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WHY WOMEN MAKE HEALTHCARE BETTER

Women really drive healthcare these days and I'm not nearly the knuckle dragger male I was back in the day.

About a year ago and aided by some serious lecture time by one Bridget Brennan, author of *The Female Factor* and *Why She Buys*, I wrote a piece here about women in healthcare. The writing exercise was worth way more continuing education credits than my lengthy time spent in dental school under the supervision of my almost fictional nemesis, Doc Ricardo "wrath of" Kahn.

Today, women's earnings actually drive a family's disposable income; since 1970, women's wages have increased some 44 percent. Women in their 20s earn more than men in their 20s; they are the primary wage earners in 40 percent of households and earn more Bachelor, Masters, and Doctorate degrees than men. By the way, women also make 80 percent of family health decisions.

I work with seven women every day and two-thirds of our patients are women. These days, 50 percent of graduating dentists are women. Makes sense to me to listen to Bridget Brennan, my team, my patients, and about half of my colleagues.

I've always seen every woman team member and patient as my daughter, sister, or mom. And admittedly, I'm not often accused of being a total quick study. But with Bridget's help and research I

better appreciate what women want in healthcare. I've learned women appreciate learning experiences, enthusiasm, and passion; they want me to respect their time and speak their language (pronouns are strictly FORBIDDEN). I've learned that eye contact, smiles and conversation go miles in establishing the fact that we really do like the people who honor us with their trust and our opportunity to serve.

Everyone wants to feel safe in the healthcare environment. And seeing patients as friends and family is a major step in the right direction.

Women are the healthcare buyers. The gender factor is the strongest buying factor of them all. With women, service is the most powerful marketing factor. It's really up to us (practitioners) to see the opportunity...and in the process, provide more effective care and more likely enjoy longer and happier careers. Good service is giving people what they really want. Great service is exceeding expectations. Why not look and listen for opportunities to be extraordinary?

We have a sign hanging in our reception area that says we're committed to "... making dentistry fun." And in healthcare, I think finding the fun is a lot easier when we pay attention to *The Female Factor* and *Why She Buys*.

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Other than a brief flirtation with a pair of five-pound dumbbells, most of the workout is bodyweight only—pushups, leg raises, squats and lots of leg and arm circles that seem mild at first, but pack a wicked punch if you continue to do them for long enough. I'm no ballerina, so I can't say for sure how much of the workout is derived from dance, but other than the occasional plié, the movements aren't particularly graceful or challenging. Anyone can do them.

This is nice, because it means you could technically learn the movements and do them at home on your own—without the need for expensive equipment or expensive personal training. That said, a few minutes in Jake's class and it becomes pretty obvious why having an instructor push your limits is worth the extra money.

"Look at this chair I brought for you," Jake taunts us, 30 painful seconds into a tippy toe chair squat. "You're welcome. All of you should send me a thank you note. We still do that down south."

Jake, as it turns out, is from Arkansas. He came to Southern California a few years ago and thankfully, brought a seemingly endless bag of one-liners along with him.

On not standing high enough on our tippy toes during relevé squats: "I don't like kitten heels. They're disgusting. I want to see big, slutty stilettos."

On the lack of enthusiasm in our hip thrusts: "I want to see some baby making motions. If you can't do that right, I pity your social life."

The only thing that kept me from laughing out loud is the fear of receiving another punishing dose of ab-work from Jake.

I make it through the hour class without giving up. I'm exhausted, yet I feel undeniably accomplished.

Bottom line: Barre is definitely a killer, whole-body workout. Your core will thank you afterward, but certainly not during. My legs, too, were still feeling the burn hours later.

Barre isn't particularly social. You're there to work, not to chat. But Jake had me constantly cracking up (at least internally). Definitely an entertaining way to spend an hour sweating out the stress of a long day at work. ☺