



Easy to Implement
Strategies to See
More Kids and Make
Practice Fun!

5 STEPS TO BUILD A PEDIATRIC, FAMILY- FOCUSED PRACTICE

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5 Steps to Build a Pediatric, Family Focused Practice

Working with kids can be one of the most rewarding, fun and satisfying aspects of chiropractic practice.

While this document is focused on how to grow the percentage of children you are serving in your office, I would like to make a clear distinction here between a pediatric practice and a pediatric, family-focused practice.

A pediatric practice is focused solely on pediatric cases. A pediatric, family-focused office is geared towards first meeting the needs of the child, however it is also acutely aware of the responsibility to educate the family on the detrimental effects of vertebral subluxation, and the need for each individual to have their spine and nervous system checked on a regular basis throughout a lifetime.

A pediatric, family-focused office can and should be very easy, fun and profitable. While kids bring a fun and light energy and dynamic to a practice, they also require very different skill sets and clinical expertise.

Of course, before you decide that you are going to specialize in taking care of children and having a pediatric, family-focused practice, you should probably make sure you actually like kids and that they like you!

I wish you an abundance of joy, personal and professional success and hope this document can contribute to all three.

Sincerely,

Steve Tullius, D.C., ACP

Step 1

Be Likeable, Like Kids, and Be Like a Kid

Before deciding if you want to have a pediatric, family-focused office you should **first decide if you *REALLY* even want this.**

It's okay, it's not for everyone.

Not everyone wants to be crawling after or chasing kids around the office. Some chiropractors want everyone lying on a table ready for their analysis when they are ready for them. Others don't like the unpredictable nature that kids bring to an office environment or the sticky walls, sand on the tables, or face paper strewn about the room.

That's totally fine. Those doctors can focus on their ideal target market and serve them really well. It doesn't mean they can't or should not take care of kids, only that they will probably never serve a huge pediatric population.

For those brave souls that want to take on and truly embrace taking care of children, it requires three essential character traits that will make or break you.

They are quite simple really and for many doctors they just come naturally but others may need to work on these things.

- 1) **Be Likeable.** Be fun. Don't be stuffy and as BJ Palmer would say, "Don't take yourself too damn seriously." Do people like you? Are you a positive person? Do you give off positive vibes? Aren't sure? Ask a close friend or family member. Be honest with yourself. Kids want and need a doctor who is fun and energetic just like them!
- 2) **Like Kids.** This seems like a no-brainer but you really need to like kids if you want an office full of them. Like I said before, it's not for everyone. The good news is that having

a practice full of kids is actually easier than parenting. You have to live with your kids. The kids in the office will go home after their visit. :)

- 3) **Be Like a Kid.** Some of us can do this easier than others. For me it is just who I am. I like to joke, to play and have fun. If this doesn't come naturally for you, spend time connecting with and remembering your childhood. Remember what it was like as a child to eat an ice cream cone. First trip to Disneyland? How did you feel on the first day of school each new year? Holidays? Grandparents? Get connected to the feeling of being a kid so you can build rapport with the kids in your office. Tell jokes. Be interested in their lives. Get down on a knee and look right into their eyes when they talk to you. Make them feel important because they are.

Step 2

Refine Your Art

Children have very different clinical needs than adults. In fact, the more children you take care of, the more you will actually see the unique and subtle needs that each adult has as well.

It's an interesting phenomena. ***As you take care of children of all ages and at different stages of neurological development, you will discover how different their adjusting needs are.***

Couple that with taking care of children with special needs who have extremely sensitive nervous systems and you will become acutely aware of the subtle differences in every individual's nervous system. Taking care of lots of children has made me a much better adjustor for people of all ages.

Unless you had some ultra unique experience in chiropractic college, you were not adequately prepared to take care of children. Diversified adjusting of the infant spine does not cut it.

While there are many techniques and systems that are extremely effective at correcting subluxations in pediatric populations, I can only speak from my experience. That experience has found, and clinical results support, that a tonal approach for a pediatric, family-focused practice is ideal. For those unfamiliar with tonal approaches, I refer you to read Dr. Christopher Kent's paper, [Models of Vertebral Subluxation: A Review](#).

The tonal approach utilizes a kid-friendly pre and post check analysis as well as pediatric appropriate forces to correct vertebral subluxations. In my personal practice ***I find that having as many different tools in your belt to address the variety of children and individual preferences to be invaluable.*** On any given day I will use a traditional osseous adjustment, activator, pediatric toggle headpiece, a light touch vibratory force with a fingertip, or a side posture sacral move. Adjustments will be given with a child lying prone or supine, standing or stooped, on a table or by the toys, on their own or on a parent.

In regards to objective analysis, I consider paraspinal thermography a necessity. Not only for your clinical assessment of the neurologic component of the vertebral subluxation and its corrective process, but also for the proper education of parents. While it is a bit more difficult to perform thermography on pediatric populations, it is very possible to attain accurate scans.

Once you have selected a child-friendly technique and analysis, make sure you train and master that art through continuing education. It is one of the best investments you can make in yourself and your patients deserve nothing less than the best from you.

Whatever technique system you choose, make sure it meets the neurological, developmental and emotional needs of children of all ages. Many techniques meet the doctors needs. When running a pediatric-focused practice, your technique needs to meet the child.

Step 3:

Meet Their Needs, Wants and Desires

The most successful businesses cater to the needs, wants and desires of their target market. If you are going to create a pediatric, family-focused practice then it should be designed with those needs, wants and desires in mind. If you need help determining your ideal target market and how to connect and build relationships with them, I highly suggest you check out the work of [Dr. Shawn Dill](#) and his [Black Diamond Club](#) or personal coaching.

When I designed my latest office I “hired” an expert in this area. My 7 year-old son. I told him I was hiring him as my CFO (Chief Fun Officer) and I tasked him with making the office so fun that kids would never want to leave.

Guess what? Kids never want to leave!

Immediately when they walk in they know they are in a safe place. The colors are soft and calming yet strategically energetic in specific locations. We don't have one small kids corner. Half the reception area is a kids area with toys, puzzles and stuffed animals. We also have three other kids areas so that kids (and parents.... and staff) don't feel overwhelmed. One section naturally attracts kids that are more energetic while another area attracts the kids who want to stick more to themselves and read a book or look at the fish tank. We have no walls except for the exam, consultation room and bathroom and the ceilings are super high. All of this creates a very open, safe and FUN environment.

Remember, ***most children coming into the chiropractic setting with neurodevelopmental issues are in a state of extreme fight or flight.*** You want to minimize any additional stress your office environment might create and make a first impression that is lasting and lets them know they are safe and in the right place.

Parents will also immediately recognize that you are a specialist in caring for children based upon your office environment. This will boost their confidence and lower their stress response as they are often having to keep their children occupied or “controlled” in other healthcare settings.

When a new child comes into the office, I usually try to greet the child first and then the parents. I get down on a knee or at eye level, welcome them into the office and take them on a tour. I show them around and help them feel comfortable. If you aren't available to do so, your staff should do the same.

Part of meeting their needs is interacting with them with the appropriate energetic levels. Some children are more outgoing while others are very shy and still others are outright scared. Changing your body posture, position and tone and speed of your voice as well as your choice of words depending upon the age and cognitive level of the child makes a huge difference in establishing rapport and creating a successful relationship.

Asking for permission to come into their space and to check them, especially for non-verbal children, makes a huge difference in being able to fully interact and develop a relationship with the child. So much communication is non-verbal. Children can feel and sense your energy. Keep it regulated and your awareness acutely sensitive to the body language and energy of the children you are seeing.

Speaking of energy, having fresh, organic fruit is a huge plus. Kids get hungry. The extra touch and effort goes a long way with the parents and the kids. I keep it simple with apples. I've tried and failed with a few other items. Let's just say that raisins and squeezable applesauce were major fails.

Oh, and ***don't forget the stickers. Kids love stickers. :)***

Step 4

It Takes a Village

Being viewed as a specialist requires that you act like one.

Specialists provide opinion and services around their unique speciality. In your case, it is chiropractic, vertebral subluxation, and recognizing typical as well as abnormal development.

Society values specialists. They want the best heart surgeon. If given the option they will hire an electrician versus a handyman for complicated electrical work. They want the best educators and they also want the best chiropractor helping their children.

Put simply, to specialize is to stand out and be valued for the specialized service you provide.

In my office I do not offer anything besides vertebral subluxation correction and connecting people with other services and support they may need. I am very clear with this and emphasize the message of, "It takes a village," in all of my workshops and communications.

People inherently understand and appreciate that it is impossible to be a master of everything. They know that you can not possibly be a specialist in chiropractic **AND** nutrition, occupational therapy, physical therapy, medicine, etc.. When you make it very clear that you only focus on vertebral subluxation, and refer people to the appropriate specialist in other matters, it has the following effects:

- 1) ***It emphasizes and people understand the seriousness of vertebral subluxation.*** If your entire practice focus is dedicated to addressing vertebral subluxations, it naturally increases the value of that service and strengthens your message which increases the ability of patients to choose care for the entire family, refer others to you, and positively impacts the public understanding of chiropractic's unique offering for society.
- 2) People will perceive you as the specialist which also means they will value your service more than the generalist.

- 3) ***Building strategic alliances with occupational therapists, naturopaths, nutritionists, etc will help build your practice through referrals*** and also give the best level of service to your patients who deserve a specialist in all areas of healthcare.

Part of the “it takes a village” concept also includes reaching out and supporting local parents support groups. ***These groups need all the support they can get and are often looking for a space to host their meetings.***

Almost every city and town now have at least one or multiple support groups and organizations. They regularly have guest speakers and are always looking for new information that can help their children. Attend these meetings looking to gain more knowledge about how to serve your community and not a with a perspective of what is in it for you. Listen and Learn. Let others do the talking and when asked, offer information about how chiropractic can help.

The importance of these meetings cannot be overstated. They are filled with parents looking for solutions and you have one. They are also great opportunities to network with other providers.

There are many different providers that serve the health and educational needs of children. Many of these providers are perfect resources for the children you will be caring for as well as great referral sources for your services.

Speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, holistic medical doctors, naturopaths, acupuncturists, psychologists, neurologists, developmental pediatricians, gastroenterologists, psychiatrists, nutritionists and caregivers are just some of the potential strategic alliances. That is, of course, as long as you are focused on vertebral subluxation correction and not competing with them.

This is a very clear example of how attempting to do everything health-wise for a patient is counterproductive to the growth of your practice and chiropractic, and ultimately the success of your patient.

Teaming up with experts in their field and being the expert in yours makes perfect sense to both parents and providers, and will bring many more opportunities to serve these children than you could ever create on your own.

Contact the various providers and ask to come meet with them to learn more about what they do. Explain to them that you serve many children and need great referral sources to serve their various needs. Listen and learn. Be interested and not interesting and

watch as they ask you more about what you do and even invite you to come present to their teams.

Ask them for brochures/business cards to have available in your practice. This act of goodwill and collaboration will bring a sincere interest in you and your work.

Step 5

The 3 C's: Clarity, Confidence, and Communication

Children and parents have acutely aware internal warning systems. We all do actually but kids' systems have not been dampened by outside-in education and parents have a biologically driven burst in their activity when it comes to anything involving the safety and well-being of their children.

Because of this, ***you must possess high levels of Clarity and Confidence as well as authentic and highly effective Communication skills.***

1) Clarity

At the root of the three C's is having a clear and commanding understanding of our chiropractic philosophy.

You must know that you know that you know that you can help everyone that comes to you.

You must be rooted in the awareness that the body is constantly striving for the optimal expression of life. That vertebral subluxations occur commonly throughout life and that their presence will negatively impact the optimal expression of health, life, function and well-being.

If subluxation is present and adequately addressed, the natural result will be increased health, function and well-being. Not sometimes, but always. This is a scientific fact and cannot be successfully argued.

If you disagree or find yourself feeling nervous, uneasy or unsure regarding what you have just read, then you need to dive deeper into the exploration of our philosophy and the scientific realities of the subluxation.

Having this deep awareness of the detrimental impact of vertebral subluxation and the value of chiropractic and your service will give you extreme clarity. That clarity and focus is tangible. People can feel it when you speak.

Fear and uncertainty are just as tangible and children and parents will sense and feel it immediately.

Clarity comes from knowing what you know which comes from philosophy.

Confidence comes from experience.

2) Confidence

Your confidence may at first be lacking.

This is especially true if you have had little experience with children and particularly with difficult cases. ***You must find confidence by gaining experience either by working with or shadowing an experienced doctor.*** Your confidence will also naturally build as you begin to take care of more and more children.

That confidence will grow exponentially in proportion to the degree of complicated cases you take on. ***As you begin to experience first hand the seemingly miraculous restorative changes in those you serve, your confidence and certainty will skyrocket.***

This will naturally improve your communication of what you do. However, this is not enough. Unless you are a naturally gifted communicator and speaker, you must study and understand body language (both yours and others), tone, word selection and delivery.

These topics require much more space than this ebook could cover. The concepts have been covered by many authors and are currently shared by many fine doctors teaching these skills through mentoring or through coaching/consulting.

If you need help in these areas, seek it out.

3) Communication

Communication is how you share what you do. It is how people will find you and discover what you have to offer that will improve the life of their child, self and family.

Communication can be broken down briefly into internal and external communications.

Internal communications includes everything from the first phone call, initial visit, and report of findings to the fielding of patient questions and email newsletters. All of these communications should be centered around reinforcing your central messages: that you are a specialist in the detection and correction of vertebral subluxation in children and families and have solutions to improve their health and quality of life.

Internal communications will produce new patients due to the education process as family members, friends and acquaintances are referred into the office so it should not be neglected. ***External communications, however, will typically have the quickest return and build a practice initially.***

External communications comes in various forms. From advertising to social media, to workshops and community events.

At best your community believes chiropractic is a great neck and low back pain treatment. At worse they think you are a quack and that chiropractic is bogus.

The great news is that you can ignore the latter group as they are inconsequential to your mission and objectives. ***DO NOT ENGAGE THEM.*** On social media for example, simply delete their comments if you find an occasional troll show up. They are a huge waste of your time, energy and focus and take you away from serving more people.

Don't let them win. Delete. Ban. Move on.

The even better news is that you can shift the beliefs of the majority of individuals who have a neutral, lukewarm or positive (back pain) belief about chiropractic. I have found that most people fit into these three groups and social media is abundantly ripe with the opportunity to reach them.

I have literally built my pediatric, family-focused practice through the use of social media and specifically through Facebook advertisements of my lectures.

Over the past 4 years I have given over 40 presentations inside and outside of my office on neurodevelopmental disorders. These presentations regularly receive anywhere from 15-25 people and on average approximately 50% or more of those people will schedule an initial visit for their child and many times for their entire family.

Over the years I have refined and tweaked my presentations into what I consider to be one of the most cohesive, congruent and effective presentations available on chiropractic for the public.

These presentations consistently reframe chiropractic for the audiences in such a way that ***they leave understanding what a vertebral subluxation is, how it negatively impacts the nervous system health and function of an individual, and that a chiropractor is a specialist specifically trained to check the spine for vertebral subluxations.***

It makes practice super easy. I don't have to worry about new patients because there are so many people looking for exactly what we have to offer. We just have to give them the tools to make the logical choice of getting checked.

It's given me a lifestyle and practice I desire. I work 2.5 days per week in my practice and take 6-8 weeks of vacation a year.

My practice works for me and my family so I can help care for and raise my son who has had intense special needs as well as spend time working on my other passions. I love creating modern and effective patient education materials and it's my duty to work in the political and educational arenas to strengthen our profession and help get our message out to society.

Shifting Belief Systems

The process of shifting public perceptions involves taking people on a journey of discovery which shares specific information at key sequences so that people can come to logical conclusions on their own.

Whether they choose to engage chiropractic and your office at that point is affected by multiple variables but following this process and repeating the key messages over and over again is critical in order for the public to understand what chiropractic actually is.

The Patient Learning Process



In the diagram above you see that ***we need to take people from the general to the specific. From concepts that they already hold as core beliefs such as optimal health and function being our natural, normal state to chiropractic principle #17, cause and effect. It focuses heavily on the autonomic system, function, neuroplasticity and the fact that structure always affects function.***

We then introduce vertebral subluxation and how it affects all those things and then pose the questions to the audience. What do you think their response is?

It's exactly what we would tell them except here's the REALLY important piece.

I never had to tell them.

THEY came up with it because I gave them information in a logical sequence.

This program now runs on autopilot for me.

I've created such strong brand awareness, goodwill and a reputation as a specialist that every time I post my lectures, I regularly have 60 shares or more with only a small advertising investment.

The whole process is automated. Even the drip email education and follow up marketing that the attendees and no shows receive that continually keep chiropractic at the forefront of their mind.

There is really nothing quite like it out there that I'm aware of.

If you are interested in learning more about this completely automated, turnkey pediatric, family-focused practice building presentation and program, [you can check it out by clicking here](#).

Final Thoughts

By now I hope you have become inspired to implement some of these strategies that have worked for me.

These strategies will work wherever you practice. Besides being kid-friendly in your personal approach, they are not personality dependent. They are designed to position you as the sought after specialist in an area that no other healthcare discipline or provider can provide. It's the status all chiropractors who refine and master their art, communication and service deserve.

My hopes are that you become ultra successful so that you can serve more children and families and have the practice and lifestyle you desire and deserve so that we can collectively make the huge impact we know chiropractic is destined to make.

All my best,

Steve Tullius, D.C., ACP