



Smart N.D. Biz

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10 Powerful Phrases to Keep Patients On Track and On Schedule!

The more prepared you are to manage patients interactions, the more efficient your naturopathic practice will run.

Here are 10 phrases every doctor should have on their tool belt, or variations of them, to keep patients on track and appointments and/or calls on schedule.

Copy these phrases, edit them to make them yours and in your voice and learn them so you are ready to handle all your patient interactions with care and professionalism.



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1. Prepare them for short phone calls:

"It's good to talk to you [Name], just to let you know I have about 3/5/7 minutes before my next appointment, so how can I help you today?"

2. Turn questions into Appointments:

If a patient or potential patient asks a question about a health issue, **don't rush to answer it!** You don't have enough information yet and it is unfair and unprofessional to "assume" you have the answer yet. Instead suggest or invite them to schedule an appointment:

"I know that seems like a simple issue/question [Name], my challenge is I have no way of knowing exactly what's causing your symptoms until I know a lot more about you and what's going on - as you know everyone is different and everyone's body reacts in different ways to certain conditions. The symptoms you are describing could be caused by a number of things so the best thing we should do is to schedule an appointment so we can explore this and get to the root cause of the problem and how to fix it, does that make sense? How does [Day/Time] work for you?"

3. Prepare them for the length of the appointment at the appointment.

Let them know how much time you have together:

"[Name], we have 50 minutes together today and we have a lot to cover so let's get started by telling me..."



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4. Create Urgency:

I do have another patient right after you at [time] so let's make sure we get everything done by [time] ...

5. Take control of the conversation

How? Set an agenda at the beginning of the appointment:

We have a lot of important issues to discuss in the next 50 minutes or so, and I do have another patient at (time) so how about I set an agenda so we can get the most out of our time together? They always agree!

- *First I want to ask you some questions about how you've been doing*
- *Next I want to discuss your (Test results/ Diet/ Nutrition/ Progress ???)*
- *I also want to chat about/review your health goals*
- *And lastly I'll share/update your care plan so you know exactly the steps to take to get/stay healthy*
- *Does that make sense?*
- *Is there anything else you want to discuss during our time together today?*
- *Great let's get started ... tell me about your...*

6. Keep control of the conversation

How? Ask a question ... when you ask a patient a health related question, you are keeping the conversation on track.

Examples:

Tell me about your energy this week? How have your _____ symptoms been these past weeks?

How have you been doing on the new diet plan?



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7. Help them keep their stories short:

When Chatty Cathy wants to tell you all about "Little Johnny's first day of school" How do you get her to keep it short without being rude?

Acknowledge & Ask.

When they stop for a breath (hopefully they do) say:

"That's great, send him my best wishes, but let's get back to why you are here so we don't run out of time ... then ask a question ...

See examples above.

8. Managing "Columbo Clients"

We all have them, right? Those great clients/patients who, just like the old TV detective Columbo, at the very end of your appointment say "Oh, Just one more thing..."

If it's a simple (30 second) answer of course you go ahead and answer it, but all too often it's some completely new symptom or concern. Go back to your appointment setting phrases:

I know that seems like a simple issue/question [Name], my challenge is I have no way of knowing exactly what's causing your symptoms until I know a lot more about what's going on and unfortunately today we don't have the time to get into that conversation. As you know everyone is different and everyone's body reacts in different ways to certain conditions. The symptoms you are describing could be caused by a number of things so the best thing we should do is to schedule another appointment so we can explore this and get to the root cause of the problem and how to fix it, does that make sense? How does [Day/Time] work for you?



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9. Patient Emails

Subject Line: A quick question . . .

Then you open the email and it is 3 or 4 paragraphs describing symptoms and asking what to do!

At the risk of being repetitive ... don't answer it! Use your appointment setting phrases.

Just this time it's an email template:

Subject Line: Re: A Quick Question...

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your email.

I have read your description of your symptoms and while I know what you described may that seem like a simple issue/question, in reality it may not be so simple.

My challenge is I have no way of knowing exactly what's causing your symptoms until I know a lot more about what's going on and unfortunately that is not something I can do in a quick email.

As you know everyone is different and everyone's body reacts in different ways to certain conditions. The symptoms you are describing could be caused by a number of things so the best thing we should do is to schedule an appointment so we can explore this and get to the root cause of the problem and how to



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fix it. If you can call the office at 555-987-6543 we can set up a good time for you to come in. I have some opening next Tue & Wed if that would work for you.

*Sincerely,
Dr. Caring*

10. Know when to say "No". (And how to say it with caring)

I know as a doctor you are driven to help people and when a patient asks you for help every piece of your being is driven to say "Yes, I can help with that". That is great, and that is what makes you such a great Naturopathic Doctor.

However ...

Sometimes it is ok to say "No, sorry but I'm not the best fit to help with this issue, let me refer you to"

Example 1: If a patient asks you to help with something that you have no experience with or case files to refer to and you know it is going to take you hours of additional research to find out what the best treatment plan should be, perhaps it's time to say No.

Understand, if this health issue is something you think you will use often in the future, then by all means do the research and help the patient. But if it's an unusual case you owe it to your patient to let them know that this is not a good fit for you and that you would be doing them a disservice if you took it on ... then refer them to another doctor who has experience with this issue.



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Example 2: You have a potential new patient and you've asked all the right questions in your discovery session or in your first appointment and you suspect that they are really a "Break/Fix" patient; they want you to treat the symptom, not the cause.

Again, you owe to them to let them know that is not how Naturopathic Medicine works and that while you know how to treat the cause of the problem, you are concerned about their level of commitment and if they will follow through on your advice and that perhaps they should seek help elsewhere that tis more focuses on symptoms.

Trust me, in both of these examples, you will save yourself and your reputation from some serious headaches in the future ... and you will be doing the right thing for the patient.

Bonus Tip: Don't try to do everything in the initial appointment!

All too often I talk to Doctors who tell me their initial appointment are 90 minute or 2 hours and that often they run out of time.

Folks, that's a mistake, develop your "On Ramp" for new patients where it is broken into two or even three appointments. You won't feel as rushed, you will give the patient better care and the patient won't be so overwhelmed.

There are hundreds of other phrases and questions to use, but hopefully this helps get you started.

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