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**Set the tone: How to be a positive leader for your dental practice**

As an office manager, you have an enormous impact on your workplace. Not only do you keep everything running efficiently, but your attitude and leadership can affect the entire culture of the dental practice, which in turn will impact how your patients feel and your business results. According to Harvard Business Review, happy employees are also more productive, and the opposite is true for unhappy workers. Don’t underestimate the power of your attitude and behavioral leadership to either bring down the entire practice or to lift it up. Below are three ways to help you be a positive leader for your practice.

**Improve your own thinking habits**

When you want to improve the workplace culture around you, the best place to start is with yourself. As your thoughts and attitude become more positive and optimistic, so will that of the employees you lead. Note that positive thinking doesn’t mean pretending like everything is ok when it is not or ignoring difficult or challenging situations. It means that you take a “glass-half full versus glass half-empty” approach to those challenges.

The first step to improving your thinking habits is noticing them. Do most of your thoughts throughout the day tend to be positive or negative? If you notice that you are having a lot of negative thoughts, see if you can look at things from a more positive perspective. For example, the Mayo Clinic suggests that if you find yourself thinking something like, “This is too hard.” You could try to frame it a different way such as, “This is a chance to tackle something new and improve my skills.”

As you become more aware of your thoughts throughout the day and your self-talk, notice the tone you take with yourself. If you want to create a positive workplace, you should start by talking to yourself in a positive and encouraging way, like you would to a friend. For example, if you find yourself thinking, “I’m terrible at doing insurance claims.” Try reframing it in a way that you would for an employee you want to encourage. For example, “I am capable of doing insurance claims, I just need to set aside enough time to ask questions.”

**Share your positive thinking and self-care with others**

Sharing with others the positive steps we are taking for our well-being encourages others to do the same. According to the Harvard Business Review, as a leader, you can create healthy norms for the whole group by practicing good self-care and positive thinking and modeling that behavior for others.

When you do simple things for your well-being, such as eat a healthy lunch, leave on time to pick up your kids, take a planned vacation, or go outside for a walk during your break, you encourage others to do the same through your example. People who take care of themselves are better able to care for others, and your patients will ultimately benefit from better employee well-being. If employees don’t feel like they have time to take care of themselves, listen to their concerns and problem-solve with them to make sure they can prioritize their well-being throughout the day.

**Nurture a sense of belonging**

According to the Harvard Business Review, employees are more likely to stay in an organization when they report having a sense of belonging. One way to nurture a sense of shared goals is to be transparent about business priotirites and let your employees participate in growing the business. For example, you could hold an annual contest for employees to submit business improvement ideas and have the workplace vote on the best one to implement. Another simple way to increase a sense of community could be to hold an office holiday food drive with an end-goal set by employees.

**Putting it all together**

When you begin to think more positively and prioritize your well-being throughout the day, you will encourage employees to do the same. When your employees are happier, more positive, and feel a sense of belonging, they will be more productive, and will want to stay with your practice. Lastly, your patients will feel better walking into a practice where the employees are happy and well. Your positive leadership can make a huge difference in the results of your practice and the experience of your patients.

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