

The Personal Touch of Influence ~ the x factor within

by Joanne M. Anderson / jmawriter.com

It's a bird, it's a plane, no, no, it's a TV show, an algebra component, a personal trait ~ it's the X factor. The X Factor television program title, according to wikipedia, refers to "the undefinable 'something' that makes for star quality." Solving for x in algebra has been the bane of many a high school student across the decades.

At musicbizacademy.com, we find the definition: "Emotionally, those with the 'X factor' have a way of pushing our buttons psychologically. They make us feel good or inspired." And from the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*: "a circumstance, quality, or person that has a strong but unpredictable influence."

There's a lot of wiggle room in reports as to how many ads a person sees every day. The Consumer Reports website suggests 247 commercial messages each day, and the American Academy of Pediatrics declares: "The average young person views more than 3,000 ads per day on television, the Internet, billboards and magazines."

Various sources cite numbers ranging from 250-ish to 3,000, with that top number popping up most often. Since most everyone does some tasks where advertising is not present like in the shower (unless the TV or radio is really loud) and sleeping, it's more likely in the hundreds, not thousands. But hey, that's still one gigantic boatload of messages with one major purpose: to influence someone's mind. The slogans are catchy, and visual elements can be compelling ~ beautiful people about your age having the kind of pain-free, fun-filled, exciting, relaxing, enjoyable moments your patients long for.

It begs the question: How do healthcare professionals compete with multi-million dollar ad budgets and commercials developed by some of the most creative graphic designers on the planet? This is not rocket science, and your advantage can be just as gigantic: the personal touch ~ literal and figuratively speaking.

You meet, see, talk to, touch, relate to, inform and connect with every patient and often family members, caregivers and loving friends. And, you can undermine every ad by establishing trust, integrity and sincerity ~ all which carry immeasurable influence.

Trust ~ Unless given reason to the contrary, most people trust healthcare professionals for their knowledge, skills, education and training.

Integrity ~ A solid reputation for speaking truth and embracing ethical standards, along with the lifestyle that matches, can reassure even the most skeptic patients that you are honest.

Sincerity ~ Doctors, nurses, CNAs and often support staff have a heart for the well-being of every person they see. It has propelled many into the medical field, and that kind of genuine caring can be expressed in your voice, eye contact and touch.

Your literal personal touch can influence patients you see for a few minutes way more than the cumulative hours of advertising, and you can adjust it for every patient. Consider the Phil Robertson (Duck Dynasty) husky, bearded, kind of fellow. You shake his hand firmly, without lingering. For the more frail, elderly Betty White lady, you take her hand, then cover it with your other one and give it a gentle shake. You may approach an 8-year-old with a kind touch on the shoulder. Gentle human touch is both emotionally and psychologically uplifting and is a good place to start, especially when your next touch might not be so pleasant.

Figuratively, your personal touch is projected in your face, smile, eye contact, approach, body stance, tone of voice and choice of words. You have an X factor which is capable in influencing not only your patients, but also your staff, colleagues, family and friends. Cultivate it, and use it always for the benefit of others.