

your referral base.

MEETING YOUR PATIENT'S NEEDS

By Lynn Garber

Proper interviewing techniques, asking the right questions, will not only help you to understand your patients' needs, but will help your patients to discover their own needs. Following the techniques in Linda's article will elicit answers that will assist you to further plan treatment for you patient—treatment to meet their needs!

The next step is listening, really listening, to how the patient responds to your questions. When listening, cut out your own distractions and really listen to what the person is saying to you. Listen not only to their words but also tune

into their body language, energy level, emotions and tone of voice. You will never be able to meet your patients' needs if you don't know what they want.

Success in today's competitive marketplace is dependent on being customer-needs focused because people have choices as to on whom and with whom they spend they money! Your patients will accept the treatment you present to them only if the end result will benefit them and meet their needs. What are some of the end results your patients might want from total treatment? Here are just a few.

- A better appearance
- Improved health
- To prevent further problems

A word of caution—don't begin your case presentation until your patient has adequately presented his or her needs. Patients don't buy treatment or procedures, they pay for end-result benefits. Each patient must be viewed as an individual and for each individual those end-result benefits are different.

Remember, people always act in ways they visualize will have the greatest payoff. Also remember, people's actions and decisions are usually emotional and not logical. To you this means a patient will not be listening to what treatment and procedures you will be performing but to how the treatment and procedures will benefit them. Will the treatment meet their needs? When presenting treatment to your patients emphasize the end-result benefit, not the treat-

ment or procedure. Patients must convince themselves that your solution to their problem is the best one for them. You don't talk people into accepting dental treatment, you listen to them doing it. It is your responsibility to help your patients make important decisions about their dental health. No, not to twist their arms or push them, but help them fully understand the advantages they'll enjoy. If you have been successful in determining and meeting your patients' needs, your patients will accept the dental treatment that you present. How do you determine if a patient has accepted the proposed dental treatment? Ask them!! Here are some tips for doing it:

1. The assumptive question:

"Are there any other questions you have or other things I need to explain before we schedule your treatment?"

2. The either-or question:

"Considering the two options I've mentioned, which would you want us to schedule?"

3. The simply-asked question:

"May we then go ahead and schedule your treatment then?"

Higher treatment acceptance will be the end-result benefit your practice will experience from becoming a practice which focuses on meeting your patients' needs.

