



Build Relationships and Save Money... Simply LET GO!

Here's a simple strategy to deal with conflicts.

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Practice Management Pearls is a regular feature that focuses on practice management issues presented by successful DPMs who are members of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management.

Amid rising global tensions, trade wars, and people getting dragged out of airplanes by their ankles, it's time that we begin to see our own personal world through the eyes of those whom we share it with in business... our patients and staff.

No matter what you believe is the most important ingredient of the "art of the deal", nothing trumps (no pun intended) having an interest-based perspective of the world. Contrary to a positional-based perspective, in which the world revolves around only you, an interest-based perspective truly takes into account the view of the world that others have. It's

the only way to proactively avoid conflict, rather than perpetually try to diffuse conflict.

An interest-based perspective requires you to "LET GO". You need to let go of your pre-conceived and possi-

- G**—Gain trust by paraphrasing
- O**—Outline a win-win proposal

Active listening is the first step in the LET GO strategy. When we actively listen to someone, we are

You need to let go of your pre-conceived and possibly negative view of someone or something.

bly negative view of someone or something. Remember that your perception of a circumstance is unique. It has been formed by a complex mix of environmental and genetic factors. It might not be shared by someone else. The LET GO strategy is the way to build strong and long lasting relationships.

- L**—Listen
- E**—Empathize
- T**—Telegraph good body language

doing so with the intent of gaining empathy. It's crucial to try to understand what's important to the other person, not what's important to you. Again, your perspective of the situation is different. As you listen, open your mind's eye and see the world through the other person's eyes.

It's true that our body language says a lot about what we

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are thinking. Avoid “defensive” or “close-minded” posture such as having your arms crossed. Keep your arms relaxed at the side of your body or on your lap if you are sitting. Try to be at eye level as

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opposed to standing over the patient to avoid a condescending body position.

Once you truly understand where the other person is coming from emotionally, it’s time to paraphrase to check your accuracy. For example, if you sense frustration:

“So Mrs. Smith, I understand how frustrated you are that I was late for your appointment. I know how frustrated I would be.” Frustration was simply the emotion that you detected by actively listening. Now would also be a good time to own up to your responsibility by showing regret. “I’m terribly sorry how this inconvenienced you”.

The last step of the LET GO strategy is to rationalize (explain), and outline a win-win proposal. Relationships that are built on a win-lose proposal, where one party gets all the benefits over the other, are often short-lived. It’s time to be creative and strive to find a middle ground. Putting it all together:

“So Mrs. Smith, I understand how frustrated you are that I was late for your appointment. I know how frustrated I would be. I’m terribly sorry how this inconvenienced you. I became backed up due to a patient with a complication. I hope you understand. Now I’m going to spend all the time we need to together...focusing only on YOU. By the way, my front desk is going to have a small gift card for you because of this inconvenience.”

Only a terribly irrational person would pursue a conflict with you after a dialogue like this. It takes less than 15 seconds to have this dialog, and it will save countless hours of conflict and lots of lost income. A 15-second prompt LET GO statement by United Airline’s CEO could have saved hundreds of millions of dollars in stock value! But it’s possible that conflict could have likely been avoided much earlier in the process. The offer made to try to recruit volunteers was obviously NOT a win-win proposition. Trying to save a few bucks cost them hundreds of millions. It’s a damn shame! **PM**

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