

Telephone Techniques

1. Always answer the telephone in a clear, warm, friendly tone and with a smile on your face.
2. Identify yourself when answering the telephone. When you make your name the last thing you say in your greeting it is more likely the patient will remember who you are. Suggested greetings are:

"Hello, (name of practice). This is (name)."

OR

"Doctors _____ and _____, this is (name)."

3. Answer the telephone after the second ring and before the fourth ring.
4. If it is necessary to place the patient on hold, ask them if they may be placed on hold and wait for a response. Thank them before placing them on hold. Never leave them on hold for more than approximately 20 seconds. If you find you cannot get back to them in that length of time to finish the conversation, ask them if they can hold for a little while longer, or take their number and call them back. Give benefit plus procedure.

EXAMPLE: *"So that I can give you my undivided attention, let me put you on hold and clear the other line."*

5. Always utilize the V.I.P. Slip for new or emergency patient calls.
6. Regarding messages for Doctor and Staff: The staff should develop a short list of those callers who are necessary interruptions and the receptionist should take messages for all others. When it is necessary to interrupt the Doctor or a staff member, show them a written message rather than communicating verbally in front of patients.
7. If a patient requests a prescription,
 - A. Gather their name, telephone number, and pharmacy number.
 - B. Inform the patient that as soon as the doctor is available either you or the doctor will return their call.
 - C. Complete the emergency section of the V.I.P. slip.
 - D. Pull the patient's chart.
 - E. Inform the doctor of the patient's problem.
 - F. Follow through with a return phone call.

8. When "confirming" phone calls use the verbiage:

"Hi! This is Diane from Dr. _____'s office. I'm calling to let you know **we're looking forward** to seeing you for your visit with Sue to have your teeth cleaned and oral cancer screening Thursday, May 10th at 2:00.

Telephone Techniques

Larry M. Guzzardo, Inc.

Dental Practice Management & Marketing Excellence

1549 Brookhaven Hill – Suite 100 Atlanta, GA 30319 (404) 842-0530/LMGuzzardo@aol.com

www.larrymguzzardo.com

Language of Acceptance

Using complicated professional terminology often builds barriers to effective communication. The best way to get your message across when speaking to patients is to keep it simple. An example is: instead of saying periodontal scaling, say gum treatment; instead of prosthetics, say caps or dentures; a treatment may cause discomfort, but **never** hurts or causes pain. Keeping it simple helps communicate your message clearly and effectively.

"Strange words are not friendly words." Will Rogers

The following list has been developed to point out that the proper choice of words makes a dynamic difference in the communication process.

Operative Language

INSTEAD OF:

TRY SAYING:

Would you like to come on back?

Mrs. Jones, Dr. Smith will see you now.

Small cavity

An area of decay

Simple

Uncomplicated

Old filling

Restoration that has outlived its usefulness

Do you understand?

How do you feel about?

Impressions

Imprints for diagnostic models

Face-bow

Facial measurements

Pantograph

Jaw movement record

Articulator

Jaw simulator

Partials

Partial dentures

Baby teeth

Primary teeth

My girl(s)

My assistant/hygienist/etc. or use their name. "Please see Mary at the front desk."

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INSTEAD OF:

I suggest
Dr. Smith would like
Drill
Chisel, forceps
Syringe, needle
Mouth-jaw system
Grind
Hurt, pain
Open up
Open wide
Business office
Waiting room
Operatory
Private office
Case presentation
Full mouth series
Study models
Rehabilitation
Work
Fillings
Temporary fillings
Extractions

TRY SAYING:

I recommend
Dr. Smith recommends
Light touch hand piece
Use the number of the instrument
Use the color of the syringe cover
Chewing system
Reshape
Discomfort
Please open
Open big (to a child)
Administrative office
Reception room or reception area
Treatment room
Consultation room
Treatment discussion
Necessary films
Diagnostic models
Complete dentistry
Treatment or dentistry
Restorations
Sedative fillings
Removal

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INSTEAD OF:

Composites

Grind the tooth

Denture adjustment

You should have this done

We'll send it to the lab

TRY SAYING:

Cosmetic restorations

Prepare the tooth

Observation appointment

"If it were my teeth, wife's, son's or daughter's, this is the way I would do"

Dr. Brown's laboratory technician will adjust it.

Hygiene Language

INSTEAD OF:

Root plane and curettage

Root plane

Curettage

Irrigant

Necrotic

Tissue

X-rays

Probe

Sulcus

Scaling

Tartar/Calculus

TRY SAYING:

Gum treatment or perio treatment

Smooth the tooth

Treat infection or removed diseased gum

Medicine

Diseased

Gum

Pictures or film

Measure the gums

Crevice or area between gum and tooth.

Remove calculus, hard plaque or hard deposits

Hardened plaque or hard deposits

INSTEAD OF:

TRY SAYING:

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Inflammation

Infection

Recall

Preventive therapy/continuing care appointment/maintenance visit

Check-up

Periodic or thorough examination

Dr.'s check

Dr's examination

The Dr. looked at your x-rays

The Dr. diagnosed your films

Telephone and Scheduling Language

INSTEAD OF:

TRY SAYING:

We have an opening at ____/I can squeeze or work you in/I can give you an appointment/I can see you

Dr. Brown can see you at _____.

Who's calling?

Dr. Brown is with a patient. How may I help you?

Cancellation

Change in the schedule

You're overdue for your recall

Your last examination was July 7, Mrs. Green

The doctor is not here.

Dr. Brown is out of the office right now, but I expect him back shortly.

Running late

Interrupted schedule

Switch appointments

Rearrange schedule

If you have any problems or trouble

If you have any questions

The Doctor will call you back in a little while

Dr. Brown will call you back in _____ minutes or by ____ o'clock.

Do not worry about it. It should not bother you.

Please hold the line, Mr. Sloane and I'll ask the Doctor.

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INSTEAD OF:

What's your name?
Huh?
Thank you for calling
Work
Do you understand?
Long appointments
Dr. Brown is busy
Remind you about your appointment
Keep time open
Opening for you
Says to
Old patient
I can't take you without an appointment
The Doctor is running behind schedule.
I can give you Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.
You're wrong, Mrs. James, Your appointment is at 2:00
Your sister is doing fine with her new denture.

TRY SAYING:

Would you spell your first and last name for me, please?
I'm sorry, I didn't hear you, or pardon
Thank you for calling, Mr. Adams.
Treatment/service/dentistry
Have I made that clear?
Well planned appointments
Dr. Brown is with a patient
We're looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday at 2:00 p.m.
Reserve time
Special time reserved for you
Recommends
A former patient
The Doctor's schedule is full; Mrs. White, but I'll find the earliest possible appointment for you.
The Doctor had to reschedule because of an emergency.
Dr. Brown can see you Tuesday at 10:00 or Wednesday at 3:00
Since it's not clear, and perhaps we should try to find another time for you to see Dr. Brown
Your sister was fine (looked great) that last time I say her.

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INSTEAD OF:

I'm sorry you feel so terrible

When would you like to come in?

I'm sorry I can't fit you in today

He/She's all booked up. He/She can't see you until..

Who referred you to the Doctor?

TRY SAYING:

I'm sorry you're uncomfortable

Do you prefer mornings or afternoons?

It's such a shame you didn't call earlier.

Dr. Butler's schedule is filled for today. However, he can see you _at ____.

May I ask who we can thank for referring you to Dr. Henry?

Financial Arrangement Language

INSTEAD OF:

Financial arrangements

Estimate/price/charges/cost

Pay for/handle

Contract/note

Installments

Sign/signature

Your total bill is \$150

Would you like...?/How do you plan..?

You had a lot of work done.

Do you still work at Romeo's?

TRY SAYING:

Payment arrangements

Fee

Take care of

Agreement

Payments

Place your name here/please approve here

The total fee for your treatment is \$150, Mrs. Banks.

Will that be cash, check or bank card.

You had extensive treatment, Mrs. Jones.

How are things at Romeo's

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INSTEAD OF:

You owe \$15 for today's appointment

Your whole bill is \$376, Mr. Allen.

Please fill out this credit statement

Three hundred twenty-seven

Professional discount

Bill

TRY SAYING:

Today's treatment is \$15, making your total bill \$35, Mrs. Lee.

Your wife's account is \$104, Bill's is \$80, and yours is \$192, Mr. Allen. That is a total of \$376.

Please fill out this routine information form

Three twenty seven

Professional courtesy/courtesy savings

Statement

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