

Less is More

First, nothing is more important than chocolate. If I'm giving a presentation during dessert, dessert wins. Second to the food, nothing is more important than the people in the audience. If I follow the installation, the momentum favors the valued leaders. Third, if the golf tournament follows the speech, well, you know where the focus will be.

All three challenges presented themselves as I stood up to give the finale luncheon keynote for the American Academy of Dental Practice Administration. It's a lot of fun to speak at these events. Yet for these reasons, I felt like Elizabeth Taylor's seventh husband on their wedding night — I knew exactly what to do; I just wasn't that sure I'd be compelling and unique.

How do you solve this conundrum? How do you stay focused, do a great job, and maintain the attention of others when faced with a logistical quagmire? Your solution: Less is more. To control chaos in your practice and anywhere in your life, follow the maxim, "Less is more."

When less is more

Here is a list of "Less is More-isms" guaranteed to help you communicate, lead, and manage with greater finesse:

★ **Less clutter, more clarity**

It's amazing how many unnecessary words we use. Count up words such as "you know," and phrases such as "to be perfectly honest with you" (is everything else you say *dishonest*?), and fillers such as "you know what I'm saying?" Be your own clutter guard. Make your intentions clear by deleting extraneous "uhs" and "ums."

★ **Less procrastination, more action**

I just returned from my National Speakers Association annual convention. One take away for you and me is "Done is better than perfect." Perhaps you are postponing a project in your office or at home because it has to be done a specific way. You don't have to compromise your ideals, yet you will move forward with efficiency when you realize it doesn't have to be *perfect*. Nothing ever is.

★ **Less talking, more listening**

In January, I had the privilege of working with 12 dentists in Fergus Falls, Minn. Yes, that's Minnesota in January! (The weather cooperated and the snow-covered farmland radiated with a serene beauty.) During that day, I could've done all the talking, but the best way to learn is to listen. In a facilitative way, we had a give-and-take discussion. Using their answers to the initial question, "What do you want to learn more about in the realm of communication skills in your practice?" we strategized

and practiced. When could you be talking less and listening more?

★ **Less distraction, more focus**

One of my corporate clients observed, "If you have money bets on your golf game, you golf better." How can you provide less distraction and more focus in your office? Do your patients get distracted when you do case presentations? Is the room where you do these consultations filled with stuff on the wall, extra articulators on the table, and a floating screen saver on the computer? After you finish reading this article, walk around your office. Look with fresh eyes, then get rid of the distractions.

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Reisman, author of "The Naked Truth About Giving Great Speeches," teaches how to speak for yourself so that others listen, trust, and buy from you. She has been a visiting faculty presenter at The Pankey Institute, a speaker at many dental meetings, and president of Speak For Yourself® for 15 years. For the "Top Ten Ways to Blow It as a Communicator," e-mail her at Karen@SpeakForYourself.com. For her other learning tools, go to www.SpeakForYourself.com.



★ **Less razzle dazzle, more simplicity**

Did you know that 12 million Crayola crayons are produced annually? Their motto is “Keep it simple.” Think about a box of crayons. There aren’t tons of choices. You get basic, primary colors. That’s it.

There was a time, however, when crayons were not doing well in the marketplace. Fancy chalks and pens seemed to be taking over. Yet the crayon industry stuck to simplicity and has surpassed its competitors.

As I coach presenters, I beg my clients to limit the fancy visuals with all of the bells and whistles. Give us great visuals, well-defined pictures, without six fonts and eight color schemes. Where can you find more simplicity in your office?

★ **Fewer answers, more questions**

Patients visit your practice wanting answers. You may find out more, diagnose better, and relate with heightened trust when you ask more questions, then close your mouth and listen.

When more is more

At times, more is more — when it comes to nurturing your close relationships.

Back to that keynote at the AADPA meeting: When I got up to begin the presentation, the audience was eating their dessert, they had just installed their new members and leaders, and the golf game was around the corner. The only thing they hadn’t been able to do was take a much-needed bathroom break. My speech was a success. I made it shorter. I employed my favorite maxim: “Less is More.”

