

Myrtle Potter Media, Inc.

# The Best Medicine:

Vol. 01



## 5 PRESCRIPTIONS YOU WON'T FIND IN YOUR DOCTOR'S BAG



Myrtle Potter

Your Trusted Voice in Healthcare™

Published by Myrtle Potter Media, Inc. eBooks

# Table *of* CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	Page 1
Prescription 1: Get the <u>Best</u> Doctor, Not the Nicest Doctor . . . . .	Page 2
Prescription 2: When Needed, Seek Out University Clinics and Hospitals . . . . .	Page 3
Prescription 3: Losing Your Temper is a Losing Proposition . . . . .	Page 4
Prescription 4: Know that Doctors are Only Human . . . . .	Page 5
Prescription 5: Practice Routine Maintenance . . . . .	Page 7
• <i>Final thoughts</i> . . . . .	Page 9
• <i>About Myrtle</i> . . . . .	Page 10
• <i>Copyright</i> . . . . .	Page 11
• <i>About the publisher</i> . . . . .	Page 11



I was scared, lost, and frustrated. As a woman who had spent years in the hard-knocks world of business, rising to president of two multi-billion dollar healthcare companies, these were unfamiliar feelings. When my precious young son was diagnosed with autism, these emotions swept over me like a bad flu that I couldn't shake. I suddenly found myself walking through the maze of the healthcare system with no map, compass, or direction. I felt as if I was in a foreign land trying to learn the language and customs of a world that at times appeared unforgiving on every front.

There are many doctors and a host of healthcare services available to most of us, but if you suddenly find yourself helping a loved one battle a disruptive healthcare issue, you can feel like you're on a cross-country journey without direction and the certainty that a refueling stop will emerge before you run out of gas. **But YOU, the caregiver, are often the most important ingredient in the recovery of your loved one.** It may feel like an incredible responsibility, or even an unfair burden, but I know that with the right help, you can fulfill your responsibility as a caregiver for those you love.

I know you can, because I have learned some powerful yet simple lessons that can be used in most any healthcare situation. I discovered these prescriptions the hard way – by the “live and learn” method – but my hope is that you will benefit from my experience (good, bad, and downright bumpy) and use these insights to make yours and your loved one's healthcare journey a little easier. These are *5 Prescriptions You Won't Find in Your Doctor's Bag*.



### Prescription 1

#### “Get the Doctor, Not the Nicest Doctor”

I bet you have all been in a situation – in a doctor’s office, in a hospital room, or on the other end of a phone call – when you braced yourself with anxious anticipation to hear what the kind, sensitive doctor had to say. But instead of the grace and diplomacy you expected, you found yourself listening to a doctor who was gruff, stern and seemingly annoyed with your very existence.

I remember well the first few times I encountered a doctor with bad bedside manner. I left the experiences seething with anger and swore I would not go back at any cost, especially after one of these expert physicians, who was obviously exasperated by my questioning, said that my precious three year-old son would “*never even be able to place an order at McDonalds*” due to his autism.

But, as I put some distance between myself and the harsh encounters, I remembered that my job, as caregiver for my family, was to **get the best doctors available**. So, if the best care for my family rested in the hands of a physician with a bad bedside manner, I would need to check my emotions and ego at the door and rise to my role to secure the best care for those I loved.

Sure, it’s not pleasant to take advice from someone you think is rude or less than gentle, but success lies in keeping your eye on the prize. That prize is making sure you get the absolute best doctor to treat your loved ones whether or not he or she would get a blue ribbon of approval from Miss Manners.

Of course, there are always limits. By no means should you ever accept abusive language. Nor should you accept abusive behavior or actions that put you or your loved ones at risk. But my years in the boardroom and managing thousands of employees taught me that rarely are we, or those we encounter, good at everything. For the great doctor with the bad bedside manner, ignore his social ineptness, and focus instead on the great results he will deliver.

So, ask yourself, “Are great results worth staying with this prickly doctor?”, if the answer is “yes”, try to hang in there. When Dr. Bad Bedside Manner makes you want to walk away, or burst into tears, keep your eye on the prize – a great result and a healthy outcome for your loved one.



### Prescription 2

“When Needed, Seek Out University Clinics and Hospitals”

When my son was first diagnosed with autism, my husband and I struggled to piece together a plan of action. From the day my son was born, we had relied on the same pediatrician and used the local community hospital. While our local community hospital felt secure and familiar, with great coaching and direction from our pediatrician, I soon learned that I was going to have to step out of my comfort zone, and seek the expertise of autism medical specialists who worked at a university medical center one hour away from our home. I had always been put-off by the idea of getting care from a sprawling university hospital like those I had visited over the years in the course of my work. Despite what should have been a familiar exercise, I suddenly found that I was intimidated by the thought of going to a big, imposing institution where I expected the physicians and fancy experts to talk over my head.

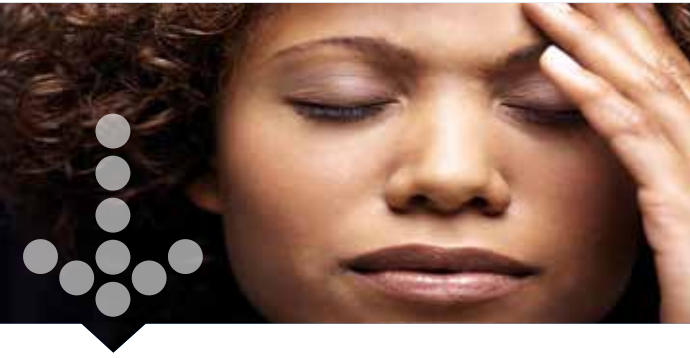
Boy – was I wrong!

**Most university hospital clinics have great insight and resources to offer, especially when you are dealing with a life-disrupting illness like multiple sclerosis, cancer, or autism, to name a few.** University medical centers often have expertise in difficult-to-treat, or rare diseases and therefore have significant experience in treatments that usually exceeds that of your local community hospital.

University doctors often have the latest, and most up-to-date information on various ailments, can prescribe the newest treatments and, in some cases, offer the opportunity to be part of their cutting-edge medical research studies.

So, off we went to the big university hospital clinic, and we never regretted our decision for a moment.

NOTE: When seeking an institution and expert team, don't take the label “university” as the only criteria. Do some research to find out each institution's areas of expertise, and go online to seek opinions about their work. Then, make your best informed decision.



### Prescription 3

## “Losing Your Temper is a Losing Proposition”

Okay, this is one of those big-time live-and-learns. Let's face it, being in a hospital setting is overwhelming and emotional. Either you don't feel well, or you are overwrought with concern for a loved one. Perhaps you've been at the hospital for days. You're tired, frustrated and scared, and before you can count to 10, you lose it! You've decided the staff and doctors are not doing their jobs, not listening to you, and may be, in fact, just trying to push you around. In response, you figure, *“I'll just give them a piece of my mind!”* and off you go on a confrontational rant with the *“Who do you think you are?”* and the *“We'll see what your supervisor thinks of this!”* And yes, you even go so far as to randomly question your team's qualifications. You pat yourself on the back thinking, *“I showed them who's the boss – now I'll get the treatment I deserve!”*

Well, you most likely will get what you deserve, but it won't be better treatment. When you completely lose it, you alienate your medical team, and brand yourself as the problematic patient with whom no one on your medical team wants to deal. You start to see the nurses rush by your room, the doctor visits become shorter, and your call button is slow to be answered. **Losing your temper is simply a losing proposition.**

Does this mean you should zip-it and not bring up issues with your medical team? Certainly not. But remember, you need these people on your side. Instead of losing it, try taking a deep breath to remain respectful, and in a calm, concise manner, share your concerns. I also found that writing down my needs, and sharing the document with my team helped all of us stay on task. Keep it informal, as you don't want your team to think you are documenting their performance. Rather, this piece of paper is merely a tool for sharing your thoughts during this highly emotional time. If you do lose it (and we are all bound to at some point), apologies and a little token of appreciation for your hard-working medical team, like a card or homemade snacks, go a long way toward mending fences.



### Prescription 4

## “Know that Doctors Are Only Human”

Perhaps you've heard this joke:

*“A doctor is at the gates of Heaven and demands to jump to the head of the line, only to be turned back by St. Peter. Immediately after being rebuffed, he sees St. Peter open the gates to someone wearing a stethoscope and white jacket. When St. Peter is questioned, he explains, “Oh, that’s God – he just thinks he’s a doctor.”*

This familiar bit of humor says a lot about how some physicians see themselves. But it does take two to tango, and we as patients sometimes wish god-like qualities upon our doctors. Who can blame us? Our care is in their hands, and we all want our medical team to perform miracles.

**But the fact is: Doctors are only human.**

Doctors (and nurses) will have really great days, and a few bad ones; they have feelings and moods and they even have their own physical ailments with which to deal. There are limits on how much time they can spend with every patient and, as much as we wish it to be, a doctor will never be a mind reader. It's important to look at your doctor as a flesh and blood person. I always take a moment to ask about her interests, or ask him about his children. Then I think, “What can I do for this person to get the best possible results for myself and my loved ones?” The answer most often is ***start by being a good patient*** – and this does not mean being quiet and submissive.

Being a good patient means being able to provide all the pertinent information your doctor needs about your condition in an organized manner. Here is some key information you should always have ready to share:

- ✓ Family medical history
- ✓ Medical records



### Continued...

## “Know that Doctors Are Only Human”

- ✓ A list of all medications (name, strength, dose and frequency) currently or recently consumed, including all over-the-counter medications, vitamins or other supplements
- ✓ The date when symptoms began - describe them with specificity
- ✓ The length of time these symptoms have persisted
- ✓ Recent travel history, including travel destinations and dates

Use your best bedside manner, even if your doctor doesn't. Remain polite and appreciative.

These simple acts of kindness will set the tone for your relationship.

And just between us patients, if you want a nurse or doctor to spend more time in your hospital room, find out one of their favorite goodies and keep it on hand. My friend's grandmother lovingly referred to this as 'nurse bait'. You'll be surprised how many more visits you will receive with something as simple as a box of chocolates and a note that says “Please Enjoy!”



### Prescription 5

#### “Practice Routine Maintenance”

There is nothing like a disruptive healthcare situation to turn your family’s life into a free-fall. But following the example of good real estate agents who emphasize “location, location, location”, I am going to emphasize “routine, routine, routine”. As the lead caretaker of your family’s healthcare needs, there is an incredible burden on you to juggle all the treatments, medications, appointments and physicians. But one of your greatest tools that can ease some of the stress is **keeping to a routine**. Try these suggestions for routine maintenance:

- ✓ **Don’t Always Jump at the First Doctor Appointment Offered:** If you have a favorite coffee group you attend on Thursday mornings, and the appointment being offered conflicts, ask for another option. Very rarely does a day make a difference.
- ✓ **Keep the Patient’s Routine in Mind:** Perhaps you have a parent who is going in for dialysis. Try to make sure she knows she will still be able to attend her weekly book club. Not only is it important for your loved one to socialize, you want to continue to give her things to look forward to.
- ✓ **Keep Routines While in the Hospital:** If your loved one is in the hospital, and perhaps a football fan, make sure that by hook or by crook, he will get to see their ball game. Keeping routines while in the hospital is even more important for kids. If you have an evening routine with your child (maybe bedtime reading at home), keep the routine in the hospital. Keeping the routine will reduce anxiety, and bring immeasurable comfort.



Continued...

### “Practice Routine Maintenance”



**Regularly Use the “H” Word:** For many of us, the “H” word – help! – is the hardest word to use. But you must ask for, and accept help from others. You will have friends asking how they can help you, and what they can do for you. Never turn down an offer. Make a list of what needs to be done, and share it with anyone who asks – everything from taking the dog out to ‘do his business’ so you don’t come home to puddles and soaked carpets, to getting your daughter to a birthday party. Friends really do want to lend a helping hand. And, let’s face it: If the tables were turned, you’d gladly do the



same.

**Focus on Yourself Too:** During times of giving care to others don’t forget to nurture your needs. I admit that this is an area where I have consistently struggled. When faced with the pressing medical needs of those I love, I have often neglected my own health and emotional needs. Often I paid the price by getting so run down that I succumbed to every cold, flu and germy infection that I encountered. I have learned the hard way that it is crucial that you try to *keep your own routine*. Don’t skip that yoga class; keep your hair appointments; and hard as it is, make it a priority to eat right and get your rest. Being a caregiver can be very gratifying, but there is perhaps no more difficult and draining job. If and when you can, find the time to take care of yourself, and routine maintenance will help you do just that.



### Final Thoughts

At some point in life, we will all journey into the healthcare system. Whether it is seeking care for yourself or a loved one, it is one of those life passages that involves lots of people, has many moving parts, moments of frustration and, hopefully, great joy and success. Perhaps the old adage ‘knowledge is power’ applies to your healthcare voyage more than any other situation in life. So, be wise, be prepared, and remember to pack *The Best Medicine: 5 Prescriptions You Won't Find in Your Doctor's Bag*.

Dear Readers,

Thank you so much for reading *5 Prescriptions You Won't Find in Your Doctor's Bag*. This eBook was born from my own personal experience of being engulfed in a healthcare situation that turned my world upside-down. After I regained my health, I made a promise to myself to “use my hard-earned knowledge to help others in disruptive healthcare situations”.

And that is why I have made this eBook so easy to share. Whether you are seeking care for yourself or a loved one, finding support is just a click away. Just go to my website [www.MyrtlePotter.com](http://www.MyrtlePotter.com) and click on the eBook cover. It's that simple.

I also hope while at my website, you will find lots of other useful tools and information to help you successfully navigate the healthcare system. You'll find a whole team of people who want to help you through just about any healthcare situation. There are videos, podcasts, lots of useful articles and resources.

Most importantly, we want to hear from you – how you're doing and what we can do to help. So please keep in touch. I want to be your trusted guide as you navigate the healthcare system.

*Best Wishes for the Best Health,*

*Myrtle*

Please visit me at [www.MyrtlePotter.com](http://www.MyrtlePotter.com)

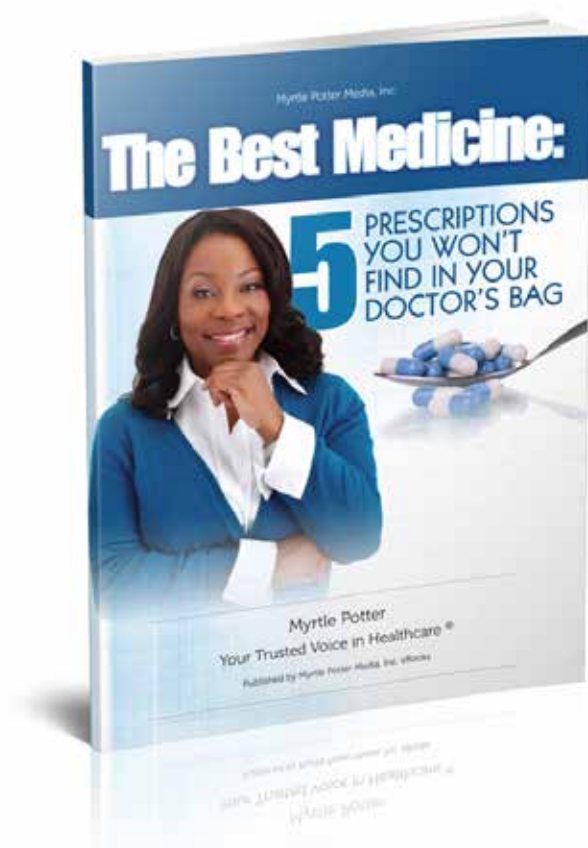


### *About Myrtle*

Myrtle Potter is CEO of Myrtle Potter Media, Inc. and Myrtle Potter and Company, LLC. She is on the boards of Medco Health Solutions, Inc., and Everyday Health Inc., and is a regular on-air business contributor on CNBC. She can also be seen on Accent Health and on the Everyday Health website at [www.everydayhealth.com](http://www.everydayhealth.com). Myrtle previously held high-level positions at Genentech, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Merck, and served on the board of Amazon.com. She was three times named one of the “Top 50 Most Powerful Women in Business” by *Fortune magazine*, Myrtle is widely recognized as *Your Trusted Voice in Healthcare™*.

[www.MyrtlePotter.com](http://www.MyrtlePotter.com)





### ***5 Prescriptions You Won't Find in Your Doctor's Bag***

Copyright © 2012 by Myrtle Potter, Inc. All rights reserved.

You have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this eBook onscreen.

#### About the Publisher

United States

Myrtle Potter Media, Inc. eBooks

1275 Lincoln Avenue, Suite 7

San Jose, California 95125

[www.MyrtlePotter.com](http://www.MyrtlePotter.com)