



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

Why your doctor is always right (but would be better not to be).

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | MARCH 28, 2018



“Teach the tongue to say, “I do not know,”

and thou shalt progress.”

-Moses Maimonides, ca 1200 AD

Good advice for what seems like a culture full of know-it-alls.

Physicians are some of the worst offenders. I remember in medical school being taught that if I didn't know an answer, make one up. And if I didn't feel confident, fake it for the professors and patients.

I failed at that.

What I've learned since then is that people ache for the truth. They're not looking for us to know it all, but to know *them*, to care about their story, and to always do our very best for

them.

And we're better when we own up to what we don't know—certainty squashes curiosity, innovation, and discovery.

Why do they do that? Being right is a tool physicians use to mask their fear, vulnerability, and inadequacy in the face of people's suffering. We're uncomfortable about not always having solutions, or assurances about what the outcomes of our interventions will be.

But our clients don't need—or want—us to be all knowing and infallible. They need our open hearts, our love, and our passion for helping them the best we can. They want to be fixed, but don't expect perfection.

My clients love it when I don't know a thing and take the time to look it up. I think in those moments I give them permission to be imperfect too. They don't have to walk out of our encounters feeling like they need to know it all or effortlessly glide back into their lives and implement their care plans flawlessly.

When we're okay with being less perfect and certain, we all get to breathe. We get to be more human.

And more importantly, when we let curiosity out of its box, we give our genius (yes, we're all geniuses) space to thrive and seek better answers.

Have a Beautiful day!

Karyn

p.s. From my Archives:

[*Live the Questions.*](#) 2018.

[*How We Harm Our Patients With the Need to Be Certain \(and Right\).*](#) 2017.

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Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and

healing through essential self-care practices.

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