From your social media platforms to your online reviews, it’s important to keep a pulse on what your patients are saying and engage in positive dialogue.

Proactively engaging with patients on your online platforms helps you keep your practice top of mind, highlight services and products, and get feedback from your patients.

The following are best practices for engaging on your online platforms:

1. Check your social media platforms at least once a day and aim to respond to messages and questions within 12 hours. This shows your audiences that they are valued and ensures you are handling any issues quickly.

2. “Like” and respond to positive comments — even a simple “Thank you!” or “You’re welcome!” The commenter will appreciate it, and it keeps positive comments at the top of the thread.

3. Ensure that all posts and responses are on-brand, professional and respectful.

4. Hide or remove comments with inappropriate language, threats, HIPAA compromises (such as photos where individuals’ faces are shared without consent) or negative mentions of a specific doctor. Consider including these community guidelines in your “About” section.
Now, you might be wondering what to do when a patient or follower shares a negative review, comment or complaint. You may be tempted to delete the post, respond tersely or even fire back. But remember that the rest of the online community is “watching” your actions. It’s critical to show professionalism and respect and to take the time to think through the question and best response. While you can’t control every comment or review, your response may help prevent further negative feedback. The following are tips to keep in mind for negative reviews:

5. Identify sensitive questions or comments and determine the best course of response. This could include patient complaints and questions on cost, billing or office policies. A good practice is to take the conversation in private via direct message.

6. Decide whether it is worth it to respond on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, it may be best not to respond, depending on the content of the review, the volume of reviews for your practice, etc.

7. If you respond, do so in broad “all patient” terms and office policies versus getting into a direct dispute.

8. Do not get into an online debate over the incident that prompted the negative review. Doing so can look defensive or confrontational.

9. Invite the negative reviewer to contact you directly to discuss the issue further.

10. Make sure that any response represents you as a compassionate, concerned and understanding professional.

11. Consider this example response: “Our office strives to provide the best service to all patients. We would like to learn more about what happened and hope you will contact us as soon as possible.”

12. Negative reviews should not be removed, unless they include profanities or statements of hate, reference a specific provider or violate any privacy policies.

Consumers don’t expect businesses to have 100%, five-star reviews. Engaging with positive online comments and reviews, while thoughtfully handling any negative feedback, will help your practice strengthen your relationships, reputation and service to your patients.