



LCP Dental Team Coaching (formerly Julie Weir & Associates) is recognized as the premier consulting firm specializing in pediatric dentistry since 1996.

Ten Ways to Provide an Extraordinary Patient Experience

Many doctors and dental teams are opposed to change and openly resist it due to comfortability, making exceptions for why things do not work out, or even more likely, fear of taking risks. When we change a system, idea, or process, it comes with risk—risk of failure, risk of vulnerability, or risk of feeling uncomfortable. Albert Einstein once said, “The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” Let us challenge the status quo and work on shifting our mindset about change and embrace the opportunity that change brings. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we must get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Dental practices are changing, and most patients and parents expect new, next level experiences. We encourage you to step outside of your comfort zone, embrace new opportunities for excellence, and consider adopting one or more of the ideas below to create new, extraordinary experiences for your patients and parents.

1. Doctor and team member pictures in a frame

- It is hard to build relationships with patients and parents when they cannot see your face. Even to existing patients, you may look much different than you did before with the added PPE.
- Consider taking a picture of each team member without their PPE and put the picture inside a frame. You can place each frame in an operatory, next to the computers in the open bay, or at the front desk.
- Keep the frames close to where the team member normally sees patients and encourage each person to show the patient their picture so they can recognize who they are without the added protective gear.
- Another creative option is to have the team members’ faces printed life size on poster board and affix them to tongue depressors. Your team could hold them up for patients so they know what they look like without their protective gear.

2. 30-second welcome video for new patients

- Create a short, 30-second welcome video for all new patients so they have a chance to meet the doctor without PPE. In the video, the doctor should welcome the new patient to the practice and even consider giving a short tour of the office. This can quickly be done with an iPad or smart phone.

- Avoid using patient names so one recorded video can be used for all new patients. Prior to the new patient appointment, the video should be sent through your patient communication software to the new patient along with a short welcome message.
- Consider adding any additional information that is helpful to the welcome email, such as new COVID-19 guidelines and precautions, procedures for patient arrival, and any other practice information they should be aware of before arriving for their appointment.
- The video helps to establish connection and trust. Doing this from the start is imperative to building a lasting relationship with the patients and parents.
- “Hi, my name is Dr. Jones and I am the dentist at Smiling Kids Pediatric Dentistry. I wanted to share a little bit about myself, so you know who I am at your visit! I may look a little different the next time you see me since I will be wearing a mask. (Consider showing what you look like with a mask). During our visit, I will count your teeth, show you how to brush properly, and give you tips for keeping your teeth nice and clean! I look forward to seeing you soon!”
- Consider including team members also sharing their names/positions and welcoming the patient and parent.

3. Short video after new patient appointment

- Create a short video for your new patients at the end of each day thanking them for coming to your office. Let them know you appreciate their time spent with you and that they can call, text, or email anytime with questions about their child's needs.
- The videos should be specific to the new patient and use both the parent and patient name.
- "Hi Mrs. Jones and Johnny, it was a pleasure meeting you both today. Thank you for coming to see us and sharing about what makes you so special! I cannot wait to hear about your school play the next time I see you. Please let me know if I can help you with anything in the meantime. I look forward to seeing you soon!"

4. Video tour of the office

- Since COVID-19 has limited patients touring your office, consider taking a video to put on your website that shows new patients all your practice has to offer.
- Start the video at your front door and walk them through what a typical appointment flow would look like. Share with them the front office, the clinical area, and any other significant practice features.
- This is also a great opportunity to share with new and existing patients any new changes you have had to implement due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- You may consider showing them how all patients will have their temperature taken upon arrival, follow a team member to the clinical area, and any new contactless options you have available to keep them safe.

5. Give parents choices about their children's care

- It is important that parents feel informed about their child's treatment recommendations. A patient and parent experience could be drastically diminished if a parent feels unheard, invalidated, or unimportant.
- If teledentistry options are available in your practice, make sure parents are aware of this service, its benefits, and how to utilize it.
- If parents wish to discuss treatment options in more detail, be sure they understand there are virtual visits available so they can meet with the doctor from the safety of their own home.

6. Share on social media your "behind the scenes" infection control

- More than ever, parents want to know how you are going to keep their children safe. Post on social media "behind the scenes" footage that shows your team sterilizing instruments, sanitizing the rooms, and changing your PPE.
- Post a video role playing with your team so they know what precautions you are taking. Have one team

member play the parent and another team member playing the child. In the video, open doors for them, show them how they can pay with contactless options, avoid touching pens and clipboards, and any additional measures you have taken to ensure safety.

- These videos can also be posted on your website along with the tour of your office.

7. Digital dazzle cards

- Surprise your patients with fun, thoughtful personalized texts with digital dazzle cards.
- Each week, team members should send digital dazzle cards to 1–3 patients. Make sure the note is thoughtful and attentive toward a patient's specific situation.
- Consider having your clinical team provide the front office team with the message at the end of each day. The next day, your front office team can send the two-way texts through your patient communication software.
- Examples:
 - **Thoughtful:** "Dear Johnny, it was fun seeing you today! It has been quite a while. We missed you. You brightened my day with your stories about your vacation. I am so glad you're our patient!"
 - **Apology:** "Dear Mrs. Smith, I apologize Johnny's treatment took so long today. We appreciate your cooperation and patience. We make a promise that next time we will get Johnny in and out on time. See you soon!"
 - **Star Patient:** "Dear Sammy, you did so well today! I know you were a little frightened when you got to the office, but you were very brave and helped us take care of you and your teeth. I am very proud of you! You were my "Star Patient" of the day!"
 - **Complimentary:** "Dear Susie, I absolutely loved your pink sparkly shoes today! I wish I had pink sparkly shoes just like you! We can't wait to see you at your next visit!"

8. Speak in patient-friendly terms

- When speaking to parents and patients regarding oral hygiene, treatment recommendations, and dental anatomy, use terms and vocabulary that they understand.
- Many doctors and dental teams use language that is much too technical for parents to fully comprehend.
- Practice with your team members and role play conversations. Discuss which terms you are using that may be confusing to patients and parents. Identify simpler vocabulary terms and keep them in mind for your next consultation.
- Be proactive and create a list of common terms for children to have a comfortable experience. Have a list of "Words We Use During Your Child's Visit" posted on your

website. This can even be a short and fun video (i.e. sleepy juice instead of shot, wiggle your tooth instead of pull your tooth, silver hat instead of crown, vitamins for your teeth instead of fluoride, counting your teeth instead of exam, pictures of your teeth instead of X-rays).

9. Share marketing calendar for theme days on your social media platforms and website

- Patients love seeing the dental teams dress up for theme days! Make it interactive by sharing your theme day calendar on your website.
- When parents schedule, share with them that day's theme, if there is one, and encourage them to have their child get involved.
- For example, if the child is scheduled on Superhero Day, let the parent know that the team will be wearing superhero outfits and if the child has one, wear it to his/her visit!
- Share the monthly theme day calendar on your social media platforms and highlight each week's theme day(s).

10. Focus on FUN!

- There is something so special about pediatric dentistry. It is easy to get caught up in the hectic schedule and stress of COVID-19 precautions, but keep in mind the reasons you wanted to provide dentistry for children in the first place.
- Do not forget the simple things, such as an air high five, a thoughtful compliment to the patient and parent, and the appreciation for their coming to see you. Enjoy all you have accomplished and the great service you are providing to the children who need it. You only get to see them for a short time, after all.

This pandemic has forced all of us to modify how we lead our teams and run our businesses. We have been pushed, stretched, and bent past what we thought we could handle. Nonetheless, this is our reality. Let us reflect on where we have been and enter the next stage of this new season with a clear vision on where we are headed. As you reflect on new opportunities for better patient experiences in your practice, ask yourself: are you ready to take your practice to the next level?

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