

Unlocking Patient Loyalty: How the FORD Method Builds Real Connections

By Amy Anderson, MBA

"Building personal relationships with patients makes them feel special and valued. And it's one of the surest ways to build a loyal, long-term patient base." —Karen Zupko



Building genuine relationships with patients isn't just a "nice to have," it's a powerful way to boost loyalty, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth eferrals. The FORD method offers a simple, memorable framework for making every patient feel seen and valued.

Imagine a patient asks, "How soon can I get back to yoga after my procedure?" You could just answer, "About six weeks," and move on. But what if you took a moment to dig deeper? Ask, "What kind of yoga do you practice? Do you go to a studio or do it at home? Is there a special event coming up you want to be ready for?" Suddenly, you're not just their surgeon/injector/patient care coordinator; you're someone who cares about their life. This simple shift can turn a routine visit into a memorable experience and build loyalty that lasts.

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WHAT IS THE FORD METHOD?

FORD stands for:

- Family
- Occupation
- Recreation
- Dreams

The idea is simple: by learning about these four areas of a patient's life, you can create conversations that go beyond symptoms and treatments, making every interaction more personal and memorable.

People want to feel like more than just a name on a chart. When you ask about someone's family, job, hobbies, or future aspirations, you show genuine interest, and that builds trust.

HOW TO USE THE FORD METHOD IN PRACTICE

1. Listen for Clues

Patients often drop hints about their lives without being asked. Maybe they mention a child's graduation, a stressful work project, or plans for a marathon. Don't let these moments pass; follow up with curiosity.

2. Ask Open-Ended Questions

Instead of yes/no questions, invite stories.

- **Family:** *"I saw on your form that you have two kids. What are they into these days?"*
- **Occupation:** *"You mentioned you're a software developer. What kind of projects do you work on?"*
- **Recreation:** *"I noticed you're into mountain biking. Where do you like to ride?"*
- **Dreams:** *"You mentioned wanting to travel more after retirement. Where's your dream destination?"*

3. Record and Remember

Document FORD details in your notes. Next time, you can pick up where you left off *("How did your son's soccer tournament go?").* This makes every visit feel personal and thoughtful.

4. Make it a Team Effort

Share FORD insights with your team. Start each day with a quick huddle to discuss upcoming patients and their interests. This ensures everyone is on the same page and ready to engage.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The FORD method is a simple, effective way to turn routine interactions into meaningful relationships. By focusing on what matters most to your patients—their families, work, passions, and dream—you'll stand out as someone who truly cares. In a world where personal connection is often overlooked, FORD is your shortcut to better relationships and a thriving practice.

Ready to try it? Next time you meet a patient, get your FORD on, and see how quickly the conversation (and the relationship) transforms.

Amy Anderson, founder and CEO of ACG Practice Partners, is a seasoned healthcare business coach. With over two decades of experience working with plastic surgeons, Amy is an authority in practice operations and the development of efficient workflows. She has coached hundreds of surgeons, administrators, PCCs, and team members on building a strong office culture, improving revenue, and optimizing business management practices. Amy's approachable style and practical advice make her a favorite among surgeons and staff alike. Follow Amy on Instagram @amyandersonmba or email her at connect@acgpracticepartners.com.