

BECOME THE LEADER OTHERS WISH TO FOLLOW

In my last segment in *The American Chiropractor* last year, one of the ending statements I made was “I wish for you the mindset of responsibility, the courage to speak clearly, the compassion to serve at a higher level, and the discipline to act with respect and integrity.” I would like to take up where I left off in that closing piece. If you were paying attention to the seven characteristics of Advanced Citizenry, you will no doubt have noticed that I left out one of the seven characteristics or values, “fairness”. This was not by mistake or omission, it was intentional, and you will understand why as you read on.

In the training we do with our Learning Curves members, we help them clarify their professional values and integrate their values into everything they do in and outside their practices on a professional basis. Our professional values are the bedrock with which we can build the foundation of our purpose in practice. Without a clear understanding of our values and as a natural extension of those values, our purpose, we are like a ship without a rudder. In times of calm, we can sail along without issues, but what happens when rough seas come up, as in losing a valued staff member, or the prevailing winds change like the changes in insurance reimbursement, or we sail into uncharted territories or along a rocky coastline similar to when our patients don’t follow our recommendations, respect our policies, or drop out of care unexpectedly. Then what happens? If you are like most, you scramble. You start to react and respond through policy and procedure changes, you try something new and different, you create incentive programs and special advertising schemes, and you start looking for the next new patient cure or the miracle policy manual. You may even bounce from one coaching company to the next looking for that perfect fit. In essence, you get off purpose and are now stuck in the process, similar to being run aground as in the analogy from earlier.

Being Purpose-driven is the same as being Values-driven. Without a clear understanding of your values, you cannot have a clear vision, you will not be able to take the most appropriate steps to achieve it and you will not have a meaningful purpose to support them. Every chiropractor I talk to wants to have a successful, balanced, and lucrative practice where everything functions smoothly and everyone loves everyone else and everybody works hard to help each other succeed. Every chiropractor wants an office where they can go to serve others with love and compassion and feel appreciated and valued in return. They want to be deliberate and certain about the direction of their practice and want to know that

they are on the right track and practice growth is an inevitable outcome. The problem with this scenario is that few if any of us have clearly defined values that create the foundation of our purpose with which to plan our mission steps and develop our vision of success. We are taught the rudimentary dynamics of doctoring and occasionally we may be given a broad scope idea of how to make recommendations that will lead to patient success, but we are not given the tools, training, consulting or coaching necessary to build a solid foundation for our essential self and the values that are important to us and the success of our practice, our patients and our ability to step outside our little world and impact humanity on a bigger scale.

This is not right, and I would say not “Fair”. Not just unfair to us, but to those that depend on us, our families, our teams and their families, our patients, their friends and families, our communities, and those that live and work in our towns, cities, and counties, and ultimately to those that have come before us in chiropractic and those that will come after us. The commitment that it takes to get through school, pass boards, get our first loan, connect with patients, create meaningful positions for and successfully train our assistants, should be rewarded with a level of success far beyond what many in our profession find 5,10, or 15 years into practice. Practice can and should be a process of personal and professional growth and accomplishment, where the years are marked with the growth we experience through the triumph of challenges and the growth in our leadership that comes with the support and nurturing we provide our families, our teams and our patients. To become fully engaged in the purpose of practice is very different than to be fully engaged in the process of practice. The purpose of practice helps to reinforce our values and define our leadership, purpose creates certainty and meaning in everything we do. To be fully engaged in the process where purpose is a second thought is quite frankly a burn-out game. It is unfair that so many in our profession start out so strong and courageous only to find themselves feeling fearful and defeated a few years later. It is unfair and I think it is unnecessary. As Dr. Patrick Gentempo always says, “when you are on purpose, you are not alone”. I know what it feels like to have a clearly defined purpose and values base in practice, and I know what it feels like to be on a roller coaster ride stuck in the process, and let me say from experience, I will never trade in the long term growth and success that comes with a values based practice for the short term gains of a process based practice. Processes in practice are important, but purpose and values are essential! If you are feeling less than certain and content with where you are in practice and want to regain the passion you once had, consider your professional

values and your reconnect with your purpose, it is the difference between an ordinary practice experience and an extra ordinary one! Please let me know what your thoughts are, I am always interested in hearing from you. Thank You for your love and commitment to chiropractic! Jeffrey S. Slocum D.C.