



Be a Goldfish

It's healthier to just move on from mistakes (and negativity) rather than linger on them.

BY LYNN HOMISAK, PRT

To Our Readers: There are no foolish questions. Chances are that if you have a question or concern in your practice, others are experiencing a similar situation. We're here to help. PM [doctor and staff] readers are encouraged to submit questions to soslynn@gmail.com which will be printed and answered in this column anonymously.

Topic: More Stress than is "Diagnosed"!

Dear Lynn,

I just overheard my receptionist tell a patient on the phone, "Sounds like you have a stress fracture." She went on to recommend at-home treatment until seen for their scheduled appointment. I didn't know who this patient was but was shocked that a diagnosis was offered. Over the phone. By my staff! Three strikes?

No question about this one. Taking a wild guess here, your reception-

ist does not hold a license to practice medicine. Given that, he or she stepped way over the line of their job description and crossed over into a more serious malpractice offense by diagnosing a condition. Period. Enough said. It seems there is a reprimand in order, starting with a team

mark, but now it seems to have snowballed into downright rude behavior. As you might imagine, it is not only affecting morale, but productivity. I need a referee!

Are you open to trying something out of the ordinary?

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review of strict practice policies and the serious consequences of skirting those policies. And of course, follow up with better training methods. And fast. Like yesterday.

Topic: Be a Goldfish

Dear Lynn,

Wondering if anyone deals with constant conflict in their office. For us, it started as the occasional snide re-

First, something you already know. Negativity never has a place in our practices, let alone having it occur consistently. The moment this behavior becomes evident, it needs to immediately be addressed. Postponing only intensifies its adverse consequences and makes things worse.

If it is one staffer who, after being warned, still cannot control

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snide remarks and continually gets on everyone's last nerve, a conversation with him/her that starts (and ends) with, "That type of behavior is not tolerated here, and I think you may be happier working elsewhere" needs to happen. With the instigator out of the picture, it is suggested that an additional conversation take place with the remaining staffers. Here is where we might consider summoning our pretend-Ted Lasso character to weigh in.

For those familiar with the fictional TV football (soccer) coach, you will agree that his positive approach to life's struggles is simple and refreshing.

Case in point: Lasso uses this saying: "Be a goldfish" to help one of his players not dwell on a mistake that has negatively affected his performance on the field. He explains, "You know who the happiest animal in the world is? A goldfish. Why? It's got a 10-second memory. Be a goldfish." His inspirational quote implies that it is healthier, mentally and physically, to just move on from mistakes (and negativity) rather than linger on them.

Lasso's leadership approach to alleviating this player's frustration can be translated as a highly effective communication tool. And although circumstances are different (his take place on a playing field and yours, in a medical practice), both can benefit from his philosophical offering.

Another worthwhile tactic to share with your team is the Rule of Five. It suggests that you can compartmentalize any drama by asking yourself, "Is whatever is going on going to affect me for five seconds?" "Five minutes?" "Five hours?" "Five days?" "Five weeks?" "Five months?" "Or five years?" If it's going to affect your life for five seconds—so what? Let it go, it's not worth the aggravation. If it is going to affect your life for five years, it's an "all-hands on deck"



situation requiring full attention and sage advice.

Looking at the big picture, we do not have to LIVE with our co-workers. We only have to spend eight or so hours a day with them. In that short period of time, we should be able to do our jobs and hold back any destructive, negative

All people are different. Their unique personalities are different and because of this, not everyone absorbs information equally from a single style of teaching.

Now if only there was a way to get to know each staff member better, we would be able to match the most effective learning techniques with their individual persona. How about we ask them? Are you not ready to sit down and have those individual conversations? Does it feel too awkward?

If so, you might want to start by distributing a written survey that will help you learn more about them; what makes them tick?; what stimulates their productivity?; what fuels their job satisfaction? And today is your lucky day! I can help by sending you a complimentary survey template to help highlight

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remarks. You remember what your mother taught you... "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all!"

Hurtful words thrown back and forth are nothing more than garbage in, garbage out. Give the above suggestions a try. They will prove to be better ways to deal with conflict than tilting at windmills.

No one will deny that rude remarks are everywhere—in and out of our workplaces. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone could just commit to "being a goldfish"? Is it so difficult to realize that negative words are nothing more than childish behavior, and NOT reacting is the more adult response? Just move on. Be a goldfish.

Topic: There's No Such Thing as a "Cookie Cutter" Staff.

Dear Lynn,

I train all my staff the same way. Why do some of them get it and some don't?

those particular preferences. Email me at soslynn@gmail.com for the actual document.

The awareness factor that a survey delivers is priceless because the questions designed to explore personalities serve many professional purposes. It can influence better job placement, reveal job expectations, consider time restraints and family obligations, and structure both motivational tools and benefit incentives (because again, not every person is motivated or incentivized by the same thing). This is all for the cost of a piece of paper!

On a more personal note, learning more about personal lives (events, things they enjoy, hobbies, etc.) can also be used to strike up a meaningful conversation that will help foster a better work relationship and increase productivity and growth as a team.

After completing a short annual survey (annual is best as circumstances change over time), you can

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review it with the employee or just keep it on file for reference.

Regarding training, the most effective program includes a variety of methods. However, because individuals are more open to learning and re-

task is done meets the needs of the “logical” thinker.

Learning these little details about your staff, though they may seem inconsequential, can play a critical role in providing staff with the training approach most suitable for them. When the end result produces an accept-

welcomed, appreciated, and inclusive. (Here is where the survey can play a role.)

3) Understand and provide each new employee with proper orientation, necessary focused training, and ongoing encouragement, appreciation, coaching, and supervision.

When employees are guided to success, the practice is in an overall better position to succeed. **PM**

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taining information if they can personally relate to the way it is presented, you will want to adjust accordingly.

In other words, some individuals will benefit from auditory learning, while others are more visual-oriented. A kinesthetic (or hands-on, HOW-TO) approach offers both the trainer and trainee a sense of confidence in their achievement, while also understanding WHY a

able task outcome AND it is combined with an employee who enjoys their job, you've hit the mega jackpot!

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1) Choose wisely. Don't rush the hiring process. Properly vet your job applicants and carefully consider their personality traits before hiring.

2) Once hired, make them feel



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