



## Gratitude and Appreciation

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Throughout the journey, as we can endeavor to develop a relationship-based practice, we look forward to the time when patients pay their dental fees “with gratitude and appreciation.” (Dr. Pankey’s definition of a fare fee is “a fee that is paid with gratitude and appreciation.”) Early on we would be happy if the patients just paid their fees. Yet, as time goes on, we realize that money is not the only exchange necessary to live a “fulfilled life.”

I remember discussing this very topic over lunch with Dr. Pankey some twenty years ago. It seems as if I had become quite efficient, with the use of time and motion studies, comprehensive treatment planning and scheduling. I was getting paid, but life as a dentist was a “dry hole.” He smiled as he listened to me and offered his suggestion: “Why don’t you slow down and become more affective?” Affective, I thought, affective with what?

“With people” he continued. His words have had a profound influence on me through the years.

As I struggled to learn new skills, one thing became amazingly clear; as our patients come to us, confident in the care they receive, the trust they transfer to us is incredible. I found myself acknowledging this trust transfer of my patients, and an interesting thing happened; they began to “pay” with gratitude and appreciation. To the extent that I conveyed to the patient “ I don’t need your gratitude and appreciation” they didn’t extend it! But, when I was ready to risk myself and my gratitude and appreciation, the patients took the opportunity to express theirs.

At this time of the year, it seems appropriate to reflect on the gift of trust your patients offer you. Find some way to acknowledge it either through a warm handshake, eye contact, or a verbal thank you – or via a written note or open letter to your patients, possibly all of the above. The point is, be intentional and sincere in this communication. Instead of looking for the gratitude and appreciation, try expressing yours, and view it a most rewarding way to celebrate this past year and ring in the new one.

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