

The Rules about Role-Playing

What I hear, I forget,
What I see, I remember,
What I do, I understand.

Confucius 451 BC

Why is it important to role play for communication skills practice to improve effectiveness? After all we talk all day to patients! Bert Decker, master communicator says it best; “because **You’ve Got To Be Believed To Be Heard.**” That’s also the title of his terrific book on becoming an effective communicator.

Commitment to quality in the dental profession goes beyond a quality clinical procedure. It’s also about quality interactions with our patients and team members. The practice may offer outstanding dentistry, yet if we do not communicate with care, confidence, and professionalism, we may not have the number of opportunities to provide dentistry as we might like. Role-playing is a training tool it allows a team member to practice and be prepared for the moments of truth that are present everyday we interact with patients!

The Role Play: Guidelines for Success

- Be specific with the purpose
 - What are you trying to achieve?
 - What do the participants want to practice?
 - What is the desired outcome?
- ❖ **Note:** Preparation can contribute greatly to the overall success of the role play and may minimize “butterflies”.
- Remember, a role play is not meant to be an Oscar winning performance! It is meant to provide you with the opportunity to “feel” and prepare for situations you find yourself in. Practice improves effectiveness.
- Encourage feedback from the others on your team. This feedback may offer other positive solutions to handle situations. Tell your team **what you are practicing** so they will know where to focus.
 - ❖ **Note:** It is hard to know how we really appear to others. Supportive, constructive feedback from observing the role play is invaluable in increasing effectiveness. How about seeing for yourself by being recorded or videotaped?

After receiving feedback and doing a self-analysis, **role play the same situation again**. Now you are on the road to mastery!!

Let's face it. For many of us, role playing can feel artificial and embarrassing. MOSAIC has heard the following hundreds of times...."When I'm actually in this situation, I'll know how to handle it.". Well, chances are with practice you'll be more effective "handling" your interactions. You'll feel more assured and be more confident. Sometimes that is what it takes to get the result your want. Those you come into contact with will be impressed by your professionalism, job knowledge and caring attitude.

When role playing becomes a part of your regular team meetings, it will feel more natural...and not a punishment any longer!
