



## 10 Tips to Decrease Stress & Increase Case Acceptance

Stress levels are sky-high right now. Your team is stressed. Your patients are stressed. That can be a volatile mix.

Knowing what to say and how to say it makes a huge difference in reducing stress, improving the workplace culture, and increasing case acceptance.

Stress management expert Jen Butler works with dental practices across the country. She is the founder and CEO of JB Partners, a SMaRT firm dedicated to building successful teams. SMaRT stands for Stress Management and Resilience Training.

Here are 10 tips you can implement today to overcome the stressful challenges you face. Visit [www.PatientPrism.com](http://www.PatientPrism.com) for more resources.



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## 1. Choose the right words

Masks can be a trigger point for stress for some people. Choosing the right words can diffuse stress and accomplish your goal of following the guidelines set by your practice and/or your local government.

In this case, try using the “Feel / Felt / Found” technique.

*“I understand how you feel. Others have felt the same way. What we have found is that by following the government restrictions as we have to do, we can’t make everybody happy, but I do know that you will be extremely happy with our dentistry.”*

It can also be powerful to use a “From / For” statement.

*“I understand how you feel. You don’t know my story. I’m protecting myself not from you, but I’m protecting myself for my mom so I can go see her.”*

## 2. Live in the neutral

One of the biggest causes of stress is worrying about how somebody will react.

For example, imagine that you need to talk to your boss about your work schedule.

“Try to come into the conversation without preconceived notions,” recommends Jen Butler. “Don’t label the conversation as hard, stressful, or difficult. Instead, go in with an open mind of what could work and offer a few solutions.”

## 3. Control your mindset

There is so much going on right now. The only thing that you have absolute control over is your perception of the circumstances. You have control over your thoughts. You have control over your attitude.

You can choose to turn on the TV or turn it off. You can choose to come from a place of kindness or not. Your attitude is the most imperative element of resilience.



## 4. Use “I don’t, I do” statements

When you don’t know what to say, Jen Butler recommends using the “I don’t, I do” strategy.

*“I don’t know what to say. I do want you to know that I stand with you. I don’t know what are the right things I can share to make you feel better. I do want you to know that I’m here for you.”*

## 5. Propose and vote for solutions to reduce stress

In addition to mental and emotional stress, many team members are under physical stress because of the added PPE requirements. It can be especially difficult for team members who experience hot flashes or claustrophobia.

Jen Butler offers two solutions that she recommends for dental teams. She recommends having the team discuss them and then vote for a solution.

“I recommend 90-minute lunches and extending the work day by 30 minutes. Why? Because it can take 15 minutes to get off all the PPE garb and do the COVID clean, and then the team has to come back 15 minutes early to garb up again. That leaves them only 30 minutes to eat. By extending the lunch break, people get an emotional and physical break.”

The second idea: Hire a floater who can flip rooms, hold the suction, perform sterilization, and handle light duties in both front and back. That will give the clinical team members a few minutes to breathe without a mask in between patients.

## 6. Align expectations with the situation

Acknowledging that things are not normal helps align expectations. The good news is the situation will not last forever.

“Give yourself a break,” said Butler. “Don’t worry if you’ve gained weight because you haven’t been able to go to the gym or that your gray is showing. Everyone on the planet is going through the same thing and understands.”

### 7. Reduce no-shows

Patients weren’t always courteous about keeping their appointments even before the pandemic. Now that can be even more of a challenge and an added source of stress.

When you’re scheduling an appointment, be honest and say that you’re working very hard to keep your doors open for your community during this time. Here is some phrasing you can use:

*“Please do us a favor and confirm this appointment time is going to work for you. We were shut down for several weeks and we need your help to keep us working now so we can keep our doors open.”*

These are visceral words for people right now. Everyone knows someone who is struggling to find work. By being honest, you’re connecting on a deeper level. The appointment is not about the calendar. It’s about your livelihood. It’s about helping your community.

Some practices are having their doctor and hygienist place calls the night before to simply say,

*“This is Dr. Jones. I’m looking forward to seeing you tomorrow at 1 pm. I’ve reserved that time for you and wanted to see if you had any questions before your visit.”*

It creates a personal bond. When a patient likes you and trusts you, he or she is more likely to do business with you.

### 8. Create a personal connection with patients

People are looking for personal connections more than ever right now. That can be hard when you’re dressed from head to toe in PPE. Create a collage of pictures with your team members names and fun images and display them in the operatories and other patient-facing areas. They give your patients something to look at, humanizes your team, and will help your patients relax. Plus, the framed picture is easy to wipe down.

Another idea: Create laminated buttons with each team member’s picture that can be worn on your gown or lab coat.



You can also create short videos to showcase your team donning the PPE and share them via email, SMS links, social media, and on your website. People respond to visuals, so when they know what to expect – from a temperature check to wearing a mask in the office to the extra layers of PPE – they will be less stressed about their visit.

## 9. Increase same-day dentistry

Successful dental practices make getting the work done as easy and convenient as possible for their patients. Right now, nobody wants to have to make multiple visits to a provider.

Here is some effective phrasing to use to increase same-day dentistry. When you're scheduling the appointment, ask if the patient would prefer to only have a diagnosis during his or her visit, or would like to go ahead and just take care of the problem while they're already in the office.

Once the patient is chairside, try this effective phrasing:

*"You're already here and you're comfortable. I'm already garbed up and we know what needs to be done to solve the problem. By taking care of it right now, we save you time and money. Dental problems only get bigger the longer you wait. By taking care of it today, it's the cheapest it will ever be. We have a lot of ways to help you fit the cost of the treatment into your family's budget, including monthly payment plans if that would help you. Our goal is have you leave you here looking and feeling good so you can cross this off your list of things to do."*

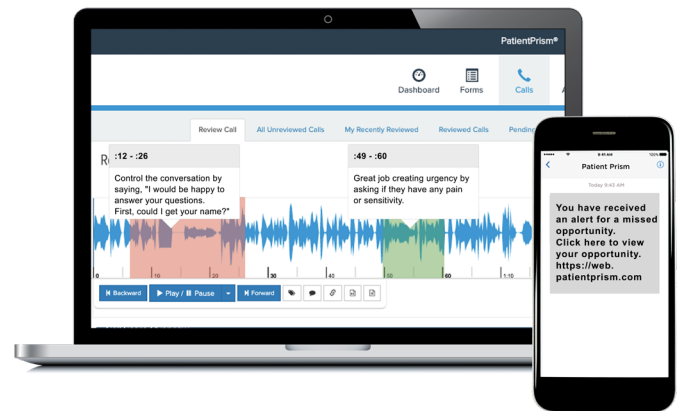
People are financially-conscious right now, so mentioning your in-house discount dental plan or third-party financing options resonates. By removing cost as an obstacle to care, and by focusing on the convenience of achieving their goals without the need for multiple visits, you're benefitting your patients and your practice.

## 10. Make every phone call count

One of the best ways to reduce stress in the dental practice is by having a schedule filled with high-value patients.

Right now, patients are more concerned than ever about safety, treatment costs, and insurance coverage. Knowing what to say and how to say it makes all the difference.

Patient Prism is an award-winning call tracking and call coaching solution to improve new patient call conversions and increase dental practice revenue. It records your new patient calls, identifies the ones that don't end in a booked appointment, and coaches your team on what to say to win back that missed opportunity – all within about 30 minutes.



To see how Patient Prism could help your team schedule more high-revenue patients, visit

[www.PatientPrism.com/Overview](https://www.PatientPrism.com/Overview)

To learn more stress management techniques and to download Jen Butler's free e-book "10 Best Ways to Reduce Stress," visit [JBPartners.com](https://www.JBPartners.com).

Visit [www.PatientPrism.com/Overview](https://www.PatientPrism.com/Overview) to learn how our award-winning solution will give your team a blueprint for call-handling success.