



Patients, Patience

No matter what business you are in, the ability to tune-in to the needs of your client is vital to developing a successful relationship. That skill is even more important to practitioners in hands-on or healing professions, says **Edward Feldman**, owner of Feldman Chiropractic in Kingston.

Feldman will give a full-day workshop on "Making the Healing Arts Successful for Your Clients" at his practice on Saturday, April 2, beginning at 9 a.m. Cost: \$125. For more information, call 609-252-1766.

The seminar is aimed particularly at psychologists, massage therapists, and alternative health care practitioners. "This is a skill that

has nothing to do with education level or special certifications, but it is still one of the most difficult skills to learn or to teach," says Feldman. "The ability to create and nurture strong relationships is especially important for health practitioners because a strong client-practitioner bond can open a pathway for significant trust and healing."

Feldman has been in practice for more than 30 years. He is a graduate of SUNY-Buffalo and earned his D.C. from New York Chiropractic College. He was a table trainer for the Upledger Institute for Workshops in CranioSacral Therapy and is an assistant trainer in the Feldenkrais Method, developed by Moshe Feldenkrais, an Israeli physicist and athlete.

Feldman's interest in the "mind/body connection in healing" began while he was still in school, in the 1970s. "I had an awareness of the importance of this connection, but at the time I didn't have the experience to really understand it," he says. A few years into practicing his interest increased as he noticed that while his patients always seemed to feel relief, it was often only temporary. "The people kept returning every few months or so with the same problems. I felt there must be something more to it than just doing the correct procedures."

Presence. "I'd argue that a successful outcome for clients means that they have felt acknowledged, received, seen, and heard by the therapist," says Feldman. "To achieve this a practitioner must have presence. This means that the

person is centered and present in himself. He has put all of his own personal concerns as well as his technical skills behind a curtain."

While it may seem counter-intuitive to "put your technical skills behind a curtain," Feldman says that the practitioner who begins a session with a client thinking about the latest techniques will often try to use those skills whether they are the most appropriate for the particular client or not.

"So much of our work involves listening," Feldman says. "However, before we can be active listeners and fully take in what our clients are presenting, we need to be aware of what is happening within us. This listening occurs when we become aware of our breath and the sensations occurring within our own bodies."

Before you begin a session ask yourself, are you attentive to your breathing? Are you allowing yourself to experience your breath just the way it is, without trying to change it? Is your mind soft and calm? Have you let go of everything going on outside the room that may prevent you from experiencing the session fully? "If you answer yes, you are ready to settle in to work on the task at hand," Feldman says.

Space. Another important aspect of presence that practitioners must remember is the spatial comfort level of the client. "We need to learn how to negotiate that space, to learn what makes each person we work with comfortable or uncomfortable," Feldman says. "We must respect space and become aware of how it affects people's

perceptions. The ability to reveal more deeply depends on a feeling of safety."

Feldman suggests a simple exercise to help practitioners learn about their own comfort levels and to become more aware of the spatial comfort zones of others. Work with another person and begin the exercise standing about 15 feet apart. Walk slowly toward each other until both people feel that the comfort level is correct. Discuss your feelings with the other person.

While many healing practitioners, massage therapists, and chiropractors must be hands-on when working with a client, it is still important to respect their space before and after the session.

Listening. Listening is one of the most important skills anyone can learn — it is important not just for the healing arts, but for every person in a service profession. "We must focus on the other person, not on our own agendas, to resonate with the person across from us and sense what's going on within their minds and bodies," Feldman says. "It is from this place that we relate as human beings."

A practitioner must "check in with the client and pay attention to both the verbal and non-verbal cues," he says. A client may feel crowded in by the practitioner, even though physically the client is given lots of space. "At times like this we may notice a change in body language for the client that indicates a level of discomfort," he says. "It is essential to take note of these cues and make adjustments so that the client feels met, safe and seen." — **Karen Hodges Miller**