

# Osteopathic Ways of Being

## Episode #5

By Steve Paulus, DO, MS and Bonnie Gintis, DO

*In this episode, we explore an innovative approach to enriching your inner life as an Osteopath:  
**The Osteopathic Ways of Being.***

*The Osteopathic Ways of Being are not formally a part of A. T. Still's teachings. However, they are congruent with the basic Philosophy of Osteopathy and with the spirit of A. T. Still's approach to healthcare. The Osteopathic profession has tended to ignore the inner life of the Osteopath. We can apply the Osteopathic approach to our inner life. Our inner life is reflected in the outer expression of the Osteopath, and strongly influences the quality of patient care. Who we are, affects how we treat. Our level of awareness of internal events (us) influences our ability to sense and perceive external events (our patients). By attending to your "Ways of Being" you can become a better Osteopath. Being a better Osteopath, is clinically significant.*

- 1. CONSCIOUSNESS: The consciousness of the Osteopath influences perceptual abilities and the overall quality of treatment. By being more aware of our thoughts, emotions, sensations, perceptions, and surroundings, we are able to enhance all aspects of our clinical skills.**

*Definition: Consciousness is the state of being awake and aware of oneself and one's surroundings. As an Osteopath, your patient is part of your surroundings. Consciousness is the subjective state of knowing. The word "consciousness" is also used to imply the choice of being aware, as contrasted with being passively ignorant or oblivious, or passively allowing the default be to not choose and just accept whatever choice is made for you by others or by your circumstances.*

- 2. ATTENTION: An Osteopath is an expert at paying attention. The ability to pay attention is the source of perceptual proficiency in clinical practice and is indispensable to expanding skills in Osteopathic Manipulation and in evolving as a clinician.**

*Definition: Attention is the action of receiving information from one's self or one's environment. There's a dynamic quality to the flow of information, and how it is received by the consciousness.*

- 3. PATIENCE: Patience is the capacity to choose waiting over action or to choose action at the right time. In an Osteopathic practice, being patient means to ultimately respect the natural ability of the individual to self-heal.**

*Definition: Patience is a quality of consciousness and essential to the development of an Osteopath's attentional skills. Patience is the ability to remain calm and grounded, and to respect the tempo of the patient's response to your treatment.*

- 4. HUMILITY: The inspired practice of Osteopathy arises from the virtue of humility. We must recognize our strengths and weaknesses. It's important to know that absolute certainty, in uncertain situations, can be harmful to a patient. Knowing what we don't know is just as important as knowing what we know.**

*Definition: Humility is the freedom from self-importance or arrogance and is the quality of being humble. To be humble means that we have an honest view of ourselves, acknowledge our mistakes and limitations, and are open to other viewpoints and ideas.*

5. **INDIVIDUALISM:** Each Osteopath is a unique individual functioning within the whole of Osteopathy as a profession. The evolution of an Osteopath requires self-reliance, experimentation, and discovery. Each individual clinician learns Osteopathy and innovates their style of treatment based upon their own interests and personal preferences.

*Definition: Individualism is the principle of being unique, independent and self-reliant. Individualism in the context of healthcare addresses the both the uniqueness of both the Osteopath and the patient.*

6. **SELF-ASSESSMENT:** Each Osteopath must develop the ability to self-assess the quality or lack of quality of their clinical work. Learning the art and science of Osteopathy takes dedication and a drive toward excellence.

*Definition: Self-assessment is the act or process of analyzing and evaluating oneself or one's actions. The ultimate purpose of self-assessment is to help the Osteopath know the extent of their abilities and to improve upon them.*

7. **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:** Osteopathy, as a profession, is progressive and evolving, and each individual Osteopath must be devoted to personal and professional growth and improvement. Expanding Osteopathic clinical skills requires a dedication to life-long learning and a commitment to an integrated way of thinking based upon the practicality of scientific method combined with the capacity for insight. Clinical curiosity forms the foundation of the process of growth and development in Osteopathic professional life.

*Definition: From the perspective of the individual Osteopath, growth and development is the progressive acquisition of clinical skills and abilities throughout their lifetime. Growth and development include personal and professional evolution. Growth and development are not automatic but are a conscious process. Growth and development can lead to wisdom.*

- 8. PROFESSIONALISM: An Osteopath is a highly trained health care professional whose ultimate goal is patient welfare with a focus on altruism, trust, and the patient's best interest. We must be respectful and honest with patients while educating them and providing high quality healthcare. Ethical behavior of the Osteopath is paramount to the clinical relationship between and Osteopath and a patient. The Osteopathic approach is based upon respect and a recognition of clear boundaries and knowing limits of practice ability.**

*Definition: Professionalism means having standards of ethical conduct, integrity, responsibility, and accountability. Respecting communication is a centerpiece of professionalism in the context of Osteopathic practice. Maintaining confidentiality is intrinsic to the professional relationship between the Osteopath and their patient. Professionalism includes both personal and social responsibility.*

- 9. PERSONAL HEALTH: Attending to the personal health and welfare of the Osteopath is essential and must not be neglected. The vital dimensions of a holistic sense of wellness include physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational, and social. We need to care for ourselves so that we can better care for others.**

*Definition: The six main aspects of personal health are: Spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, occupational, and social. Addressing these six features of wellness builds a connected sense of fulfillment. Consciously choosing to be healthy is the first step towards greater wellness. Personal health is not merely the absence of disease.*

- 10. CONNECTION: Every Osteopath throughout the world is connected to each other via the Philosophy of Osteopathy and the Principles of Osteopathic Treatment. Every Osteopath is connected to our patients via the reciprocal power of the Osteopath-patient relationship. As human beings our drive to connect with others is embedded in our biology and is inclusive in our professional identity as Osteopaths. The evolution of Osteopathy as a profession is a social experience linking the past to the present and beyond.**

*Definition: Connection is the action of being linked with someone else or a larger group and embraces a deeper sense of being. Connection is defined by being in relationship. Authentic connection gives us a sense of belonging and purpose. Connection is a main source of well-being and happiness.*