

The Receptionist Personality Dilemma...Scheduling

(Make a copy of this and give it to your Scheduling Coordinator)

As a well-chosen receptionist you are probably a strong *relator* type who does not want to upset anybody, which is good, but you are probably a weak get-it-done *director* type. Your director personality style makes you decisive; it makes you schedule the appointments and not care about pleasing others. Your relator and director styles are opposite and balance each other out. Thus, if strong in one and weak in the other you are doubly strong in one and doubly weak in the other.

You may think that you are doing right to always please the patient/family, but you are not. You are placing them in inappropriate appointment times, which does not give the doctor and clinical team the time to properly treat them, or, gives them too much time and makes their day less productive. In either case it is very frustrating for the doctor and clinical team—you are not pleasing them. Yes, the demanding people are in front of you and you want to please them so they leave, but don't forget who you are not pleasing—your team.

You need to realize that if you follow your schedule and *not* give the strong-willed patients what they want when it is inappropriate that you are actually doing what is best for them. And you being a strong relator, they will trust that you actually are giving them what is best for them and they will accept the appropriate appointment time.

There are three types of people who walk up to you for an appointment:

1. Those who will take any appointment you give them
2. Those who want certain times, but will take what you can give them
3. Those who want what they want and don't care about what you want to give them

So, why give out *popular* appointment times to those who will take anything, when you can reserve those popular appointment times for those who are more demanding.

You can resolve your scheduling dilemma and make your team and all but a few patient/families happy by doing the following when giving out appointments:

1. *Never* ask, “**When you would like to come in?**”—be more specific.
2. Tell them, “**The doctor wants to see you in X weeks!**” and, if not known ask them, “**Is there a particular day of the week that works best for you?**”
3. Once known, pick out two *unpopular* times for their appointment and say, “**We can see you on such and such a day at X o'clock or Y o'clock!**” and *wait* for their response.
4. If they complain and don't want the suggested time, suggest a *more* popular appointment time by saying, “**We can see you at Z o'clock!**” and wait for their response.
5. If still unhappy with the suggested times say, “**I'm sorry, but these are the only appointments that will give the doctor and assistants the necessary time to properly treat you. Would you like appointment-A or appointment-B?**”—then schedule them.

You will find that the more you do this, the more the strong-willed patient/families will learn their limits in getting what they want and will accept the appointment times you suggest.