



At the Heart Of Your Care

BY DR. SUSAN MAPLES

Do you ever long for the old days in health care, when your doctor's eyes were on you, not a computer screen? When you felt more like a person than a statistic? By 2018 electronic medical records and "evidence-based" (current research-proven) practices have become the goal. Add to that, the evolving "business" of medicine with the inherent corporate responsibility for generating a profit. Meanwhile you as the patient cope with confusing (and shrinking) insurance reimbursements and the chilly culture of medical billing.

It's no walk in the park for health care professionals either. Most work for a demanding corporation where they struggle balancing **business** (how they get paid), **science** (what they know) and **art** (how they *care for you, as a unique individual*).

The business of health care places a strong value on *efficiency*, the ability to see more patients and performing more tests/procedures in less time. Unfortunately, efficiency doesn't acknowledge the time it might take you to remember details, catch your breath or wipe your tears while you report

your story. And efficiency doesn't recognize the extra time it might take to uncover *all* the root causes in a complicated diagnosis. Nor does efficiency make much room for a small assembly of varied health professionals to collaborate about your diagnosis—or your best treatment options.

We, as human beings, are hardwired for authentic human contact—for real listening, big-hearted compassion and understanding! Without building these heart bonds we lack trust in our docs, and we lose the willingness to enthusiastically participate in our care. Is it any wonder then, that countless studies have proven significantly more favorable health outcomes when the relationships between patients and their medical/dental professionals is personal, caring and trust-enhancing?

But it's not just patients who yearn for connection, it's the care providers too! In a large 2016 survey of health professionals, a whopping 74% of docs said they valued their doctor-patient relationships *foremost* in their practice satisfaction level. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of these surveyed docs said outside forces severely affected their abilities to provide that

quality of care. On a personal note, when I gather with any group of docs, for learning or socializing, there is almost always some conversation about the menacing forces that form a wedge between the doctor and patient.

If you want new-fangled medicine/dentistry with old-fashioned personalized care, you can help. Greet us with a smile, even if you've been waiting. (Assume that someone needed more personal attention just before you.) Come prepared with your own questions—and write them down, so you don't forget to ask. If you feel rushed, please ask us to slow down. When you have a great experience, say thank you—or even write a hand written, snail mail note of gratitude. And don't forget, you still have choices. If you think you could feel better cared about or understood by someone on your medical/dental team, keep looking. There is likely a more personalized "fit" for you out there.



Dr. Susan Maples is a dentist in Holt. She is also a speaker, health educator and author of BlabberMouth! 77 Secrets Only Your Mouth Can Tell You to Live a Healthier, Happier, Sexier Life. Reach her at Susan@DrSusanMaples.com



Susan Maples, DDS

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