

You mentioned that your father was already 70 when you were 19. What was your relationship like growing up? Did any of the lessons he taught you influence how you run your business?

AMIR RASHIDIAN: My father was 51 years old when I was born. This is four decades ago. Back then, everyone thought that life expectancy wasn't very long and so did my dad. So, in my earliest memory, Dad would sit me down and say, "Son, I'm not going to be around very long, so I need to teach you everything I can, and wisdom is the most important thing, so I want to give you as much as I can before I go." Now, he lived a long time after that, but I remember being a little kid sitting at our dining room table in our house in Iran, and Dad owned this big construction company, and he was looking at financial statements and profit and loss [statements] and going down the cost of each job, and the material and the labor. I think I must have been 5 years old, and he was telling me, "Hey, look, you have to take this number, you subtract this, and this is your profit. And remember: profit is important—you don't want to overspend." I just remember doing that.

The second thing I remember Dad told me was "Your greatest power is willpower. Use willpower. When you're too tired, too lazy—you don't want to get out of bed—just say, 'I have willpower' and you will go.' Those are the biggest lessons I think I learned. That's what I want to teach my sons.

When did you open your first clinic, and what led you to start the Mid Atlantic Chiropractic Center?

I graduated chiropractic school in 2000. I was in Chicago. I always wanted to come back to Maryland, but I didn't know where I wanted to practice. I came back and worked for several different chiropractic offices, learned a lot from each one, and three years later, I found a friend of mine who actually had gone to school with me. The two of us picked a real small town called Woodbine and decided to start a practice there. The philosophy behind it was if we pick the smallest town we can think of, then word will spread much faster because hopefully everybody knows everybody. It kind of turned out that way, except we picked a town where you couldn't really advertise in, because it's on the corner of four separate counties, and you didn't know which county you advertise in.

But it worked out well. It was very successful. I always wanted to have multiple offices. A couple of years of running that practice, doing really well, we decided to open a second office. My practice partner didn't want to be a part of that second office. I came to Frederick and started this office, and I did this one with my wife, Brandi.

Brandi and I used to go door-to-door. We didn't really have a big marketing budget, so we actually went and knocked on doors for about six weeks and met 1,200 people, shook hands and introduced ourselves, and did kind of a survey. We met them, and then they were the people we marketed to, and we opened our doors and the office was wildly successful from day one. We've never looked back. I think the only thing holding us back is our capacity and how many people we can serve right now.

How do you ensure the business is differentiated from other chiropractor's offices?

From a business standpoint, we call this an upside-down org chart. The typical organization chart is you have the owner and the CEO and the president at the top, and then you've got your direct reports, and the middle management, and the customer service, and then the customers at the very bottom. Ours is completely flipped upside-down. Part of that is, as most business owners have faced, I hit a lot of challenges where I was really frustrated with how business was going, how difficult it was, and there were times where I remember asking myself, "Who's working for who?" Because it seemed like I was working really, really, really hard just to generate some revenue so I could make payroll, and that was it.

But the minute I accepted, "Well, you know, what if I am working for my employees? And they're working for our patients, and it's an upside-down thing?" All of a sudden, it made sense. And I said, "Well, that's what I should do." Because if I build up people who work for me and help them and equip them, train them so they can serve the next level, and they can serve the next level, now it's a lot easier to grow. The minute we made that mental shift, I think everything ended up working a lot better and smoother.

We also have this thing called the "culture of reverse accountability," where I don't hold my employees accountable—they hold me accountable, because I'm accountable to provide a safe and enjoyable work environment for them. That's my job. I'm supposed to provide what they need—resources and material and time, and whatever it is they need

—so they can do their job properly and enjoy that job. We call that reverse accountability.

If your patients are at the top, who's right beneath them?

That would be Kristen, up front. She's very, very good at what she does. She memorizes everyone's name, the details about their life—it's incredible—but, you know, I think part of that is because we're all so passionate about where we are headed, and our vision, and our mission, and why we do what we do, and the need that we are serving in the community. So we all want to be at our absolute best.

We have three core values—and that's all we have: simplicity, sincerity, and excellence. Everything has to be simple. Complexity doesn't belong in this office. Nature is not complex. We need to keep everything simple. New procedures, new products, whatever else we want to do has to stay simple. Otherwise we don't want to do it.

Sincere—we're going to be honest and sincere with our patients, with each other, the same way we'd want everybody else to be with us, and we can't have it any other way. These are non-negotiable.

And excellence, by our definition, is doing our absolute best, in the amount of time that we have, with the resources that we have available. Absolute best.

I think those core values have allowed our staff to really step up and do some incredible, amazing things. I hear about it from our patients, sometimes, or I hear about it from someone outside of the offices: "Do you know what your staff did? They went out of their way. They did this, they helped that person, they made a phone call." Patients will come and tell me, "Your staff called me and asked how I was doing," and I didn't know these things. They're not part of our protocols and procedures, but they're happening on their own because we're so focused on where we're going.