

The Power of Presence in Podiatric Care

BY **BARRY H. BLOCK, DPM, JD**

In our increasingly fast-paced and technology-driven society, it's easy to focus on electronic health records, insurance plans, and treatment protocols—sometimes at the expense of our most vital diagnostic tool: the patient.

Effective communication begins not with what we say, but with how we listen. Truly listening to our patients, without interrupting, glancing at screens, or mentally preparing our next response, can reveal not only the source of their pain, but also the emotional context behind it. A patient limping into your office may be carrying more than physical discomfort; fear and anxiety and often go unspoken unless we attune ourselves to their cues.

Making consistent eye contact is a small but powerful gesture. It conveys attentiveness, builds trust, and reassures patients that their concerns matter. In contrast, diverting your gaze, whether to a chart or screen, can unintentionally signal disinterest. One easy way to ensure eye contact is to notice the color of each patient's eyes.

Equally important is the ability to read body language. A patient might verbally minimize their pain, but crossed arms, stiff posture, or hesitancy to bear weight tells a different story. Picking up on these signals allows us to address concerns that might otherwise be overlooked, leading to more accurate diagnoses and improved patient compliance and outcomes.

In podiatry, where so many conditions impact quality of life, taking the time to be fully present with our patients is not just good practice—it's essential care. Healing improves when patients feel seen, heard, and understood. Remember—there's another human being at the other end of that foot.

Respectfully Submitted,

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