patients with whom I have developed great relationships. If one’s primary purpose is to help people, you won’t hurt them either emotionally or physically - you care about them to such a degree that you will always leave them better off than when they started.

The purpose of the Dental Wellness Center is to teach its patients about the status of their oral system to such a degree that they can make informed choices about its future. A corollary to this educational process is the building of a relationship along an educational path that is based upon mutual respect, knowledge, trust, shared values and perspectives about disease and life. Does this involve love? Well sure, it’s called compassionate love, something that any dedicated health care professional gives to the people he/she cares for. Truth is, the better the relationship developed between me and my patients, the more it will set the stage for allowing them to achieve the level of oral health that they desire. Call it love, or call it simply great rapport between doctor and patient, I have found that it sets the stage for a give-and-take in which two people develop a high respect for each other and there is no question that it will influence the utilization of information exchanged and quality of treatment performed in a way that maximizes patient success.

This needs to translate to the office team as well – if there aren’t authentic sound relationships between the team and doctor based upon bedrock of compassionate love and trust, it won’t be there for our patients – it needs to be a coordinated effort – a mutual love and respect that breeds success!

My experience has shown me that dental success occurs when the passion of the practitioner towards professional and personal growth leads to learning processes between all team members that allow the patient to experience healthy outcomes. It has been said that rich people can’t buy health, and the poor can’t have it given to them. It requires a strong mutual interest, and compassionate love - between dentist, team and patient, all working together towards co-developed goals. All the ingredients of love are involved – respect, knowledge, trust, shared values, commitment and accountability, and it all starts out with an educational process; one that allows the patient and doctor to get to know each other so that the doctor can truly discover what the patient wants and then perform the best possible dental treatment with the patients’ interests being first and foremost.