

Be Prepared!

Frequently, being prepared refers to a plan of action “in the event of...” For instance, in your practice or with your family, it’s smart to have a disaster plan of action and have everyone involved practice the steps to take. In case there is a fire in the home, know what the escape routes are, where to meet up to ensure everyone made it out of the building, etc. Disaster readiness also means having essential supplies stored in an easily accessed location.

But mostly (and fortunately) our lives are not about disaster avoidance. Most of us live pretty routine lives. We wake up, shower and get dressed; get the kids off to school; commute to work; go home; make dinner; help with homework or watch TV; and go to bed. Because they are so routine, we can do most of these tasks “with our eyes closed.”

While routines provide for a certain amount of ease in life, there is also the downside of doing things in rote manner, with little or no conscious effort involved. When people show up at work in a “business as usual” mode, customer service is close to absent. Excellence in customer service requires people to be totally present and conscious.

I remember as a young child, my mother and I would select what I was going to wear to school before I went to bed, and the clothes were laid out on a chair. Besides saving time in the morning, it also added a touch of anticipation to the next day for me...I was prepared before I went to sleep. Many years later, I accepted a position as an office manager for a business brokerage firm. When I noticed I was no longer picking out my outfit to wear to work the next day, I realized I needed to resign from the job. Not only did I not look forward to going to work, but also it had in fact become “work”, and I was not serving my employer, the other employees or the clients.

Frankly, I am surprised to hear of the number of practices that allow team members to come to work and *then* put on make-up, fix hair, etc. The unspoken message of these team members is often that work is something they are squeezing into their lives, and it is an unintentional statement of not being prepared to work!

Being prepared is both a physical and a mental exercise.

I remember the first time I had an opportunity to speak before an audience of 500+. I was *not* the scheduled speaker or even a desired speaker of the company I was working for. However, the person who was supposed to be there that evening was double booked, and my manager spent the first five hours of the day calling around the country trying to find another speaker. Finally, around 4:00 that afternoon, she came into my office and asked if I would do the event. Of course I said yes, as I had been suggesting I could do it from the time she discovered the problem.

That night, I was standing in the back of a full auditorium waiting for the signal to walk up the center aisle and start the seminar. My manager was standing next to me, patting my back trying to assure me (but I think really herself) that I would do fine. I remember the little voice in my

head pointing out all the ways I was going to fail - I was not the chosen one, I'm their "better than nothing" choice, etc. As soon as I heard it, I immediately changed my internal dialogue and started recalling stories of understudies who became opera or Broadway stars when the main act couldn't perform. I realized this was MY time and even though it didn't look like what I thought "my time" would look like, I was going to give it all I had. In my heart I knew I WAS PREPARED!!! While I did not have a lot of time to prepare my talk for that evening, everything I had done up to that point had prepared me for this. And I blew them out of the water that night! (Also, it was the last time my manager brought in an outside speaker for our monthly events!)

How can practice team members experience "my time" moments every day? It starts with being prepared.

Before you go to bed, lay out your clothes for the next day. And maintain that excitement once you're in the office, remembering that you have the tools and training to be successful. You ARE prepared!