Most dental professionals don’t much enjoy discussing fees and financing with patients, so they pass it on by saying, “Our financial coordinator will explain all the financial options to you at the end of your visit today.”

As a result, the discussion of fees and financing is often reserved until after the comprehensive care presentation. This is the worst time to have a money conversation for two reasons.

1. Patients are excited about completing the proposed care. That is, until the financial coordinator presents them with “the fee-to-do-your-dental-care-is-$X.” Now they feel 5-D — sized, discounted, and discouraged. So they compose themselves by saying, “I need to think about it,” and walk out the door. Sometimes the office never sees them again.

2. I believe that comprehensive care acceptance is a series of conversations with people, not just one big “lay-it-all-on-the-line” case presentation. A series of case conversations allows patients to take several small steps to receive comprehensive dentistry. It also allows your team and you to discuss money and financing with patients before you have to. If your case acceptance system dictates that you have the money conversation only after care has been presented, you won’t have these smaller conversations and patients will be forced to accept care in one big leap.

Have a variety of ways and times to discuss fees and financing

The discussion of fees and financing is more of an art than a science. Your success depends on your comprehensive care acceptance system, and the personalities of the people you work with in your office. It’s important that your entire team believes in the principles of comprehensive dentistry and patient financing.

Also, your team should be coming from the right place in their hearts. They should not be “takers” who press the money issue. They should be “givers” who provide options and help patients to receive the best dental care as soon as possible.

Here are several suggestions for communicating information on fees and financing. Just pull out the best method at the best time, and make sure that each method matches your practice’s image.

1. In your internal and external marketing, mention that “no-interest financing options are available” if you provide them.

2. Provide a link from your website to your finance partner’s website application page.

3. On your website, create a dedicated page that reviews your payment and financing options.

4. During the first phone call, if a patient brings up a money issue or inquires about financing, briefly explain your payment plans and invite him or her to the office. Many first phone call “price shoppers” are often people who are prime candidates for financing.

5. If patients are declined for financing, encourage them to reapply with a cosigner.

6. After patients choose a treatment option, use a printed dental care agreement to discuss their payment options.

7. As part of the conversation at the beginning of the exam, ask, “Is there anything that would stand in your way of getting the dentistry you need?” If they mention that money could be a problem, immediately explain your payment methods and financing options.

8. In his Productive Dentist Academy training program, Dr. Bruce Baird teaches dentists to say this to patients after the exam is completed: “You probably know this, but you have around $X worth of dental care that needs to be done. The good news is it’s not matter if it takes us quality four months or four years to complete. We can go at the pace you choose. Does that make sense? Great. Tonia will explain all your options in a minute. We’ll see you again soon.”

9. For patients who need comprehensive care and plan to return in a few days for a treatment conference, have a short conversation about possible care and fee ranges. Don’t talk specifics. That will come later. Always show them how they can spread out their investment over time.

10. When you quote fees for comprehensive care, follow with what their monthly payments would be with one of your financing plans. An example: “Maria, the investment to complete the dentistry we just discussed is $X, which is $X per month if you want to spread it out over time with our no-interest financing option.”

11. After patients choose a treatment option, use a printed dental care agreement to discuss their payment options. If they choose a no-interest payment plan or extended pay plan, apply for the financing now.

12. If patients are declined for financing, encourage them to reapply with a cosigner.

13. After hearing comprehensive care a patient says, “I need to think about it,” or “I need to talk with my spouse,” follow up with a phone call. If appropriate, offer to help with financing.

14. If you’re new to no-interest financing, send a letter to patients who have been presented care in the past year but didn’t schedule treatment visits. Statistics show that 60% didn’t schedule because of financial considerations.

15. At follow-up visits, offer your financing options to patients who have either uncompleted or newly identified care.

Discuss fees and financing with confidence

It’s vital that the people who quote your comprehensive fees and explain financing are comfortable doing so. If they aren’t, all the right words may be said, but their voice and body language will say, “I don’t feel comfortable doing this.”

At your team meetings, frequently tell stories of patients who delayed their comprehensive care for years, and then finally had it completed. How often do they say, “I wish I hadn’t done this?” Practically never. They almost always say, “I wish I had done this sooner!” Share those stories with your patients and don’t be afraid to diagnose and present comprehensive care. You’re doing everyone a favor.

If your patients are thinking, “Wow, that’s way more than I thought it would be!” after you quote your comprehensive care fees, this means you’re not having the appropriate fee and financing conversations with them earlier in your relationship. If you follow the advice offered here, most of your patients will think, “That’s what I thought it would be.” And when they think that, they’re much more likely to say yes to the comprehensive care they deserve.