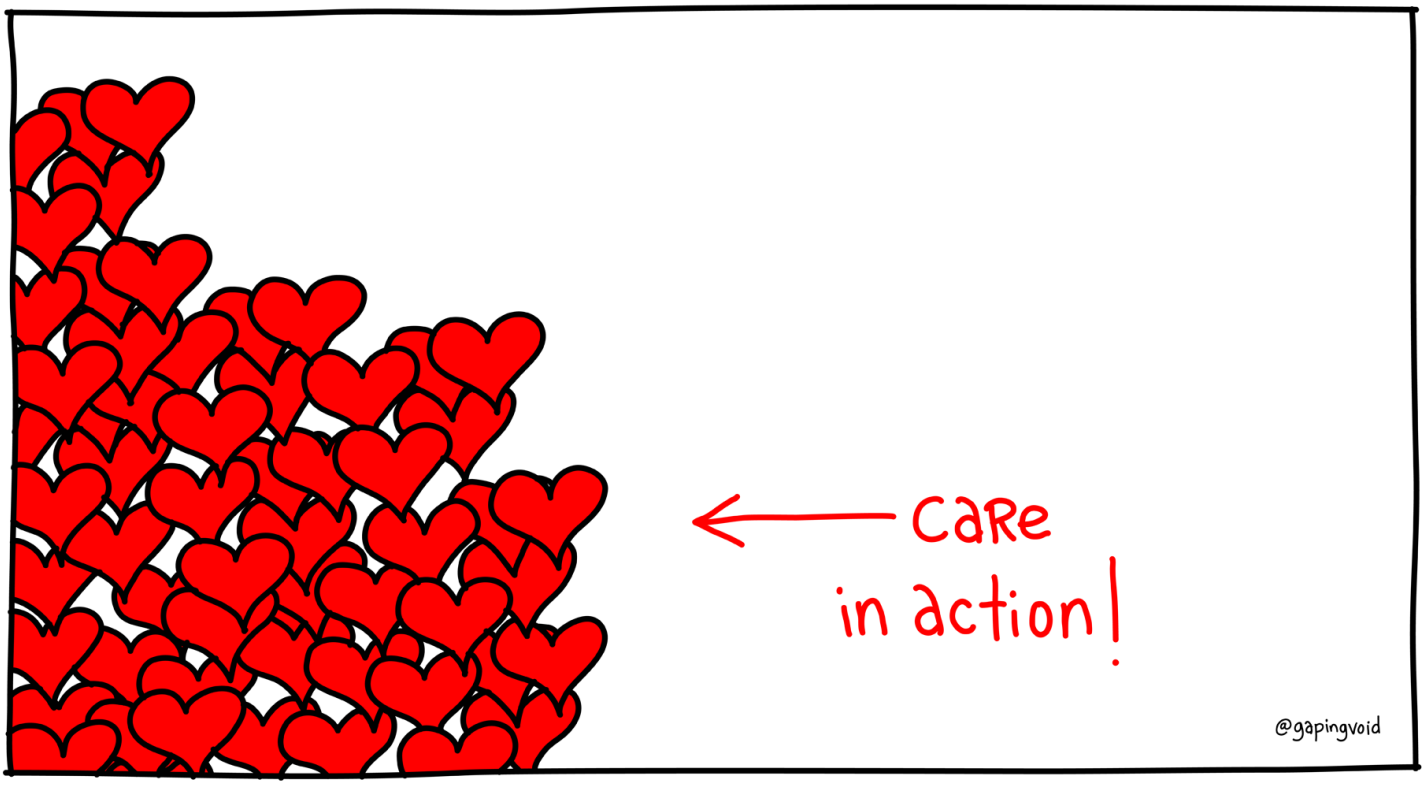
Communicating Empathy

THE HEART-HEAD-HEART™ METHOD



Team Leader's Action Plan

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Team Leader's Action Plan

Gifted leadership occurs when
heart and head—feeling and thought—meet.
These are the two wings that allow us to soar.

Daniel Goleman, Author of Emotional Intelligence

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Team Leader's Action Plan

Dear Team Leader:

According to the landmark study "Global Perspectives on Patient Experience 2018" by The Beryl Institute, when assessing the patient experience, above all else patients, families and coworkers value personal connection, empathic communication and respectful treatment. Yet, in today's hectic, high-pressure healthcare environment, healthcare staff and providers have become so busy and task-oriented that personal connection, empathic communication and respectful treatment suffer. The result is that while people on our teams are caring people, their caring may not come across to the people they serve.

Communicating Empathy: The Heart-Head-Heart™ Method helps team members embrace and use the powerful Heart-Head-Heart method to make their caring felt in their everyday interactions. When patients, families and coworkers FEEL their caring, they become less anxious and more trusting, confident and cooperative. In short, they feel safe and supported in your team's caring hands.

The *Communicating Empathy* Team Leader's Action Plan:

1. Provides an overview of the *Communicating Empathy* program and the Heart-Head-Heart Method, as well as the steps in the implementation process.
2. Describes your responsibilities as team leader and provides you with important, step-by-step actions to ensure your team gains competence, confidence, and consistent practice of Heart-Head-Heart.
3. Informs you on where to find the tools and resources you'll need as you work through the Team Leader's Action Plan.

Thank you!

YOU are pivotal to the success of *Communicating Empathy: The-Heart-Head-Heart Method* and to engaging your team in being much more effective communicators.

- THANK YOU for modeling Heart-Head-Heart with your team, patients, families and colleagues.
- THANK YOU for making empathic communication a norm and expectation with your entire team.
- THANK YOU for inspiring and coaching your team to embrace and use empathic communication in all of their interactions.
- THANK YOU for your leadership.

With appreciation,
The Language of Caring and Planetree International Team

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About the Team Leader's Action Plan

This Action Plan will help you guide your team to learn, adopt, master and use the Heart-Head-Heart method in their specific jobs. It will also help you provide direction, inspiration and role-modeling.

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1. Purpose

Communicating Empathy: The Heart-Head-Heart™ Method helps people, including those in healthcare, express their empathy and caring effectively and consistently. This do-it-yourself program enables leaders at every level to engage providers and staff in mastering and consistently using the proven Heart-Head-Heart communication method to enhance their interactions. It is grounded in best practices developed by Language of Caring® and instituted in healthcare organizations nationwide.

Expected results include:

- Increased employee engagement as staff connect more often with patients, families, and coworkers
- Greater patient engagement and improved outcomes
- More productive team interactions through greater collaboration, cooperation, and less conflict
- People expressing empathy, compassion and support to reduce anxiety and promote healing

A growing research base demonstrates the power of empathy in positively transforming the patient, family and coworker experience in healthcare. Research shows that by communicating with empathy in every interaction, each member of the healthcare team produces benefits for patients and families, colleagues, the organization, and themselves. The Heart-Head-Heart method is a simple, yet powerful, mental model that helps people communicate with empathy and caring which leads to remarkable results.

The Results of Communicating with Empathy in Healthcare Interactions

- Reduced anxiety, as well as greater trust, engagement, and cooperation among patients and families
- Fewer difficult situations, complaints and lawsuits
- Stronger patient commitment and adherence to their care plans
- More positive patient outcomes
- Greater appreciation from patients and families
- Greater patient retention and loyalty
- A more positive grapevine about your organization
- Providers and staff who feel more engaged and gratified in their caring work
- Improved relationships outside of work, with friends, family, teachers, business contacts, and more

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2. Background and Facts

These days, people in healthcare feel extremely pressured. They have many priorities, responsibilities, and a combination of stresses they experience at work and beyond. As a result, there is a tendency for them to predominantly use "Head" or task-oriented communication. This looks and sounds like communication based mostly in explaining what they're doing, gathering information and describing actions/options/plans. What is missing are expressions of caring or "Heart" communication including verbal and non-verbal behaviors associated with empathy, appreciation, sincere regret about pain, anxiety and inconvenience, and observable actions that are tied to the emotional and connected personal experience.

Of course, people rely on us for "Head" communication. They need and want information, options, answers, explanations and choices. However, interactions that include solely Head messages feel impersonal. Patients and families often think, "These people may be competent, but do they really care about ME as an individual?"

- **Heart Communication:** We tune into and acknowledge feelings and anxieties, respond from our hearts, and connect to the person as an individual.
- **Head Communication:** We explain tasks, information, options, plans, and the business at hand.

Communicating "Heart" eases people's anxieties. It personalizes care and service while building the trust and comfort key to engaging patients and families. When staff members communicate exclusively from their heads, does that mean they don't CARE? Absolutely not. It's just that their caring does not come across in the way they intended. The result: The people they serve do not FEEL their caring and emotional support as part of their experience. The Heart-Head-Heart method is based on the premise that complete, effective and satisfying communication has both Heart and Head communication.

The Heart-Head-Heart Method

The Heart-Head-Heart Method is a mental model that prompts people to start their communication with a Heart message, move to a Head message (the business at hand), and end with another Heart message. Here's how it works:

- ❤ **Heart**: Speak from your heart first. Show personal caring and empathy. (eg: *That sounds so upsetting for you! I'm worry that happened!*)
- **Head**: Then speak from your head. Meet people's needs for action, information, solutions. (eg: *Let me explain… The options are… Here's what I'll do…*)
- ❤ **Heart**: Then, speak from the heart again. Close on a personal or feeling note. (eg: *I'm so glad you told me about this. I want to make things right for you.*)

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The Heart-Head-Heart *Sandwich* metaphor is a simple, visual way to remember to mix Heart and Head messages in a 2:1 ratio. The Language of Caring team has found that the Sandwich metaphor helps people remember and apply Heart-Head-Heart in their everyday situations.

The fact is…

People don't care how much we know unless they know how much we care.

Who is this program for?

For everyone! Nurses, physicians and providers, technicians, support services, leaders, all staff across the continuum of care, etc.

And for every type of healthcare organization. Healthcare systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, hospices, medical groups, health plans, outpatient centers, emergency departments, express care centers, pharmacies, home healthcare services and more!

It is also an effective intervention for departments or teams within organizations.

How does the *Communicating Empathy* program fit with other change initiatives?

By helping everyone communicate with caring, even under pressure and stress, Heart-Head-Heart can help you humanize and make more effective your implementation of performance improvement efforts including LEAN, your Electronic Health Record transition, mergers and acquisitions, safety initiatives, and much more. Communicating empathy is the "how" that ensures helpful and encouraging communication takes place, which is key to strengthening every other initiative's results.

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3. Program Components

The *Communicating Empathy* program consists of three different parts:

1. Planning and Preparing Leaders
2. *Communicating Empathy* Workshop followed by Mastery and Habit-Building
3. Sustainment and Further Improvement

Program Planning and Preparing Leaders

Program Planning comes first. This guide will walk you through the decisions you'll need to make to implement the *Communicating Empathy* program and get the results you want. Next, in alignment to your decisions, you will prepare facilitators to facilitate the workshop and leaders to lead their teams in mastery and habit-building.

Communicating Empathy Workshop

The *Communicating Empathy* Workshop is the training component of this program. This 60-minute workshop is critical to ensure every staff member understands and can apply the Heart-Head-Heart method. Then, following the next steps in the Team Leader's Action Plan, leaders use tools and resources to achieve concrete performance improvement, skill mastery, and results. The recommended time frame for the workshop and Habit-building is 8–16 weeks depending on your preferred timeline.

Sustainment and Further Improvement

After mastery, the challenge is ongoing sustainment. The goal is to reinforce and strengthen use of Heart-Head-Heart so empathic communication becomes a reliable, consistent and impressive feature in communication interactions over many years. It is essential to onboard new team members via your organization's new employee orientation or department-specific orientation, so Heart-Head-Heart continues to stay present in your organization. Other sustainment tactics include reminders, refreshers, adjustments to job descriptions, performance reviews, and more.

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B. Your Responsibilities as Team Leader: The Team Leader's Action Plan

1. A Few Notes on the Action Plan

You are pivotal to engaging your team(s) with *Communicating Empathy*—the program and the Heart-Head-Heart method. It is truly up to you to make Heart-Head-Heart take hold and become a universal language that you and your team use daily in interactions with patients, families, and coworkers.

To engage your team and produce the results you want, you will need to devote focus, time and energy to leading your team through the Team Leader's Action Plan.

What exactly will you need to do to be successful?

Based on years of experience partnering with healthcare organizations to achieve sustainable performance improvement, the Language of Caring team has identified the critical actions team leaders need to take in order to get sustained improvement.

You will find these in the team leader's action plan a few pages below.

In Brief: Key Components of the Team Leader's Action Plan

Leading Role	Supporting Resources
Role-Modeling Heart-Head-Heart by Leader	• Reminders to team leader about personally using Heart-Head-Heart in interactions with staff, patients and families • Sharing personal stories about Heart-Head-Heart
Habit-Builder Activities	• Twenty activities, each lasting 5-10 minutes, which engage your team in Heart-Head-Heart practice, application, and story-sharing. These can be done in huddles, staff meetings, or via a buddy system
Coaching & Feedback	• Conversations with individuals: Team leader schedules three short meetings with each individual; format provided • Peer observation and coaching • Team leader rounding on staff
Recognition, Reinforcement & Sustainment	• Reminder cards, posters, Pat-on-the-Back cards, and more

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Resources/Tools

The Team Leader's Action Plan, lists specific activities and references several References/Tools you'll need for them. When an action step references a Resource/Tool you can easily locate it in one of the following source documents denoted in the column labeled Resources/Tools.

The Resources/Tools include:

1. **Workshop Facilitator's Guide.** Step-by-step facilitation instructions for the one-hour foundational workshop. Includes instructions for accessing the PowerPoint and videos.
2. **The Heart-Head-Heart Handbook.** This is a booklet to be given to each program participant. It includes the handouts that will be used in the workshop, and also much more to reinforce, enliven, and support effective learning and use of Heart-Head-Heart in people's lives at work and beyond.
3. **Habit-Builders Guide.** Series of very short group activities for huddles or meetings—to help staff review, master and prepare to use Heart-Head-Heart in their everyday lives.
4. **Toolbox.** Specific templates, worksheets, assessments, and more—to make each action step clear and easy to carry out.
5. **Program Overview Video.** A high-level overview video of the *Communicating Empathy* program - includes purpose of the program, components, implementation advice.

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2. The Team Leader's Action Plan

The Team Leader's Action Plan outlines and sequences, in concrete terms, the recommended actions each leader should take to effectively engage their team and support them in achieving skill mastery, consistent use and sustainment. The Action Plan refers you to tools and resources to make each action clear and easy for you.

Start-Up Steps

	Key Actions	Resource	Due	Completed
Leader, Get Ready!	Review overview video: "Communicating Empathy: Program Overview for Leaders."	Program Overview Video		
	Review "Habit-Builders: The Guide", especially the opening instructions and the first few Habit-Builder activities to get familiar with the format and process.	Habit-Builders Guide		
	Prepare "Expressing Your Commitment Statement"—a personal statement on why this program is important to you and the organization.	Tool 1a		
	Create your plan using "Plan Summary."	Tool 1b		
	Identify opportunities to use Heart-Head-Heart regularly and begin modeling this now.	Tool 1c		
Build Excitement	Talk to your team about why this program is important to you and your organization.	Refer back to Tool 1a		
	Talk to your team about the power of communicating with empathy and share a story of empathy in action.	Refer back to Tool 1a		
	Make sure you and other leaders are role models for Heart-Head-Heart. **Options** • Engage Planning Team or Work Team in activities: "Power of Communicating Caring in Our Jobs." • Engage team in activity: "YOU and Caring."	Tool 1c & Tool 1e Tool 2a Tool 2b		
	Communicate your plan for your team (to your team). "Plan Worksheet."	Refer back to Tool 1b		
	Make sure you or the workshop facilitator has a copy of *The Heart-Heart-Head Handbook* for every person.			

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	Key Actions	Resource	Due	Completed
Make the Heart-Head-Heart Workshop Happen	If you're facilitating, get ready and practice. • Review the "Workshop Facilitator's Video." • Review the "Workshop Facilitator's Guide."	Workshop Facilitator's Guide & Video		
	Lead the Heart-Head-Heart workshop. If others are facilitating, be sure to attend, show support and share stories of your use of Heart-Head-Heart. See "Jot Down Stories for Future Use."	Tool 1d		

Follow-Up Steps for Mastery, Habit-Building and Reinforcement: Making Heart-Head-Heart Communication Stick

Step	Key Actions	Resource	Due	Completed
1	Lead Habit-Builder 1, "PRACTICE: Heart-Head-Heart with Coworkers."	Habit-Builder 1		
	Ask two people to complete the sheet "Feedback from a Coworker on YOUR Caring."	Tool 6a		
	Give out three "Pat-on-the-Back appreciations."	Tool 3d		
2	Lead Habit-Builder 2, "THE WHY: How Does it Feel When You're Caring?"	Habit-Builder 2		
	Leader complete the "Self-Check Worksheet: How am I doing?"	Tool 4a		
	Via email or print, share a caring story.	Tool 1d		
3	Lead Habit-Builder 3, "PRACTICE: Heart-Head-Heart in Complaint Situations."	Habit-Builder 3		
	Make it a point to use Heart-Head-Heart with your team.			
4	Lead Habit-Builder 4, "APPLY IT! Heart-Head-Heart in Everyday Situations."	Habit-Builder 4		
	Hand out a "Pat-on-the-Back" card to each team member. Ask them to use it to recognize a coworker for using Heart-Head-Heart.	Tool 3d		

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Step	Key Actions	Resource	Due	Completed
5	Lead Habit-Builder 5, "THE WHY: Your Communication Strengths."	Habit-Builder 5		
	Review suggested format for "Coaching Conversation #1: On Performance and Goal-Setting."	Tool 5a		
	Explain your intention to meet with each person over the next two weeks for a Coaching Conversation. Schedule these conversations.			
	Distribute "Self-Check Worksheet: My Use of Heart-Head-Heart" to each team member. Ask them to complete and return to you to discuss at their next one-on-one meeting.	Tool 4b		
6	Lead Habit-Builder 6, "PRACTICE: Heart-Head-Heart with Patients."	Habit-Builder 6		
	Use "Patient Rounding and Feedback Tool" to gather feedback from at least five patients. Compliment your team for positives, and identify missed opportunities with your team.	Tool 6b		
	Continue to meet with team members for Coaching Conversation #1.	Tool 5a		
7	Lead Habit-Builder 7, "PRACTICE: Use Heart-Head-Heart to Relieve Anxiety."	Habit-Builder 7		
	Continue to meet with team members for Coaching Conversation #1.	Tool 5a		
8	Lead Habit-Builder 8, "SUCCESS STORIES: Your Experience with Heart-Head-Heart."	Habit-Builder 8		
	Share with your boss and other colleagues two stories heard during this session.			
	Continue to meet with your team for "Coaching Conversation #1."	Tool 5a		

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Step	Key Actions	Resource	Due	Completed
9	To strengthen your comfort and mastery of Heart-Head-Heart, read through "Heart-Head-Heart: Great Examples for Everyday Situations."	Tool 1c		
	Lead Habit-Builder 9, "APPLY IT! Heart-Head-Heart in OUR Challenging Situations."	Habit-Builder 9		
	Give out the tool "Feedback from a Coworker" and ask every person to use it to gather feedback about their communication of caring.	Tool 6a		
	Give out "Pat-on-the-Back Cards" and ask each person to give them to coworkers who use Heart-Head-Heart in a challenging situation.	Tool 3d		
10	Lead Habit-Builder 10, "SUCCESS STORIES: Receiving a Heart-Head-Heart Message."	Habit-Builder 10		
	Review suggested format for "Coaching Conversation #2: Check-In about Feedback."	Tool 5b		
	Explain your intention to meet with each person over the next two weeks for "Coaching Conversation #2" about feedback they received from coworkers.			
	Schedule these conversations with each team member to discuss feedback they received from coworkers. See "Coaching Conversation #2."	Tool 5b		
11	Lead Habit-Builder 11, "PRACTICE: Heart-Head-Heart between Staff Member and Supervisor."	Habit-Builder 11		
	Continue meeting with each team member to discuss feedback they received from coworkers. See "Check-in about Feedback tool."	Tool 5b		
12	Lead Habit-Builder 12, "PRACTICE: Heart-Head-Heart in Difficult Situations."	Habit-Builder 12		
	Round on staff and deliver at least three appreciative Heart-Head-Heart statements. See tool "Appreciating Your Team Using Heart-Head-Heart."	Tool 3e		

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Step	Key Actions	Resource	Due	Completed
13	Lead Habit-Builder 13, "SUCCESS STORIES: Heart-Head-Heart Outside of Work."	Habit-Builder 13		
	Round on your staff and ask them to tell you about a time today when they made their caring felt.			
	Using Heart-Head-Heart, thank your team for their candid conversations, open sharing, and commitment to communicating with empathy and caring. See Tool "Appreciating Your Team Using Heart-Head-Heart."	Tool 3e		
	Hand out three "Pat-on-the-Back cards" and ask each person to give them to coworkers they see using Heart-Head-Heart.	Tool 3d		
14	Lead Habit-Builder 14, "THE WHY: To a new employee, what would you say?"	Habit-Builder 14		
	Ask each team member to ask a coworker to observe them and give them feedback during the next week. Give them "Feedback from a Coworker."	Tool 6a		
15	Lead Habit-Builder 15, "PRACTICE: Heart-Head-Heart with a Patient's Family"	Habit-Builder 15		
	Use tool "Patient's Family Feedback" with at least five patients' family members.	Tool 6c		
	Share positives and missed opportunities with your team. Emphasize the goal of communicating with empathy and caring in EVERY interaction.			
16	Lead Habit-Builder 16, "PRACTICE: Heart-Head-Heart with an Annoyed Person."	Habit-Builder 16		
	Give "Pat-on-the-Back" cards to staff who were complimented by patients' family members.	Tool 3d		
17	Lead Habit-Builder 17, "THE WHY: Communicating Empathy and Our TEAM's Quality of Life."	Habit-Builder 17		
	Round on staff and catch them using Heart-Head-Heart. Collect examples for use in "Coaching Conversation #3: An Appreciation Conversation" with each individual.	Tool 5c		

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Step	Key Actions	Resource	Due	Completed
18	Lead Habit-Builder 18, "PRACTICE: Heart-Head-Heart with Distressed Patients."	Habit-Builder 18		
	To prepare for "Coaching Conversation #3: An Appreciation Conversation", collect more examples of Heart-Head-Heart while rounding on staff.	Tool 5c		
19	Lead Habit-Builder 19, "SUCCESS STORIES: A Time a Coworker Used Heart-Head-Heart."	Habit-Builder 19		
	Meet with each team member for "Coaching Conversation #3: An Appreciation Conversation."	Tool 5c		
20	Lead Habit-Builder 20, "APPLY IT! Heart-Head-Heart in OUR Challenging Situations."	Habit-Builder 20		
	Give out blank "Pat-on-the-Back" cards and ask each person to give them to coworkers who use Heart-Head-Heart in a challenging situation.	Tool 3d		

On *Communicating Empathy: The Heart-Head-Heart Method*—Looking Back and Looking Ahead

	Key Actions	Resource	Due	Completed
Program Review and Next Steps	Take stock of your program, its process and results. Gather multiple perspectives using the "Program Review" Tool.	Tool 7		
	Identify actions to ensure ongoing use of Heart-Head-Heart, greater application to specific job challenges, and further improvement.			
	Plan onboarding process for orienting new team members to Heart-Head-Heart.			
Celebrate together!	Select (or develop) and implement activities or methods to help your team identify accomplishments and success stories.	Tool 8		
	Consider engaging your team in planning for a celebration using the tool: "Celebration Ideas to Spark Your Creativity."	Tool 8		

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C. Using and Copying Program Resources

The *Communicating Empathy* Program Kit contains all program guides, videos, thumbnails of *The Heart-Head-Heart Handbook* pages, and all other tools and materials. Your purchase entitles you to use these resources ONLY within your organization for the contracted number of participants as outlined in your purchase agreement. You may print and copy all guides and resources as needed for internal use, except *The Heart-Head-Heart Handbook*. **Copying The Heart-Head-Heart Handbook in whole or in part is not permitted. You will need to purchase a copy of The Heart-Head-Heart Handbook for every person who participates in the program/workshop(s).**

Following Intellectual Property Laws

You are not permitted to:

- Share videos, the workshop, workshop plans, or any other resources with anyone outside of your organization.
- Offer the *Communciating Empathy* program or the Heart-Head-Heart Method for commercial purposes, charge a fee or generate revenue from its sale.
- Take any resources, materials, guides, or any other related items with you when you resign your position. All materials are property of the original purchasing organization.

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D. Last Word

We want to close with a Heart-Head-Heart message to YOU.

Heart: We realize that you are very busy and that leading your team through the *Communicating Empathy* program takes time, focus and commitment! We understand this is a real challenge given your many responsibilities and pressures.

Head: The fact is, you have a golden opportunity to strengthen your impact on the human experience in healthcare by communicating with empathy in YOUR interactions. You also have an opportunity to help your team refocus on their caring purpose and embrace and use Heart-Head-Heart to be more effective, empathic communicators.

Heart: THANK YOU for all you're doing to engage your team in making their caring visible for the sake of patients, families and coworkers. Your leadership is nothing short of INSPIRING and we really appreciate you for it!

Want to share stories? Ask questions? Seek guidance?

Contact us at customerservice@languageofcaring.org.

Connect with Us!

You've guided your team through *Communicating Empathy: The Heart-Head-Heart Method*. To help you keep building the momentum….

Follow us for tips, tools, updates, webinar invitations, and more:

Subscribe to our free monthly e-newsletter!

HeartBeat
ON THE QUALITY PATIENT EXPERIENCE™

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