**Reducing The Stress For Patients And Clients**

 **While You Are Dealing With Stress**

It’s an understatement to say that healthcare providers and executives are more stressed out than ever before. Particularly over the last few years, it can be tough to spend energy on making the healthcare experience less stressful for the patient when staff are barely hanging on themselves.  But it’s now more important than ever—because Covid-19 and its accompanying policies have made your patients less eager than ever to engage with the healthcare system.

Most people didn’t ever enjoy going to a doctor’s office, even prior to the pandemic, and I am no exception.  But I had a great visit recently for my annual physical and much of it had to do with my doctor’s medical assistant Andrea.

1. First, she introduced herself. This immediately made me feel more comfortable.  Andrea took the time to build rapport. One would think rapport-building by a person in Andrea’s position would be the norm but unfortunately it is not. It’s rare.
2. I have white coat syndrome.  Andrea either sensed or noted it in my chart—this means she is very perceptive and/or took the time to read about me before we met. She talked to me casually and waited about five minutes before she attempted to take my blood pressure.  Andrea understood that telling me that the first reading was high would stress me out.  So she didn’t read the numbers aloud!  She said something along the line of “let’s wait a few more minutes to take it again.”  Eventually, she took it, and it was normal. But I can’t tell you how many times a person in her situation has made the white coat syndrome much worse for me!
3. Andrea took the time to look me in the eye.  She was empathic and non-judgmental as she asked her questions to prepare for my visit with my physician.

Personalizing the visit didn’t take a lot of extra time for Andrea.  But it certainly took a lot of skill and energy.  People like Andrea contribute to making the healthcare experience less “hateful” and more “grateful.”  In what small but meaningful ways are you and your colleagues trying to help reduce the stress for your patients?

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