

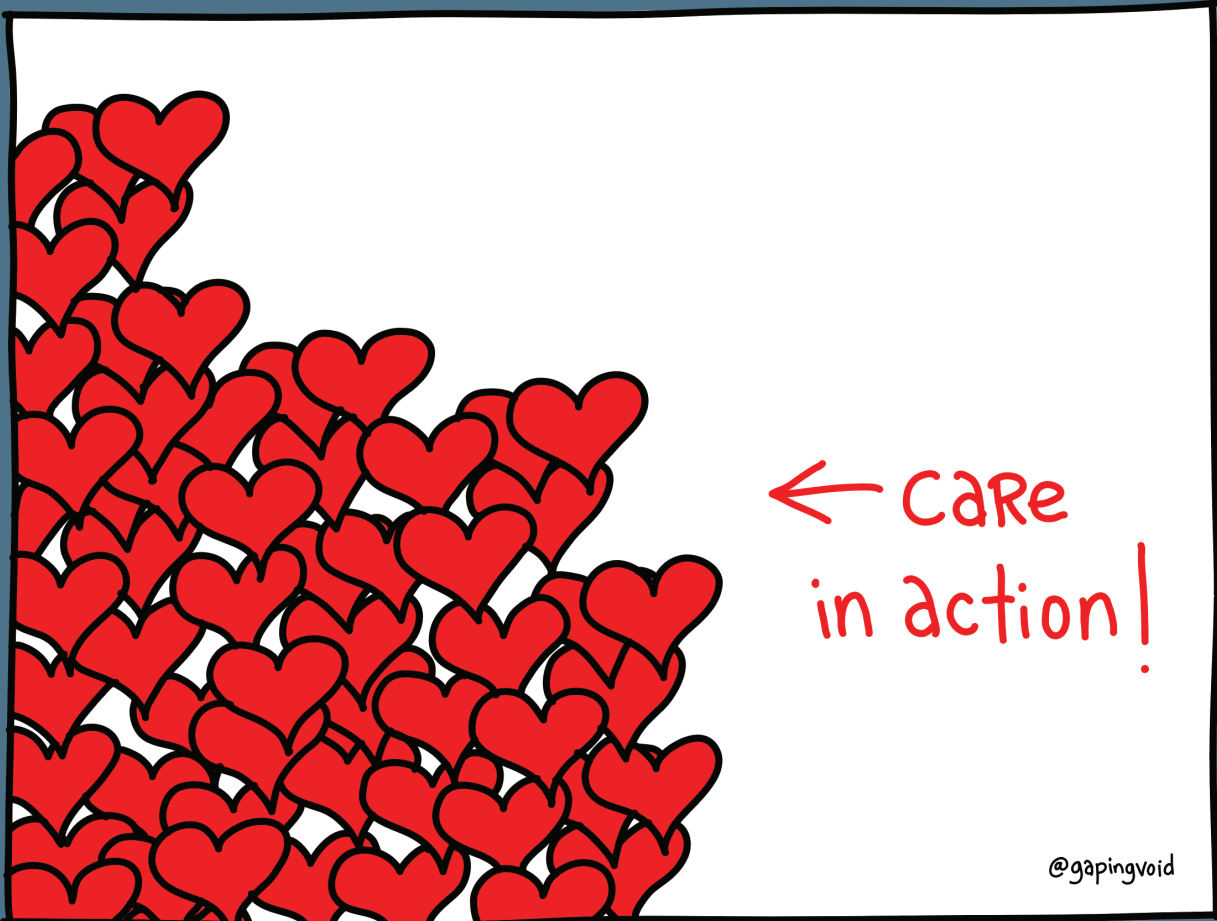


# Communicating Empathy

THE HEART-HEAD-HEART™ METHOD

## The Heart-Head-Heart Handbook:

Tips, Tools, Stories and Inspiration



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## **Communicating Empathy**

THE HEART-HEAD-HEART™ METHOD

# The Heart-Head-Heart Handbook: Tips, Tools, Stories and Inspiration

## Welcome!!

**This is your** personal Handbook. It will help you use the very simple, yet immensely powerful language method --- **Heart-Head-Heart**-- to make your compassion and caring visible, effective and felt with the people experiencing your care and support in your work. Whether you work in a hospital, outpatient service, urgent care, long-term care community, or home care. **You will successfully weave compassion and caring** into all of your interactions with the people you serve and with your coworkers as well. The results?

- You will earn greater trust, confidence, and cooperation.
- People will achieve better health outcomes.
- You will experience greater harmony, collaboration and support within your team.
- And you will connect strongly with your purpose and gain greater fulfillment.

## Why this? Why now?

Because you work in health care, you have the opportunity to contribute to people's health, peace of mind and well-being every day. And that's true whether you serve patients, community members, and families directly or you work behind the scenes and support the people who do. While your technical and clinical skills are very important, they are not enough. The quality of your communication can make or break your effectiveness and how you feel about your work and yourself. Communicating with *empathy* makes the biggest difference.

## What is the Heart-Head-Heart Method ("Heart-Head-Heart" for short)

- Heart-Head-Heart is the most amazing, powerful, practical, useful, indispensable, flexible, all-purpose, communication technique ever.
- It helps you communicate with empathy and compassion, while also addressing the business at hand.
- It helps you become a much better communicator and this will strengthen your professional pride and satisfaction –because you KNOW you are making a difference.

**With this single technique---and without spending more time, you can transform your relationships and your results-- at work and beyond.**

**“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”**

- Dalai Lama

**Wind your way through this Handbook.**

You'll learn all about Heart-Head-Heart—through examples, stories, and activities that help you master and apply this powerful method to your work and your life.

**And you and those around you will begin to reap the benefits!**

THANK YOU for all you're doing to make the human experience in health care a heartwarming and effective experience.

*The Language of Caring and Planetree International Teams*

# Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Communicating Empathy: Making Your Caring Visible</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Empathy in Health Care: Its Impact on the Human Experience</b>	<b>5</b>
	A. What is Empathy exactly?	5
	B. The Impact of Empathy: Research Highlights	7
	C. How empathic are you?	8
<b>III.</b>	<b>Communicating Empathy: The Heart-Head-Heart Method</b>	<b>9</b>
	A. The Difference Between Heart and Head Communication	10
	B. The Heart-Head-Heart Method Defined	11
	C. Feel the Difference Heart-Head-Heart Makes	11
	D. “Yes, but.... I’m not so sure!”	14
	E. The Make-it or Break-it Power of Your Mindset	16
	F. How do YOU want to benefit from Heart-Head-Heart?	18
<b>IV.</b>	<b>True Stories: Heart-Head-Heart in Action</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>How to Apply Heart-Head-Heart to Your Work—and Your Life</b>	<b>22</b>
	A. Examples Galore: Heart-Head-Heart in Job-Specific Situations	22
	B. Tools to Help You Apply Heart-Head-Heart	25
	C. Using Heart-Head-Heart to Express Appreciation	27
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Getting GREAT at Heart-Head-Heart</b>	<b>31</b>
	A. Five Tips: How to Be Effective with Heart-Head-Heart	31
	B. How to Avoid Broken Hearts	32
	C. Choose Your Words	35
	D. Self-Improvement Tools	37
	E. Six Ways to Make Heart-Head-Heart HABIT	40
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Your Personal Goals</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Give Heart-Head-Heart as a Gift to People You Love</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Caring Inspirations</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>X.</b>	<b>Closing with a Heart-Head-Heart Message for YOU!</b>	<b>47</b>
	<b>Appendix</b>	<b>48</b>
	A. Connect with Us!	48
	B. Tell Your Friends	48
	• About Communicating Empathy	
	• About This Book!	
	• About Language of Caring	
	C. Communicating Empathy Workshop Materials (on different color paper)	49

# I. Communicating Empathy: Making Your Caring Visible

There's no doubt about it. Those of us in health care are caring people. Yet, in today's atmosphere of heavy workloads, multi-tasking, and stress, it's not unusual to become so task-oriented that we don't communicate our caring. The result: Patients, residents, families and coworkers on the receiving end don't experience us as the caring people we are.

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## **That's where *Communicating Empathy: The Heart-Head-Heart Method* comes in.**

Your organization's leaders have invested in helping you strengthen your skills for making your caring felt by your coworkers and the people you support in your job, whether these people are patients, community members, family members, or others along the entire continuum of healthcare organizations. You'll learn more about how to connect with people personally, to convey empathy, and to earn people's trust, confidence, cooperation and partnership.

Everyone benefits!

### **Making caring visible to the people you serve:**

- Encourages them to engage and participate in decisions about their health and care
- Leads to open communication that prevents and reduces errors and improves safety
- Generates more positive perceptions of their healthcare team and higher scores on surveys
- Helps your organization win loyalty and retain a loyal following and referrals
- Reduces complaints and the risk, cost and stress of malpractice lawsuits
- And contributes to the financial health of your organization

### **And look at how YOU benefit when you make your caring visible!**

Most of us entered healthcare professions because we care about people. When we get caught up in the tasks of our work without connecting to people, it's easy to lose touch with our caring purpose, and miss out on the satisfaction --the joy-- of making

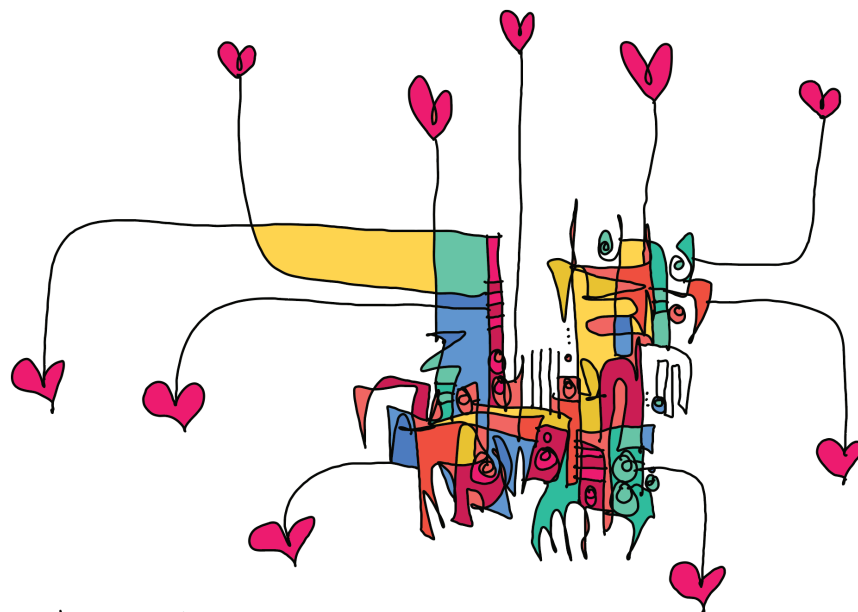
a difference. When you make your caring visible with your coworkers and the people you serve, you connect with them, ease their concerns and help them heal, and this feels good—because you are living your helping mission. You can feel that professional pride and satisfaction that comes from knowing you're making a difference. And people appreciate you for it.

Also, when you make your caring visible, you make difficult, stressful situations much less difficult. When people feel your caring, they are more trusting and cooperative and this greatly reduces your stress.

**And one more benefit that is a giant plus!** The skills for making caring visible are LIFE skills. These same skills help tremendously in our relationships OUTSIDE of work -- with our kids, families and friends. By making our caring visible in our personal lives, we strengthen all of our relationships, warm the hearts of family and friends, and enhance our sense of well-being.

When we make our caring visible, everyone benefits. And that's what ***Communicating Empathy: The Heart-Head-Heart Method*** is all about.

## II. Empathy in Health Care: Its Impact on the Human Experience



empathy is medicine.

@gapingvoid

People engaged with healthcare organizations believe that compassion is sorely missing in far too many interactions. Did you know that forty-seven percent of patients and forty-two percent of physicians report that compassion is missing from people's healthcare experiences? Those are the main findings from the Schwartz Center's benchmark survey of 800 recently hospitalized patients and 510 physicians. Says the Schwartz Center's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Beth Lown and her study's coauthors, "Systematic approaches are needed to help new and experienced health professionals develop and maintain the skills needed to provide compassionate care."

Showing our compassion by communicating with empathy is essential to fulfilling our caring mission. It is essential to the well-being of patients, residents, families, coworkers, and our own sense of well-being on the job.

**The Heart-Head-Heart Method helps us communicate empathy.**

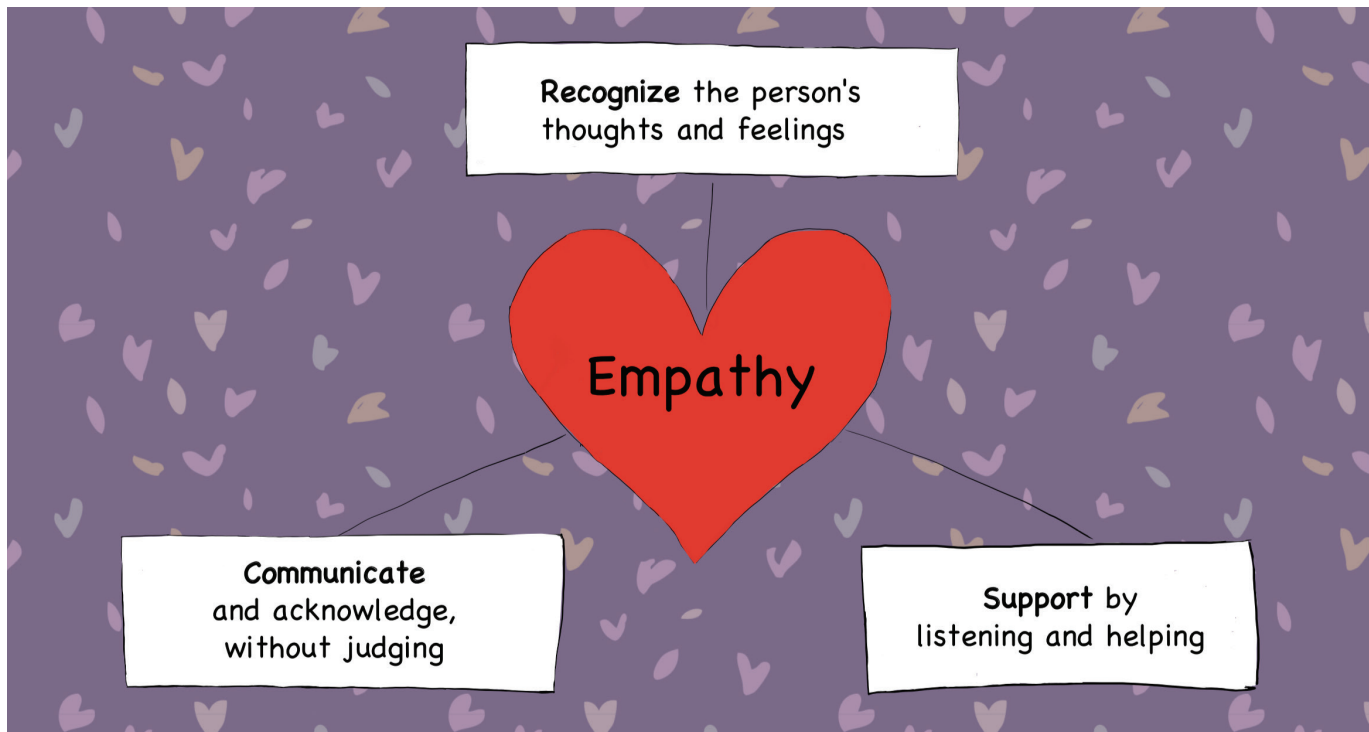
### A. What is Empathy exactly?

#### Empathy has three essential elements:

1. *Recognize.* Connect, be present, listen fully and notice the person's thoughts, feelings, and condition from their point of view, rather than from your own. This is an internal process.
2. *Communicate.* Acknowledge the person's thoughts, feelings and condition, without judging. Validate or confirm the legitimacy of the person's experience. This is an external process, expressed through our words and actions.
3. *Support.* Respond or help in a manner that is sensitive to the individual's needs. Empathy without action is not empathy. Sometimes that action is holding their hand or being there for them in some way. This is an action step. (Jeffrey, D, Clarifying empathy: the first step to more humane clinical care. **Br J Gen Pract** 2016; 66: 101–2; Halpern, J, From idealized clinical empathy to empathic communication in medical care. **Med Health Care Philos** 2014; 17: 301–311.)

### In Brief: Three Elements of Empathy

1. Internally recognize another person's inner experience and perspective
2. Communicate by acknowledging and validating the person's experience, without judging
3. Support by being a listening presence and responding or helping in a way that's sensitive to the person's needs.



**Is empathy the same as sympathy?** No! While people debate about this, here's our understanding:

**With sympathy**, you feel what the other person is feeling. If they're in pain, you feel pain. If they're upset, you feel upset. Your feelings mirror theirs. You can imagine that sympathy can drain your energy and distract you from doing your best to support the other person. For instance, if a family is consumed by grieving and you grieve along with them, it can be very difficult to carry on with your responsibilities to address their needs and provide comfort.

**With empathy**, you recognize, acknowledge and validate their grieving. You don't take it on yourself. This bit of distance enables you as a professional to respond with kindness and support in an effort to help.

#### **The Issue of Authenticity**

In our everyday experience, we instantly recognize phony attempts to express empathy. It is not real empathy unless it is said in a way that is sincerely meant and sincerely felt. If you recite scripts made up of words that were designed to sound empathic, you will not come across as empathic and your empathy will not have the effect you want. Plus, you will feel phony.



## B. The Impact of Empathy: Research Highlights

There is substantial evidence that demonstrates the impact of empathy in healthcare interactions.

### The Impact of Empathy on Patients

- Patients of physicians who score high on empathy achieve more positive patient outcomes. Physician empathy toward patients has been linked to:
  - Reduced patient and family anxiety. (Derksen et al., 2013; va Dulmen et al., 2004)
  - Shorter and less severe common colds. (Rekael et al., 2009)
  - Reduced complications from diabetes. (Del Canale et al, 2012; Hojat et al., 2011)
  - Lower rates of readmission with chronic heart failure. (Thompson et al, 2016)
  - More regular heart rate, lower blood pressure, and quicker release of antibodies that defend us from pathogens. (Rein, 1995)
- When staff communicate empathy, patients:
  - Understand better the information shared with them, and they are more willing and able to follow their care plans.
  - Give them significantly higher ratings on patient experience surveys.
  - Are dramatically less likely to voice complaints or sue for malpractice.
  - Are much more likely to remain loyal and recommend their providers and the organization to others. (J Deceti et al, 2015; D Ring, MD, 2016)
- In multi-cultural situations, communicating empathy helps us establish rapport and show our respect. It also bridges the communication gaps that often occur between people who are culturally different from each other. (M Rowe, 2017)

### The Impact of Empathy on Staff:

- Caregiver burnout shows itself in a lack of enthusiasm for and satisfaction from work, poor relationships with patients, high turnover, depression, substance abuse and even suicide. (Dewa et al., 2014)
- Conscious efforts to increase expression of empathy through training can reduce and counteract burnout. (Beckman et al, 2012; Fortney et al, 2013)
- When healthcare staff strengthen their skills for communicating with empathy, they experience

a return to their purpose and feel greater job satisfaction. (Krasner et al., 2009)

### Interested in delving into the research?

See the Appendix for a reference list condensed from the growing evidence base.

## C. How Empathic are You?

Some people are more naturally empathic than others, although the good news is that you can learn to be more empathic, if you choose to. Take this short quiz to see how inclined you are to be empathic and to value its importance.

### Empathy Quiz

For each item, circle the number that reflects your answer.

	Not So Much	Sometimes	Yes!
1. Do you try to imagine yourself in the other person's shoes when you hear their story and provide care to them?	1	2	3
2. Do you believe that by acknowledging a person's feelings, you can help them feel better and heal better?	1	2	3
3. Do you think by acknowledging other people's feelings, you can build better relationships with them?	1	2	3
4. Do you pay attention to a person's body language and nonverbal cues, since this is a window into what they might be feeling?	1	2	3
5. Do you think it's helpful to ask patients what's happening in their lives so you can better understand their physical concerns?	1	2	3
6. Can you acknowledge a person's feelings without judging them?	1	2	3
7. Do you believe that a person's illness can only be cured by medical treatment and that their feeling of connection to you doesn't matter much?	1	2	3
8. Do you think by acknowledging your coworkers' feelings, you can strengthen your relationships with them?	1	2	3
9. Can you acknowledge a person's feelings in a caring way without taking on the person's feelings yourself?	1	2	3
10. Do you appreciate it when other people are empathic with you?	1	2	3

Add up the numbers you circled.

- **If you scored 10-16:** Right now, your empathy rating is low, making it unlikely that you're making your caring visible. Empathy is learnable. If you want to become more empathic, read this book and reflect on the examples of Heart-Head-Heart. The examples will help you see how empathy enhances interactions and also the kinds of language that communicate it.
- **If you scored 18-24:** You're certainly indicating you have some of the thoughts and feelings that make you empathic and that you sometimes communicate your empathy. Still, if you want to harness the power of empathy in your work and relationships, you can build your skills for communicating empathy. By reading this book, you can strengthen your attitudes and skills.
- **If you scored 25-30:** You score high on empathic thinking and behavior. You recognize the positive impact of empathy and you engage in behaviors that communicate it to people in your work life and beyond.

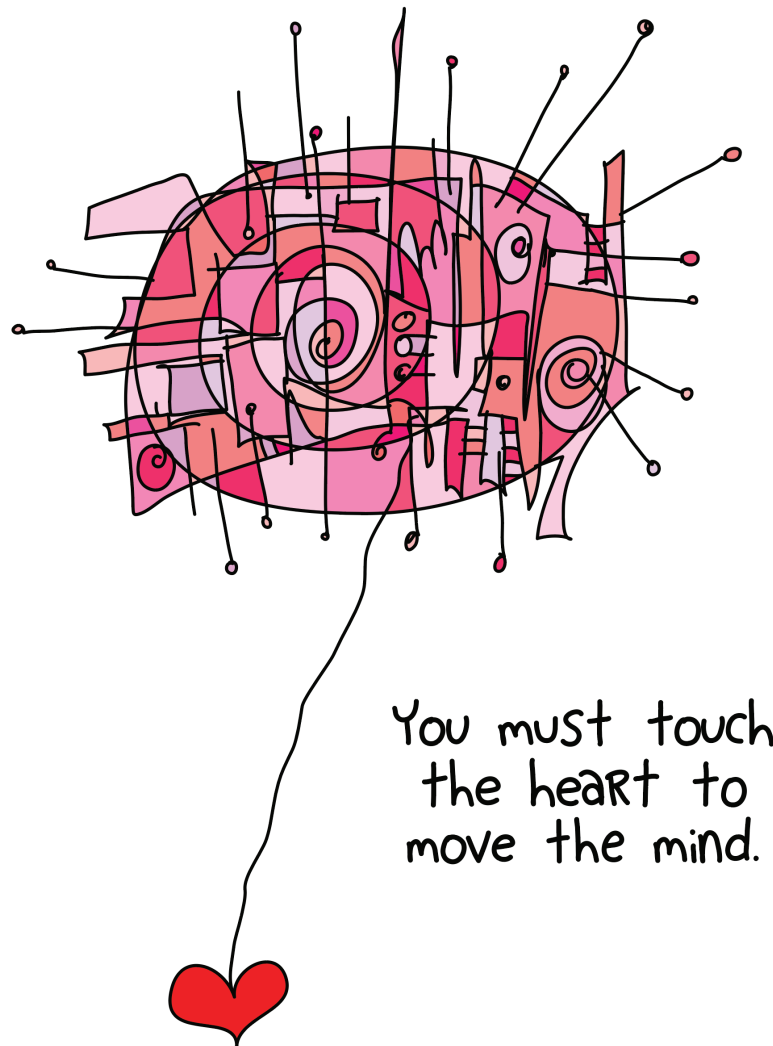
# III. Communicating Empathy: The Heart-Head-Heart Method

Now that you've considered the basics on empathy, let's delve into the Heart-Head-Heart Method that helps us communicate with empathy and have a more positive impact on people at work and beyond.

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## The Heart-Head-Heart Method

- The most amazing, powerful, practical, useful, indispensable, flexible, all-purpose communication technique ever
  - The one technique that will make you a much better communicator
  - The single technique that can transform your relationships and your results
- 





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## A. The Difference Between Heart and Head Communication

The Heart-Head-Heart Method is a simple, powerful mental model that helps you communicate with empathy and caring—while also tackling the business at hand—without spending more time!

Heart-Head-Heart is founded on the idea that complete, effective and satisfying communication with patients, residents, families and coworkers has two parts: HEART communication and HEAD communication.

 **HEART Communication: You tune into and acknowledge feelings and anxieties, respond with feeling, and connect to the person as an individual.**

 **HEAD Communication: You explain what you’re doing and meet needs for information, answers, options, and plans.**

In a conference of caregivers, the speaker asked people how they would respond if a patient cried out to them, “I’m in terrible pain!” And 95% responded with a HEAD message, such as, “How would you rate your pain from 1 to 10?” Or, “You can have more pain meds in about 20 minutes.” That means only 5% responded with Heart, such as, “I’m so sorry about your pain.” Or, “It must be awful” Or, “I want to help!”

We have become all business, and we express very little Heart. Do you doubt this? Check it out. Wander around your organization and listen in on conversations. We hope we are wrong that you’ll mostly hear head-head-head-head-head.

Head communication without Heart communication misses the boat.

### Hear the difference between Heart and Head messages.

Person says:	Heart Message	Head Message
“Every day it’s something else...one thing after another to deal with.”	“That sounds pretty overwhelming.”	“What do you have to deal with today?”
“I don’t understand why the antibiotics aren’t working. There must be something stronger!”	“I realize it’s very frustrating, and it sounds like you’re worried about getting sicker.”	“We started you on two broad spectrum antibiotics when you came into the hospital. Your blood work shows the bacteria growing. We’ll have to try something else.”
“Can’t you do more for me? This treatment isn’t working at all.”	“I really wish we had a treatment that would work better for you.”	“There’s a lot of research going on related to your illness. Maybe a new treatment will be revealed.”

## B. The Heart-Head-Heart Method Defined

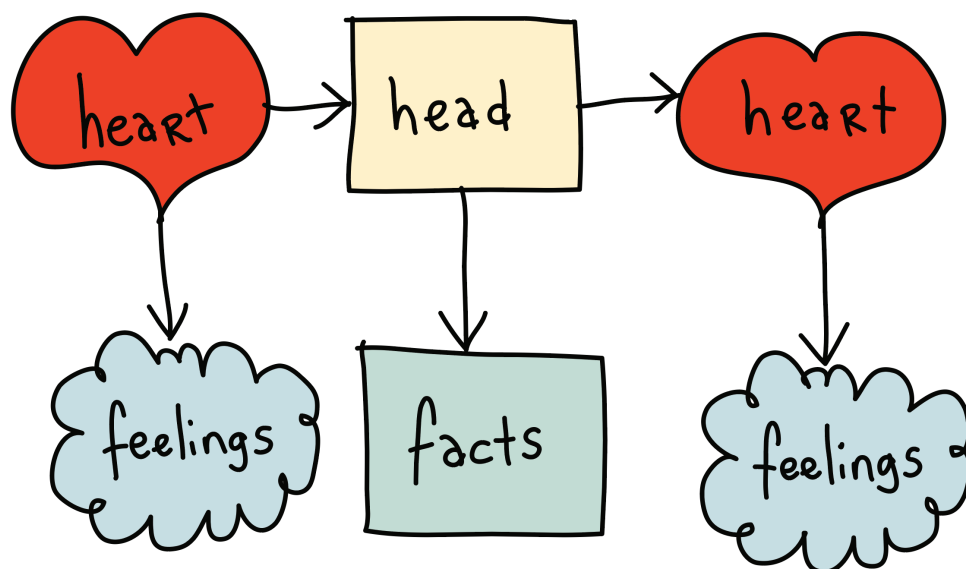
The Heart-Head-Heart Method reminds you to include both Heart and Head messages in your daily interactions, and in fact twice as many Heart messages than Head messages. It's more Heart than Head communication that really makes the difference.

### The Heart-Head-Heart Method

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- **Start with HEART: Connect.** Acknowledge the person's feelings and anxieties. Make them feel your caring immediately.
  - **Share your HEAD messages:** Meet needs for information, explanations, answers, options and decisions.
  - **End with HEART:** Close on a personal or feeling note.
- 

The image of a “sandwich” can help you remember to communicate your HEAD messages in between two HEART messages. You might think this metaphor is a bit gimmicky, but the fact is, it works.






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## C. Feel the difference Heart-Head-Heart makes!

Here are four situations (an everyday situation, an emotionally charged situation, a “bad news” situation, and a home situation.) In each situation, staff have three options. They can handle the situation with All Head, All Heart, or the Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich. Feel the difference.

**Everyday Situation:** You have an appointment with a doctor. You arrived on time and so far you've waited an hour. Finally, a nurse comes for you.




Options	Nurse's Words	The Result
<b>All Head</b> 	<p>"Ms. Simpson, the doctor is ready for you now."</p>	<p>Nurse gives clear information but no apology or appreciation for Ms. Simpson's patience. This leaves the patient thinking, "They don't respect my time."</p>
<b>All Heart</b> 	<p>"I'm so sorry about the wait. Thanks for waiting."</p>	<p>Nurse says caring words but provides no information or reason for the delay. The patient is left wondering.</p>
<b>Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heart:</b> "Ms. Simpson, I'm so sorry about the wait."</li> <li>• <b>Head:</b> "I'm glad to say the doctor is ready for you now."</li> <li>• <b>Heart:</b> "I know your time is valuable and I really appreciate your patience."</li> </ul>	<p>Nurse communicates empathy, then clear, complete information, and then words of appreciation and respect. Ms. Simpson is more likely to forgive the wait and be prepared for her appointment.</p>

**Bad News Situation:** You're a physician who just told your patient, Mr. Norman that there's no cure for his illness. After getting more information, Mr. Norman, looking upset, asks, "How will I tell my kids?"




	Words	So What?
<b>All Head</b> 	<p>"The best way is to sit down with them and tell them the story of your symptoms and tests, and tell them directly that there's no cure for it at this time. Then, lovingly answer their questions."</p>	<p>Physician makes suggestions, but misses chance to acknowledge Mr. Norman's feelings.</p>
<b>All Heart</b> 	<p>"I can imagine it's frightening to think about having that conversation."</p>	<p>Physician acknowledges Mr. Norman's feelings but doesn't answer his question. Mr. Norman will remain anxious.</p>
<b>Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heart:</b> "I can imagine it's frightening to think about having that conversation."</li> <li>• <b>Head:</b> "I believe you've met Susan Klein our wonderful social worker. Susan and I will be glad to sit down with you and help you think about how you want to tell them. And one of us can even be there with you when you talk with them, if you'd like. You don't have to be alone when you talk with them."</li> <li>• <b>Heart:</b> "I can certainly see how you want to handle this really well for your kids' sake, and we want to support you."</li> </ul>	<p>Physician shows empathy, makes suggestions and offers heartfelt support. Physician validates Mr. Norman's concerns about this very hard conversation.</p>

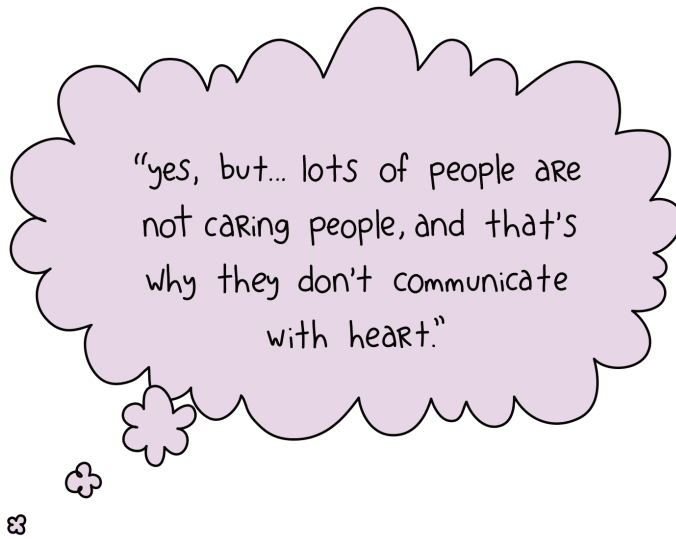
## Heart-Head-Heart is the preferred approach in situations outside of work too!

### An Emotionally Charged Situation: Teenager says to Mom, "I feel depressed."

Options	Mom's Words	Result
<b>All Head</b> 	<p>"I don't see any reason why you should feel depressed. You have friends and family who love you. You have everything you need. You're really very lucky. That feeling will fade."</p>	<p>Mom's words are dismissive. She argues with her daughter's feelings, judging them instead of acknowledging and respecting them.</p>
<b>All Heart</b> 	<p>"I'm so sorry you're feeling low. It makes me heartsick."</p>	<p>Mom's words are empathic, but she doesn't ask questions to open the conversation and learn more, so she can help.</p>
<b>Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heart:</b> "I'm so sorry you're feeling so low."</li> <li>• <b>Head:</b> "How about if we talk about what's going on with you?"</li> <li>• <b>Heart:</b> "I'm really glad you could tell me how you're feeling and I want to help."</li> </ul>	<p>Mom expresses empathy, then tries to help by suggesting a conversation. Then she expresses appreciation that her daughter opened up to her, making it much more likely for her daughter to open up further.</p>

### An Everyday Home Situation: Cindy is 3 years old. She tells her mom she wants gum for breakfast. She demands, "Gum! Gum! Gum!" Gum for breakfast is NOT okay with mom.

Options	Mom's Words	Result
<b>All Head</b> 	<p>"Cindy, you can't have gum for breakfast. Now eat your cereal."</p>	<p>A flat-out NO without empathy makes Cindy likely to have a gum tantrum!</p>
<b>All Heart</b> 	<p>"I know how much you love the gum Grams sends you!"</p>	<p>Mom acknowledges Cindy's feelings, but she doesn't explain why she said no. You can be sure Cindy will keep pushing.</p>
<b>Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heart:</b> "Cindy, I know you LOVE the gum Grams sends you and you want to chew it all the time."</li> <li>• <b>Head:</b> "Gum is not good for breakfast. I want you to eat your cereal for breakfast and then you can have gum."</li> <li>• <b>Heart:</b> "I love you and I want you to eat a healthy breakfast so you feel good all day."</li> </ul>	<p>Mom acknowledges Cindy's feelings, explains her reasoning for saying no, and does not argue. She has a caring way to say no. Cindy might still insist on gum for breakfast, but she's more likely to give in and less likely to rage against her mother.</p>



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## D. “Yes, but... I’m not so sure!”

Some people question the Heart-Head-Heart Method. Here are some concerns and doubts that we’ve heard people express...

Concerns	Do you share this concern?
1. “Yes, but...lots of people just aren’t caring and that’s why they don’t communicate with heart.”	Yes No
2. “Yes, but...HEART is not ME! It’s not my nature. I’m a HEAD person and I can’t change that. When it comes to empathy, people either have it or they don’t. And I don’t.”	Yes No
3. “Yes, but...when you show your feelings, people think you’re soft, touchy-feely, or a pushover, and they take advantage of you.”	Yes No
4. “Yes, but...deliberately communicating with heart is manipulative. You’re just doing it to get what you want. it. You don’t mean it.”	Yes No
5. “Yes, but...when somebody makes me mad, why should I respond with heart? It’s a matter of being true to myself.”	Yes No
6. “Yes, but...I’m no therapist! You show understanding and the next thing you know, they’re pouring their heart out to you. You get in over your head.”	Yes No
7. “Yes, but...people shouldn’t need coddling or pampering. It’s a dog-eat-dog world and people need to toughen up.”	Yes No
8. “Yes, but...I don’t have TIME for Heart-Head-Heart. And other people don’t have time to hear it. There is no time for caring!”	Yes No



## For each concern or doubt that you shared, read on for our answers!

**“Yes, but... lots of people just are not caring people and that’s why they don’t communicate with heart.”**

Drawing on our experience, we are convinced that most people are indeed caring. You just might not know it because they don’t express it.

**“Yes, but...HEART is not ME! It’s not my nature. I’m a HEAD person and I can’t change that. When it comes to empathy, people either have it or they don’t. And I don’t.”**

Okay, we recognize that some people have a much harder time communicating from the heart than others. Communicating with heart might not be your style or within your comfort zone, perhaps because of your genes, personality, upbringing, or life experiences that make feelings off limits. Admittedly, it can be a stretch for head-oriented people to communicate with heart. But, that doesn’t mean you can’t do much more of it, if you decide you want to. There is lots of research that says empathy is learnable which means you can learn to communicate with heart if you want to.

**“Yes, but...when you show your feelings, people think you’re soft, touchy-feely, and a pushover, and they take advantage of you.”**

We’re not recommending that you gush with feelings or overdo it. An acknowledgement here, a word of regret there, an expression of caring here, some personal regard there—you can be very effective communicating with heart in one-liners. And the Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich helps you keep heart and head in balance.

**“Yes, but...deliberately communicating with heart is manipulative. You’re just doing it to get what you want, even when you don’t mean it.”**

It’s not wise to say things you don’t mean—things that aren’t genuine on your part, just because you want something from the other person. That would certainly be manipulative (and dishonest).

The important thing is to communicate with heart—genuinely felt. If you look within for what’s genuine and make sure you include that in your communication, you’ll be more likely to get the results you want. And that is not manipulative. That is merely wise and effective.

**“Yes, but...when somebody makes me mad, why should I respond with heart? It’s a matter of being true to myself.”**

Are you thinking that impulse control is not good, because it’s not genuine? Really? Many ugly scenes occur because one or both parties do not exercise impulse control and act out against the other person without any inhibition. Impulse control is often cited as a competency reflecting maturity. People learn to hold back when they are inclined to do something destructive—to reflect and choose their response, so they are constructive instead. You can acknowledge the other person’s feelings without necessarily being angry back. You can start with Heart, “I hear how annoyed you are by this.” And then move to your Head message, which might be your explanation which can certainly be said with directness and force. And then you end with Heart again (e.g. “I want to resolve this with you.” Or “I didn’t mean to upset you.” Or, “I appreciate your directness in bringing this up.”) You can respond with your feelings too. Just start with Heart and end with Heart and the person is more likely to hear you and consider what you’re saying with an open mind.

**“Yes, but...I’m no therapist! You show understanding and the next thing you know, they’re pouring their heart out to you. You get in over your head.”**

We certainly want to avoid getting into conversations we really don’t have time for or feel ill equipped to handle because they are emotional or disturbing. With the Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich, you can establish boundaries.

• Heart: “I’m really glad for the chance to talk with you about this.”

- Head: “I’m sorry to say I need to end our conversation now, because I’ve gone as far as I can at this point.”
- Heart: “Thank you for our conversation. I do hope it was helpful for you.”

**“Yes, but...people shouldn’t need coddling or pampering. It’s a dog-eat-dog world and people need to toughen up.”**

You have a choice. Do you want to contribute to the dog-eat-dog phenomenon by socking it to people you communicate with!? Using heart communication, you can choose to communicate in a more personal and supportive way.

**“Yes, but...I don’t have TIME for Heart-Head-Heart. And other people don’t have time to hear it. There is no time for caring!”**

No doubt, scarce time discourages expression of anything but the meat of your message. And more heart communication might take more time in the short run, but not in the long run. When you take the added moment it takes to speak from your heart, the other person will hear you better. You’ll reduce their anxiety and prevent communication roadblocks. They will cooperate more. You will be more effective. And it can take less than a minute. One sentence here, another sentence there and a much better result.

A Request: When you hear a coworker express doubts about Heart-Head-Heart, step in and address their doubts. You can use Heart-Head-Heart when you do!

## **E. The Make-it or Break-it Power of Your Mindset**

To feel empathy and communicate it, and to use Heart-Head-Heart effectively, you will need to make sure you approach people with a positive, or at least neutral mindset. A negative mindset can stop you from feeling empathy and bringing your best self to the situation.

Let’s say a coworker mentioned to you that a

particular patient is very difficult. When you approach that patient, your coworker’s comments might prejudice you to expect the patient to be difficult and get your guard up --ready for a challenge or resistance. When you approach a patient like that, you will have a hard time using Heart-Head-Heart effectively.

Some people think, “I can’t change how I feel and think. It’s just how I see the world. My perceptions are my perceptions.” As humans, we are perceiving and judging all of the time. But in fact, we CAN change our expectations and perceptions by choice. We can stop negative thoughts and at least “get to neutral” by replacing our negative thought with a positive one.

We call this **reframing**. Reframing goes on inside our own heads. We decide to change our point of view so it will help us be more effective. We do ABSOLUTELY have the power to change what we’re thinking or saying to ourselves. We can change a negative thought about the person or situation to a positive one or at least a compassionate thought. This will enable us to bring our hearts and our caring to the situations we face.

**How do you reframe?** Reframing begins with becoming aware of your “self-talk.” Your self-talk is what you are saying to yourself, your inner monologue or commentary about what’s going on. So, first you become aware of your self-talk. And when you catch yourself engaging in negative self-talk, you decide to replace it with positive or at least neutral self-talk about what is going on or the situation and person you are facing.

Here’s an example. After interacting with a patient’s family, you first think to yourself, “The nerve of them being so demanding!” If you think that thought without replacing it with a more positive one, how could you possibly communicate with heart? So, let’s say you catch yourself thinking that. You can choose to replace that thought with a positive thought that will give the family the benefit of the doubt, like, “This is not about me. This family is probably hurting---very worried about their loved one.”

Are you concerned that reframing or choosing to replace a negative thought with a positive one is phony? Reframing might be hard for you to do, but it isn't phony. Think of all the negative thoughts people have that "get in their own way." The fact is, you have a choice about what to think to yourself. You can be more effective and feel better when you choose to replace negative expectations or thoughts with

positive ones. With REFRAMING, we can stay in touch with our caring, use Heart-Head-Heart in a genuine way, and amazingly, even influence the other person in a positive direction.

## A Few More Examples

### You might think:

The patients here are so difficult. How could he do that to me?

(About a coworker) She always resists every good idea!

These patients are just looking for drugs!

### You can reframe this to:

I wonder what he was thinking that made him do that?

I wonder, from her perspective, what good reason she has for not wanting to do this.

I wonder what's going on with this person. I want to know, so I can do the right thing.

## F. How do YOU want to benefit from Heart-Head-Heart?

To review, by using Heart-Head-Heart, you can strengthen and even transform your relationships—for the better.

- You can earn people's trust, respect and cooperation.

- You can get your message across.
- You can be seen as the competent and caring person you are.
- You can make a positive difference in people's lives.
- You can reduce your own stress.
- You can feel good about yourself, your relationships and your impact.

### Stop and Reflect: How do YOU want to benefit from Heart-Head-Heart?

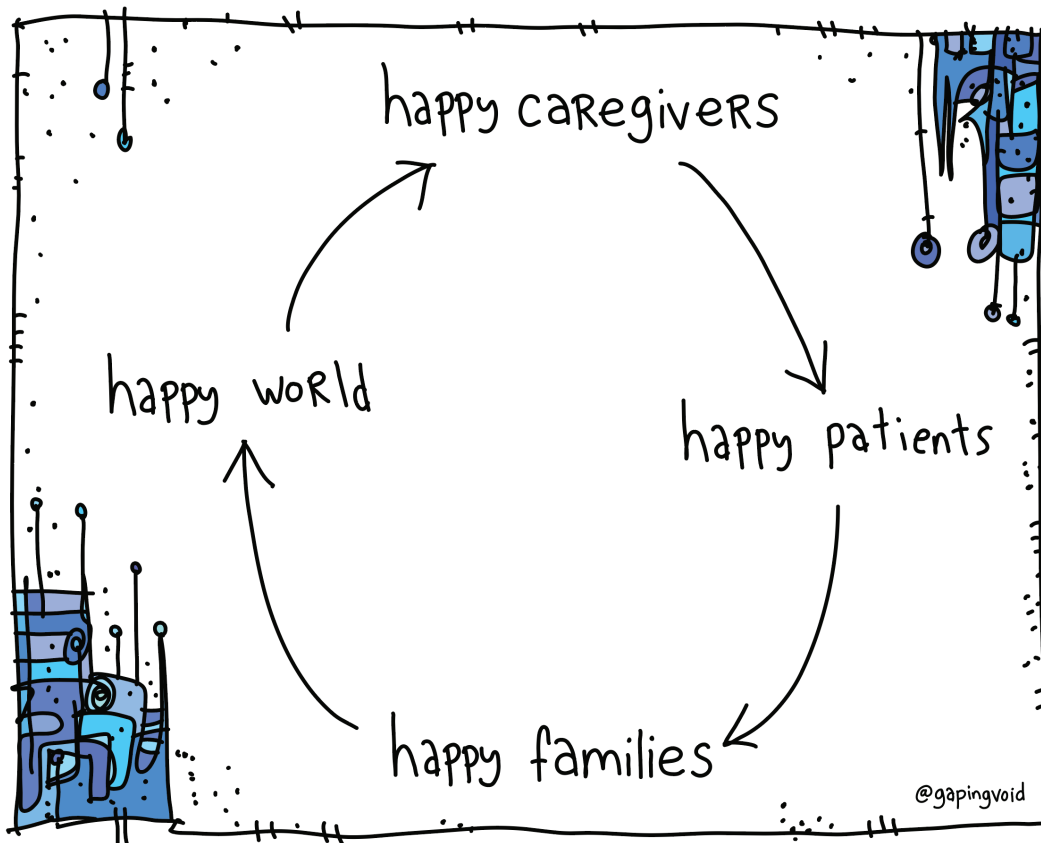
Take a minute to think about the benefits you want from adopting the Heart-Head-Heart Method and using it regularly at work and beyond. Jot them down here. Then, after gaining more experience with Heart-Head-Heart, check back and see how you did.

#### The benefits I want...

1

2

3



## IV. True Stories: Heart-Head-Heart in Action

People who've adopted the Heart-Head-Heart Method share an abundance of success stories. Here are a few about healthcare and home situations.

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**From Kathy Conaboy  
Mom, and Patient and Family Experience Manager  
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia**

I first came here to CHOP when my son was 8 years old. He'd been horribly injured in an accident and he was here many times a year for the next 12 years until he transitioned into adult care. Today he's doing very well, and I have a long-standing partnership with this hospital, which led me to work to bring the family voice to a lot of initiatives at the hospital.

My first exposure to Heart-Head-Heart was profound. It struck me that in many of my most challenging and difficult times here as the mother of a very sick child, what was missing from many of those encounters was empathy. And, the times when things went so well, there was empathy. And those are memories that stay with me as if they happened yesterday.

The clinician or person speaking to me connected with me and made a terrible moment not so terrible because they communicated with empathy. They made it clear that they were there for me. They helped bring me into the conversation, and they helped me grapple with what we were going through.

When I first saw Heart-Head-Heart, I realized I had never before been able to give words to what it meant to have a conversation like that. I became very passionate about the work, very excited about the opportunity to bring it here to help different clinicians and clinical teams.

My role was to share my story and to use pieces of the story to illustrate the skills for communicating with empathy. I'd say when you practice your clinical excellence, if you start and end in a caring way, and you say what you planned on saying in the middle, you're going to dramatically change the way that encounter goes. You're going to be perceived as compassionate and caring by the family you're speaking to. You're going to create trust and commitment to what you're trying to get to happen.

The reactions from staff have been very significant. They're surprised. They're ecstatic. "You're kidding me? That's all I have to do to bring family-centered care to life?" "Yes. Arrange your face. Make a connection with the family. Take your hand off the doorknob and your phone. Say what you came to say. Start with caring words and finish up with a really profound expression of caring. You can create moments that a family will remember 20 years from now as very satisfying."

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**From Tara Strain, Patient Representative**

A nurse manager called me for help with an upset family of a man with dementia. She and her charge nurse had already spent HOURS with this family and couldn't satisfy them. The problem was--we didn't have the patient's home meds, so their father had a REALLY bad night. The nurse manager said, "Good LUCK!" as I went to try my hand at talking with the angry family.

I sat down, introduced myself and said, “First I’d like to acknowledge what a truly amazing job you are both doing caring for your father. One of you is always by his side, making sure he gets what he needs. Now, I heard from your father’s nurses that he had a bad night because we didn’t get his home medicines for him. Is that right?”

They said YES and I apologized for the discomfort their father had suffered. I told them we resolved this and he is now receiving all of his meds. And I said we would do everything possible to make sure he sleeps well. And I said again how blessed their father is to have them in his corner. I thanked them for speaking up to us, gave them my card and said to call me any time. The daughter hugged me and thanked me. It only took 3 or 4 minutes.

The charge nurse and nurse manager were shocked I was back so fast. I said I just used the Heart Head Heart sandwich. An apology, a solution, and some understanding was all that was needed.

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### **The Traffic Ticket Story From a Health Plan Administrator**

Heart-Head-Heart can save you in lots of situations in everyday life. I’ll tell you one story, but please don’t tell people my name, because I’m embarrassed about my driving.

So the story goes like this. I was on my way to work and I was very late as usual. So, I was coming down the turnpike faster than 80 mph, even as I approached a construction area, which is also a double no-no. As I came around a curve, I saw the State Trooper sitting right there with his radar gun. I knew he had me. So, I pulled right over, and I thought, “Oh, gosh. I’m going to be so late and miss that meeting.” Well, the Trooper pulled out into traffic fast and he had his arm out of his window, waving cars around him. And it struck me in that moment, that this was really dangerous for him.

He stormed up to my car window and said, “Do you know how fast you were going?” He was really upset, his head bobbing, his body language angry. And the first thing that came out of my mouth was “I’m so sorry that I just put you in danger as you had to come out into traffic to chase me down. I should not have been driving that fast. And you put yourself at risk to come and stop me and I apologize for that.” And the air went completely out of his anger. I was not trying to get out of a ticket; I really meant what I said.

I think the usual me before learning about the Heart-Head-Heart would have said or at least thought, “Why don’t you go arrest a criminal? Why are you bothering me? I’m trying to go to my job.” But I had started to use Heart-Head-Heart as a habit, and I used it automatically. And I’m sure it came across as authentic.

And I think the State Trooper who normally would never listen to any excuse was really, I think, touched by those words. His response was, “I’m only out here to try and protect you.” I said, “I’m sorry. You got put in danger to come and help me.” He came back with, “Well, I don’t want you to get hurt. I’ve gone to the homes of four families this month to deliver bad news and I don’t want that for you.”

Then he asked for my license and registration, looked at them, “Your registration’s not signed.” So now I’m in even worse trouble. I said, “I appreciate you reminding me of that. I just forgot.” So, I signed it and gave it back. He went back to his car and when he came back, he said, “I’m going to fine you \$100 for excessive

speed and \$30 for the registration not being signed.” But anyone who knows anything knows that the fine really should have been upwards of \$500 and maybe doubled because of a construction zone --with points, courts, suspension of license, a lot of other bad things. What had happened is we made a human connection.

What’s profound about Heart-Head-Heart is that it creeps into your everyday behavior. It makes us all much better human beings from a connection level and it’s easy to do.

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### **Brenda Spector, Mom and Physical Therapist**

My 8-year old and I seem to fight nearly every night before he goes to bed. I feel terrible about that, and I’m sure it isn’t good for him either. I decided to see if I could break the pattern by trying out Heart-Head-Heart. That night, I told him it was time for bed and he said he had to finish watching the video he was watching. As usual, I got mad and so did he. Then, I thought to try Heart-Head-Heart. I said:

- **Heart:** I know it must be really hard to stop watching in the middle.
- **Head:** I’ve already let you watch extra and it’s already a half hour past your bedtime. You have school in the morning and you need to get your sleep. I’m asking you to use your self-control and close the computer. I’ll keep the browser window open so you can watch tomorrow after school right where you left off.
- **Heart:** I want you to feel rested and have a good day tomorrow.

He still wasn’t happy about it, but he reluctantly paused the movie and went to bed. At least he didn’t go to bed mad and I felt a lot better about how I handled it. When I use Heart-Head-Heart, we both leave the conversation with our self-esteem in tact.

# V. How to Apply Heart-Head-Heart to Your Work—and Your Life

## A. Examples Galore: Heart-Head-Heart in Job-Specific Situations




Here are examples of Heart-Head-Heart statements developed by teams in other organizations. Seeing Heart-Head-Heart language that works can help you use Heart-Head-Heart in your everyday situations.

*Please Note: The point is not to write SCRIPTS for yourself. The goal is to identify message points and think of sample language for expressing those message points. Then, by consistently communicating these message points (in your own words and genuinely), you will go from good to GREAT in communicating your empathy and caring.*

In the many examples that follow, you'll find Heart-Head-Heart statements for these situations:




1. Communicating about waits and delays
2. Service recovery and responding to complaints
3. Situations with coworkers
4. Tough situations about money
5. Communicating about opioids

### 1. Communicating about Waits and Delays




	Heart 	Head 	Heart 
The patient has been waiting.	Mrs. Hunt, I'm so sorry we haven't been able to take you yet. I want you to know we haven't forgotten you!	Other patients are taking longer than we predicted, and our care team wants to give each person the time they need. It will probably take another 20 minutes before we're ready for you. If that changes, I'll let you know for sure.	I know it can be hard to wait when you aren't feeling well or you're really busy. I really appreciate your patience and I'll be sure to let you know if there's a change.
A patient must wait for test results and their diagnosis.	I realize waiting for results can be very stressful, and I want to get you the results as soon as I possibly can.	It usually takes 4 days to get the results. It takes that long for careful analysis. I assure you, as soon as I receive the results, I'll call you.	I'm just sorry it takes so long. I know the waiting can be very hard.






## 2. Service Recovery and Responding to Complaints

	Heart 	Head 	Heart 
Patient says she heard about remedies on the internet that her nurse did not mention.	I'm so glad you brought this to my attention. I'd like to look into it for you.	The internet has so much information, and it's hard to know what would be helpful. How about if I review the information you showed me and see if it might improve our approach to your illness.	It's great that you're investigating options and bringing them to my attention. This will help us come up with the best possible plan for you.
Resident's family member complains to manager about rude staff member.	I'm so sorry this happened to you. While she might have been under a lot of stress, you deserve kindness and respect no matter what.	I will definitely look into this and prevent it from happening again to you other members of your family or our community.	Thanks so much for telling me, so I can do something about it.




## 3. Situations with Coworkers

	Heart 	Head 	Heart 
Physician is taking too long with patients and keeping people waiting	I know how much you care for your patients and you are generous to want to spend extra time with them.	Many people are waiting right now, and they are agitated from the long wait. Could you possibly speed up?	I know it's hard to stick to a tight schedule when you're trying to give people individual attention. Is there anything I can do to help?
You are late with a report you promised to a colleague.	I'm so sorry I didn't get this to you earlier. I know you were relying on me.	I'll get it to you first thing Monday for sure. Will that work?	I'm sorry I disappointed you. And I appreciate your understanding.

#### 4. Tough Situations about Money

	Heart 	Head 	Heart 
Patient says they don't have money for co-pay.	I realize that's frustrating.	The fact is, the co-pay is required by your insurance company. How about if we talk about a plan that makes it possible for you to pay a little at a time?	I want to make this manageable for you.
Parent refuses to pay copay because doctor told them to bring in their child for a "well visit" that they didn't ask for. Parent thinks practice is just money hungry.	I realize it's frustrating to be asked to pay a copay, especially when you're here because your son's doctor asked you to come.	We asked you to bring in your son for his sake. Your doctor takes his responsibility for your son's health very seriously and wants to prevent health problems. And your health plan requires us to collect a copay even when the doctor suggests the additional visit. We could work out a payment plan so you can pay this over time. Would you like that?	Thank you for understanding.

#### 5. Communicating about Opioids










	Heart 	Head 	Heart 
But I really need the medicine! Don't you trust me? I thought you cared about me!	You sound very distressed and I'd like to help.	I'm not comfortable giving you a prescription for this drug, because your illness doesn't call for this, and it isn't safe for you. I can suggest another over-the-counter drug that should help your pain --without any risks to you.	I care about you and I want to reduce your pain without risks to you.
I need MUCH more medication.	I'm so sorry you're having so much pain.	You're already taking a high dose, and the risk of an overdose increases at higher doses. How about if we discuss other ways to help you manage your pain without so much risk?	I'm very concerned about you and I want us to figure out with you how to lessen your suffering.

## B. Tools to Help You Apply Heart-Head-Heart to Your Work and Your Life

No doubt, there are situations in your work or outside of work that you wish you could handle more effectively. On the two worksheets that follow, list those situations and take a stab at writing Heart-Head-Heart statements for each situation. The first sheet asks you to list everyday situations, in which you could routinely be more effective. The second sheet asks you to list especially challenging situations, like when you have to handle a certain complaint over and over again with one person after another.










# APPLY IT!

## Heart-Head-Heart in My Everyday Situations

My Everyday Situations	Suggested Language	
My Situation:		
		
		
My Situation:		
		
		
My Situation:		
		
		

# APPLY Heart-Head-Heart!

## Heart-Head-Heart in My Challenging Situations

A.	
	
	
B.	
	
	
C.	
	
	

**“The deepest principle of human nature is  
a craving to be appreciated.”**

*William James*

**“Appreciation can make a day - even change a life. Your  
willingness to put it into words is all that is necessary.”**

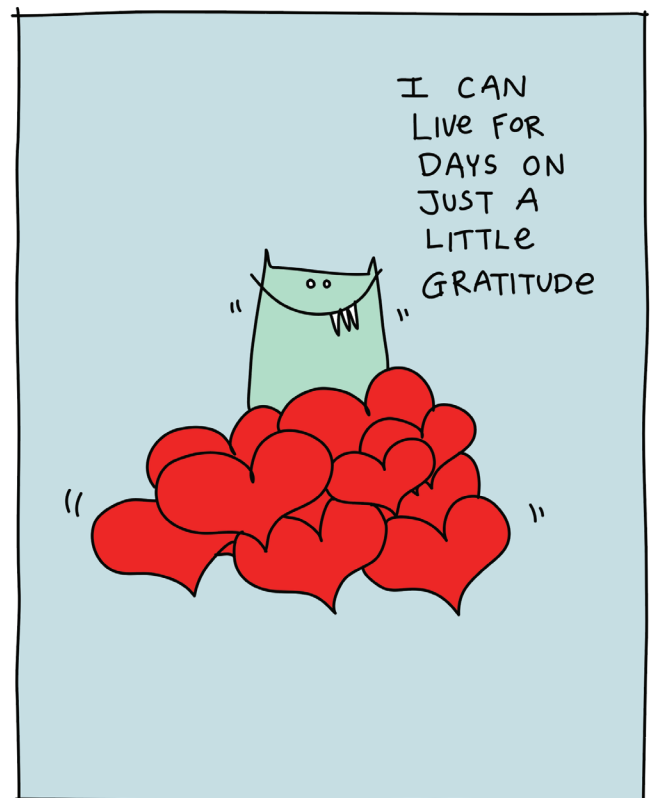
*Margaret Cousins*

### **C. Using Heart-Head-Heart to Express Appreciation**

As you undoubtedly know from personal experience, appreciation and gratitude make people feel good, whether you're giving appreciation or receiving it. Feeling genuinely appreciated lifts people up, creating good feelings, happy memories, and optimism, while boosting self-esteem. It also encourages a “pay it forward” and “we're in this together” mentality. The feeling that we truly matter is precious — that we contribute unique value to the whole, and that we're recognized for it.




So why is it that openly expressing appreciation to others at work is rare, and even when it's given, it often sounds awkward or phony? The fact is, many of us are not fluent in the language of appreciation. Perhaps, we don't have a lot of experience either receiving appreciation or giving it.

The good news: Heartfelt appreciation is a muscle that we can build using Heart-Head-Heart.



@gapingvoid

## Appreciating with Heart-Head-Heart: Examples

	Heart 	Head 	Heart 
Patient gives you a nice compliment when introducing you to his son.	Joe, I really appreciated the nice things you told your son about me when he visited.	I'm so glad you're happy with our relationship. It makes me feel really good.	You made my day!
Patient has been engaged, cooperative and good-natured.	We've been through a lot together today, and I just want you to know how great you've been through this.	Tests, pushes and probes, waiting, worrying—all of that happened for you today.	I really admire your good nature even when you're under so much stress.
Coworker has been under extreme stress because of a staff shortage.	Wow, I'm really impressed by you today!	You've been knocking yourself out to make up for our short staffing.	I want you to know I really appreciate it.
You noticed aides being very attentive and calming to one of the residents.	You know, Jean, I really admire the way you were so calm and reassuring to Mrs. Hicks.	You really tuned in and listened, and I think you made it easy for her to open up about her worries.	Thank you so much. I'm sure she feels safe in your good hands.

### Tips for Genuine Appreciation

1. Start with yourself. If you have a hard time appreciating others, you might also find it difficult to appreciate yourself. Take a few moments at the end of the day to consider: "What can I feel proud of today?"
2. Decide to notice what others are doing right. Think about your coworkers positive qualities, behaviors and contributions. Ask yourself what each person brings to the table.
3. Don't wait to show your appreciation.

## Coupons for You!

Cut out the coupons on this page and, when you're inspired by something a patient, resident, family member or coworker does, fill in a quick Heart-Head-Heart message and give them the note.

To:

I want you to know I appreciate you.

Getting specific:



Thank you!

---

To:

I want you to know I appreciate you.

Getting specific:



Thank you!

---

To:

I want you to know I appreciate you.

Getting specific:



Thank you!

---

To:

I want you to know I appreciate you.

Getting specific:



Thank you!

---







## VI. Getting GREAT at Heart-Head-Heart

Even after you get the basic idea of Heart-Head-Heart, it takes practice to get GREAT at it. Here are:

**A. Five Tips: How to Be Effective with Heart-Head-Heart**

**B. How to Avoid Broken Hearts: a list of ways you can misuse the method and fail to get the results you want**

**C. Choose Your Words**

**D. Self-Improvement Tools**

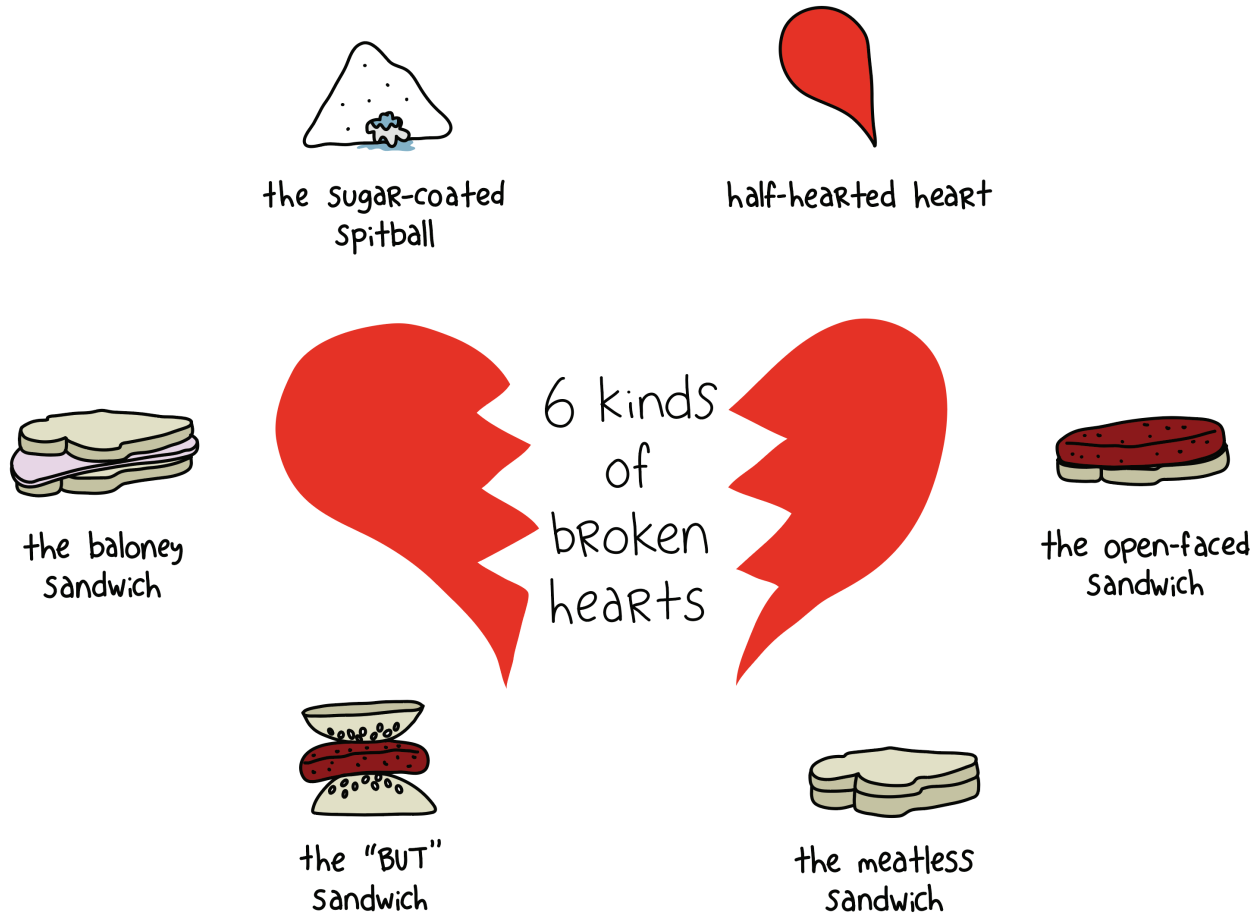
**E. Six Ways to Make Heart-Head-Heart a Habit**

### A. Five Tips: How to Be Effective with Heart-Head-Heart

1. Adopt an attitude of compassion, and don't judge. Get in touch with the compassionate and emotionally generous side of yourself and let go of judgment and defensiveness.
2. Listen, observe, and be curious. This helps you connect, notice and digest the other person's feelings, cues and reactions, so you can personalize your Heart-Head-Heart messages.
3. Think "Sandwich." Express at least twice as much Heart as Head and people will really feel your empathy and caring.
4. In tense situations, take a deep breath before you reply. Then, reply with Heart-Head-Heart, and you'll avoid sounding angry, judgmental or defensive.
5. Be sincere. Match your posture, tone, pace and face to your caring words. People can tell when you're phony.

## B. How to Avoid Broken Hearts

Some people use the Heart-Head-Heart Method with the best of intentions, but then find that it backfires, and they don't know why. Using the metaphor of the Sandwich, here are six kinds of Heart-Head-Heart statements that fail to have the desired effect.. We call these "broken hearts."



@gapingvoid

### What's this?



the baloney sandwich

To the other person, your message sounds like phony baloney, not heartfelt or genuine.

- Heart: "You are the most inspiring person I have ever met, and I really admire you."
- Head: "Now, I need you to do something for me."
- Heart: "Only you can do this, because you're so talented."

### The problem with it?

Your message backfires. The other person will roll their eyes and see you as manipulative—willing to say anything to get what you want. People will see right through you.

## What's this?

## The problem with it?

While Heart-Head-Heart is great in hard conversations, when you feel angry or frustrated, you have to be careful. Unless you take a breath and make sure you're calm enough to deliver your Heart-Head-Heart message with caring, you run the risk of delivering a Heart-Hostility-Heart Sandwich—the Sugar-Coated Spitball.



- Heart: "I know you're a very compassionate person and wouldn't intentionally hurt my feelings in a million years."
- Head: "But you have a lot of nerve saying what you said. It's off-base and I resent it!"
- Heart: "You're a very honest person, so I hope you'll appreciate my honesty."

People experience the sugar-coated spitball as your attempt to butter them up for the kill.

Your words might be fine, but if your delivery is lackluster, your heart messages will fall flat. You say something admiring, but sound bored. You acknowledge the person's feelings, but you sound detached. Read this in a flat tone and you'll see!



- Heart: "You look tired and overwhelmed."
- Head: "Are there some errands I can run to give you a break?"
- Heart: "I want to help."

The other person doubts your sincerity and is probably thinking, "You care? Then, tell your face!"

You'll know you've committed a "But" Sandwich if your Head statement begins with the word "but."



the "BUT" sandwich

- Heart: "I realize this has been a very hard experience for you, and you are feeling quite exhausted."
- Head: "But, I do need you to do three things before you leave."
- Heart: "I'll really appreciate it."

When you use the word "BUT," it negates or wipes out what you said before. Instead, use "and" or "still."

Some people are all heart. They forget to get to the beef in a Heart message.



- Doctor to Patient: "I'm really sorry about the long wait. I realize how frustrating that can be. Thanks for your patience."

The patient thinks, but doesn't say: "Yeah? Well, if you're so sorry, why did it happen?"

Many people forget to end with Heart. In an email, Jim says YES to Cousin Rhonda's invitation to visit for a couple of days. He says he plans to stay a week to make the trip worthwhile. Rhonda freaks out. Forgetting to end with Heart, she writes back, "Jim, I'm glad you're coming, but I was thinking 3 days at the most because I have a lot going on."



Jim will probably feel quite insulted, and this could hurt their relationship. Better to end with a heart message, such as: "I really look forward to your visit and hope the shortened time will work for you. Love to you!"

Now try this matching puzzle. Diagnose each “Broken Heart” on the left and draw an arrow that connects it to its Broken Heart Type on the right.

**Match Each Broken Heart to Its Type**

<p><b>A. Physician to Nurse:</b> “Thanks so much for your question. If you had waited until I had fully explained, you would not have had to ask that question at all. Thanks. I appreciate it.”</p>	<p><b>The Baloney Sandwich</b></p>
<p><b>B. Nurse to Patient:</b> “I’m so sorry about the delay. But you’re not our only patient, and every patient needs our time. Thank you for understanding.”</p>	<p><b>The Sugar-Coated Spitball</b></p>
<p><b>C. Supervisor to Employee:</b> “I realize you’re handling a lot of hard things and you sound exhausted. I guess you’ll have to buckle down. The pressures aren’t going away. And keep up the good work.”</p>	<p><b>Half-Hearted Heart</b></p>
<p><b>D. Mother to Daughter:</b> “I trust you completely to make the best decision, but this is a big decision, and I want you to check your decision with me before you act. I love you and want what’s best for you.”</p>	<p><b>The Meatless Sandwich</b></p>
<p><b>E. Boss to Employee:</b> “I’m delighted with your background work on our budget. I’m just concerned about whether you can meet the deadline we agreed on.”</p>	<p><b>The “But” Sandwich</b></p>
<p><b>F. Coworker to Coworker</b> (said in an unconvincing tone): “You have a lot on your plate. We all do. I’m sorry you’re struggling.”</p>	<p><b>The Open-Faced Sandwich</b></p>

Answer key: A. Sugar-Coated Spitball B. But Sandwich C. Meatless Sandwich D. Baloney Sandwich E. Open-Faced Sandwich F. Half Hearted Heart

## C. Choose Your Words

To be effective with Heart-Head-Heart, you need to become self-aware about the words you use so your words have the impact you want. Take a look at commonly used words that people hear as negative messages, not Heart messages. Then, contrast those to words and phrases that people hear as empathic, positive expressions of the Heart.

### Words and Phrases with a Negative Impact

You say...	The other person hears...
"As soon as possible"	When I get around to it.
"Hopefully..."	Who really knows?
"I'll try."	Not sure I can do it. No promises here.
"To be honest..."	I was lying up until now.
"I can't do that."	I won't do that.
"It's our policy." "That's against our policy."	That's the way it is. Like it or lump it.
"It's over there."	I'm too important to show you the way.
"You have to..." "You must..."	I'm in charge here. I make the rules and you follow them.
"The truth is..."	I probably shouldn't tell you this.
"Calm down."	You're out of control and you're the problem here.
"That's not my department. You'll have to speak with someone else."	It's not my problem and I won't help.
"If you had read our policy..." "If you had read the directions..." "You should have..."	Dummy.
"Like I said..."	You're irritating me and wasting my time.
"You can't..."	I set the rules here. You don't.
"What's your problem?"	Ugh, another demanding person!
"Yes, but..."	No.

## Heart Words and Phrases That Lift Spirits

You say...	The other person hears...
"I can certainly help you."	I'm here for you, for sure.
"I'll gladly arrange that."	You can count on me to come through for you.
"Delighted"	You're not a bother at all. I'm here for you.
"Absolutely"	You can count on me.
"My pleasure"	It's a joy to help you.
"I'm happy to..."	I love my job.
"I'm really sorry..."	I sincerely regret that you had an unfortunate experience.
"Yes"	You can count on it.
"What I can do is...."	I'll gladly do what I can for you.
"I'm asking you to..."	I'd appreciate it if you would...
"How may I help you?"	Just say the word. I'm here to help.
"Thank you so much."	I appreciate you.
"I appreciate this."	I don't take you for granted.

**Want insight into the words you use?** Ask a coworker to audit YOUR words and see how often you use positive, healing words, not negative or lackluster words, to elevate other people's spirits, reduce their anxiety, and earn their trust and cooperation.

### Word Hunt

Dear Coworker,

You see and hear how I communicate. Please help me communicate better by making me aware of the words I use that, in your view, have a POSITIVE vs. NEGATIVE impact.

Words with Positive Impact	Words with Negative Impact

Listen to yourself and catch yourself using words likely to have a negative impact. And step up your use of Heart words that make your caring visible and felt. By choosing words that typically have a positive impact and using these words in a genuine, not forced or scripted way, you will more often than not create the impact you want.

## D. Self-Improvement Tools

Self-assessment and feedback can help you master empathic communication and Heart-Head-Heart.

Start with yourself. Do a self-assessment using the “Self-Check Worksheet” below. It will help you become more aware of using or missing opportunities to use Heart-Head-Heart, and it will give you some ideas about what effective use of this model looks like.

Also, invite feedback: You can learn from the perspective of a coworker or coach who is present when you are communicating. Use the tool below: “Feedback from a Coworker or Coach.”



# Self-Check

## Self-Check Worksheet: My Use of Heart-Head-Heart

**Do I mix HEAD and HEART messages when I communicate with people at work? Do I --**

	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the Time	Always
Start with HEART--a caring message--before delving into business at hand?				
Connect personally upfront before digging into the tasks?				
Move beyond showing my caring and address the person's information needs as well?				
End with HEART, so I make the last impression I make a caring one?				
Use the Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich idea to remember to mix HEART and HEAD messages?				
Make more HEART statements, than HEAD statements?				
Respond with respect and appreciation even if the person appears angry?				
Listen intently when the person is talking to me?				

What am I doing really well when it comes to using the Heart-Head-Heart Method?

What do I need to do (or stop doing) to be more effective with HEART-HEAD-HEART?



# Feedback from an Observer or Coach

## Your Feedback, Please!

To:

From:

You had the chance to observe me when I was interacting with a patient, family member and/or coworker. Based on what you observed or heard, will you please give me feedback? I welcome it. **Thank you.**

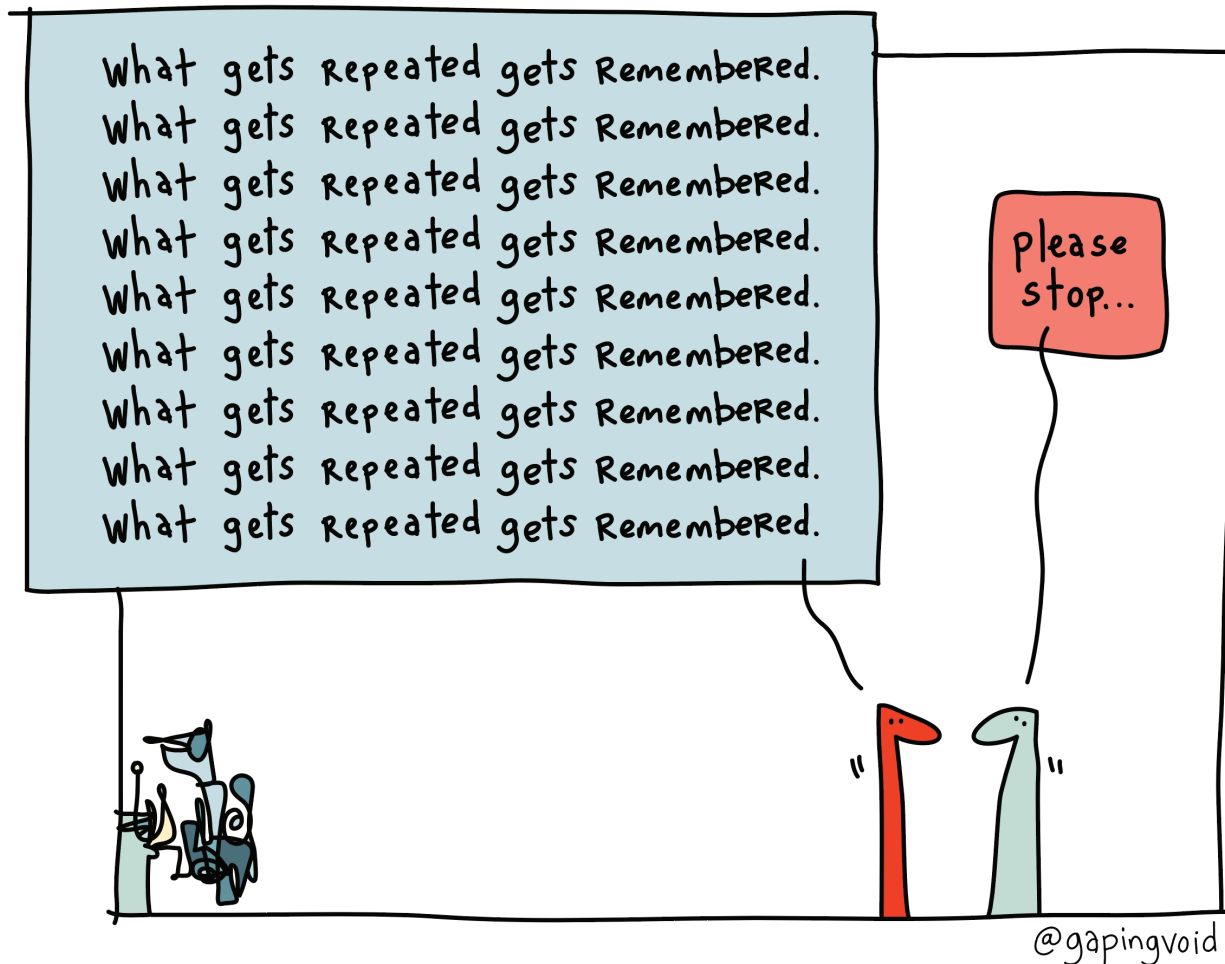
	YES	NO	Suggestions
1. Did I connect with the person?			
2. Did I give them undivided attention while they were speaking with me?			
3. Did I appear to care about their feelings and concerns?			
4. Did I show my caring in my words?			
5. Did I show my caring in my nonverbal actions?			
6. Based on your observation, did I come across as a caring person?			

<b>What grade would you give me on my communication of CARING? (circle one)</b>	<b>WHY?</b> <i>Please suggest one thing I can do in the future to show my caring more effectively.</i>
<b>A</b>	
<b>B</b>	
<b>C</b>	
<b>D</b>	
<b>F</b>	

## E. Six Ways to Make Heart-Head-Heart a Habit

When you learned to ride a bike or swim, at first you no doubt felt awkward, clumsy and unsure. Then, you practiced. And after a while, it became automatic.... second nature.

That's what happens with the Heart-Head-Heart Method. If you intentionally follow the method and practice, practice, practice, you'll master it, break through the clumsy, awkward stage and come out the other side being able to balance heart and head messages without effort.



## Make Heart-Head-Heart a HABIT.

**1. Publicly commit.** Talk to the people close to you about the Heart-Head-Heart Method and tell them you're intending to use it to improve how you communicate. Explain the method. Give an example. Explain your plan. Ask for feedback and help.

"Please point out to me when you hear me use it. A round of applause would be good too. And tell me how it feels when I use it and how I can do better."

**2. Practice daily.** A Psychology researcher at University College London, Philippa Lally found that it takes most people on average 66 days to make a new behavior into a habit (European J. Soc. Psych.).

Practice the Heart-Head-Heart Method for 66 days straight in your interaction with your friends, family and coworkers.

**3. Adopt a memory aid.** If Heart-Head-Heart communication involves changing your ways, how are you going to remember to practice it daily? Figure out a prompt for yourself---a symbol or signal to remind you to do this. Some people get heart stickers at an office supply store and paste them on a calendar one-per day, and when they use a Sandwich that day, they put a big check on that day's sticker. Others use the tried-and-true string-around-your-finger, or a sign on the refrigerator or bathroom sink (a place they are sure to visit each morning).

**4. Track your Heart-Head-Heart use.** Make yourself keenly aware of when you use Heart-Head-Heart. Jot down each example on a daily log. Notice how the other person reacts when you use it. Reflect on your results. Do this until you're sure you've mastered the method and you find yourself using it with ease.

**5. Plan Heart-Head-Heart for tough situations.** Get even more deliberate about using Heart-Head-Heart in difficult, strained or high-stakes situations. When you see a situation coming, grab a notepad

or computer and draft a Heart-Head-Heart for your upcoming situation. Work on it. Make it great. And prepare to use it. You can even take your main points with you to help you do a great job of it. Again, notice the results, log it and reflect on it so you can do even better next time.

**6. Consider a Sandwich spread.** If you work on getting good at the Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich, the Sandwich will work for you (because it works!) After building your confidence and track record of success, share the technique with others. Spread it. Tell people about it. Talk about your great results and how the Sandwich feels good to you and more often than not gets you the results you want. Teach the Heart-Head-Heart Method and the Sandwich to your spouse, your kids, your friends, your parents, your coworkers and even the guy next to you on the bus.

The Heart-Head-Heart Method is not hard. You can master it easily within a couple of months of practice, reflection and active, determined use. And the benefits will come.

## VII. Time to Set Some Personal Goals

**Think about it. How would you like to be able to communicate more effectively?**

(Check the box that reflects your answer) I would like to be able to:

**Yes!**

**Not Particularly**

**This is a priority!**

	Yes!	Not Particularly	This is a priority!
1. Respond to a complaint effectively with caring and responsiveness			
2. Earn people's trust and cooperation			
3. Ask for what I want without sounding demanding			
4. Get a yes more often when I make a request of a coworker			
5. Say no in a way that is less likely to anger the other person			
6. Communicate respectfully even when I'm angry or under stress			
7. Resolve an argument so both the other person and I feel better			
8. Give feedback in a tactful way, so the other person can hear it			
9. Raise a concern without showing disapproval			
10. Communicate directly to get the results I want			
11. Say things someone doesn't want to hear without hurting them			
12. Express my own needs, while being considerate of others			
13. Respond to feedback without getting defensive			
14. Say hard things, without insulting people			
15. Sell my ideas more successfully			
16. Repair a broken relationship			
17. Ease a person's anxiety or pain			
18. Set limits with my kids			
19. Raise a tough issue with my partner or others in my family			
20. Gain a reputation for kindness and caring			

Now, drawing on your priorities, use the following worksheet to commit yourself to trying Heart-Head-Heart.

## My Personal Action Plan for Heart-Head-Heart

---

An important relationship I will improve at work using Heart-Head-Heart \_\_\_\_\_

One situation that arises with this person, where I can use Heart-Head-Heart:

What would be a great Heart-Head-Heart for this situation?

• Start with Heart: 

• Convey Head Message: 

• End with Heart: 

What result do I want?

When I am successful in achieving these goals, here's how I'll benefit:

I want to tell these people about Heart-Head-Heart, because I'm excited about it

1.

2.

I want to tell these people about Heart-Head-Heart because I think it could really help them communicate better and feel better about how they communicate:

1.

2.

## VIII. Give Heart-Head-Heart as a Gift to People You Love

Many people who learn about Heart-Head-Heart begin to use it in their lives outside of work—with their teenage kids, with their spouses, with their parents, with shopkeepers, with anyone—especially when these people are on their nerves! And once they use it in relationships that are so important to them, they rave about the difference it makes, and they use it more, and more, and more.

Those who use it often with friends and family tell us that people hear it and say, “There she goes again—using that Heart-Head-Heart thing!”

And in response, they use Heart-Head-Heart AGAIN!

---

♥ **Heart:** “YES! Thank you for noticing. You’re very observant!”

🗨️ **Head:** “The fact is, I use it more and more, because it works! It really is helping me make my relationships better.”

♥ **Heart:** “Actually, since I love you, I hope you’ll use it too, so you too can have more satisfying relationships.”

---

### Share Heart-Head-Heart

Why not teach Heart-Head-Heart to people important to you? It will be a gift to them and a gift to you, because they’ll use it when communicating with you.

#### Suggestions:

1. Start with a Heart-Head Heart message:

♥ **Heart:** I know your relationships are important to you.

🗨️ **Head:** I learned a technique at work that is really helping me be a better communicator.

♥ **Heart:** I’d like to share it with you because I care about you and it might be helpful to you too.

2. If they’re interested in hearing about it, give them a copy of the description of Heart-Head-Heart and walk them through it.

3. Tell them you’re committed to getting really good at it. Invite them to tell you when they hear YOU use Heart-Head-Heart and to suggest to you missed opportunities.

4. Close with Heart-Head-Heart:

♥ **Heart:** I appreciate your being open minded and letting me share this technique with you.

🗨️ **Head:** This technique is really powerful and I hope you can use it to your benefit. I look forward to your trying it and I’m hoping you’ll share your stories with me.

♥ **Heart:** Thanks again for listening.

## The Heart-Head-Heart Method

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♥ **Start with HEART:**

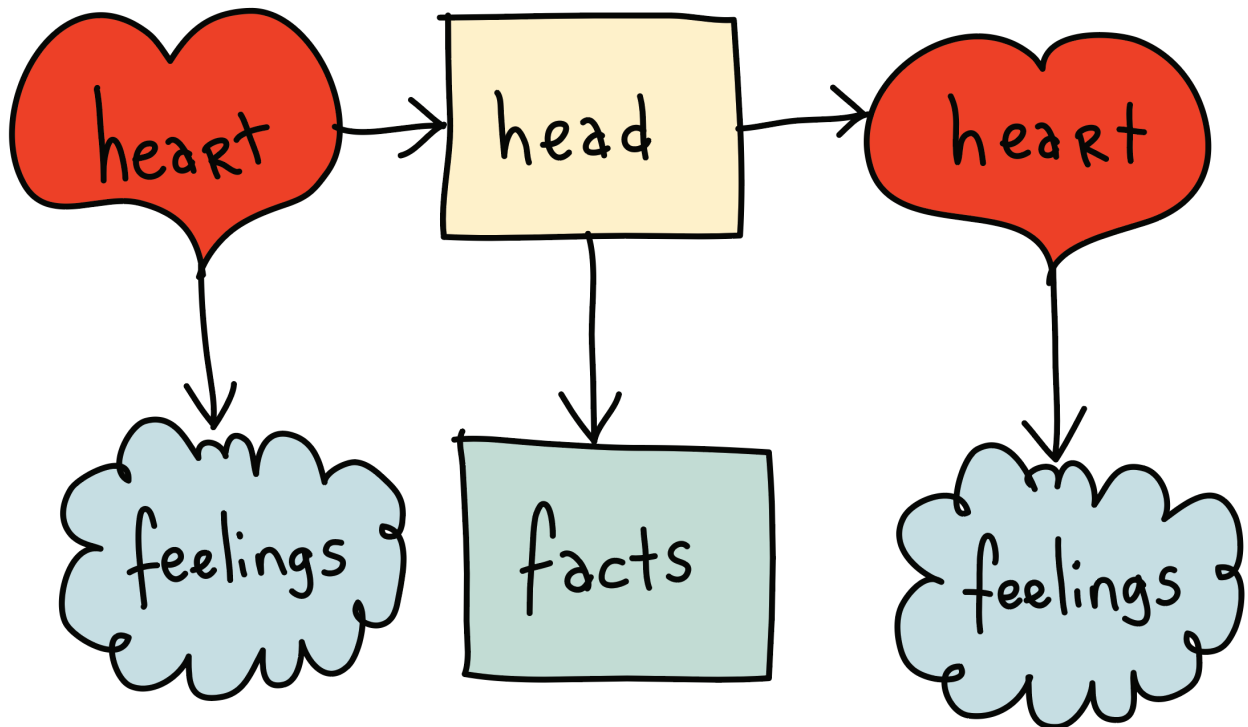
Connect. Acknowledge the person's feelings and anxieties. Make them feel your caring immediately.

🗣️ **Share your HEAD messages:**

Meet needs for information, explanations, answers, options and decisions.

♥ **End with HEART:**

Close on a personal or feeling note.



@gapingvoid

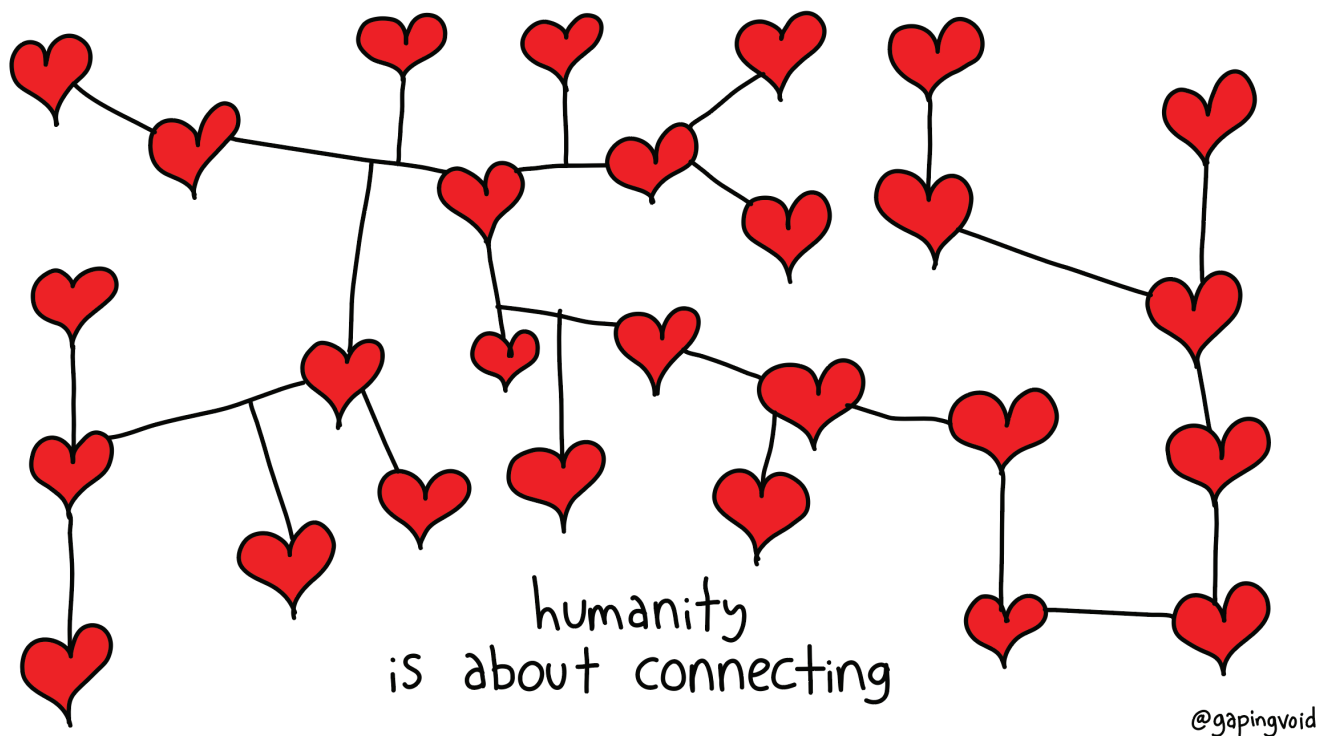
## IX. Caring Inspirations

“At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.” - *Albert Schweitzer*

“When someone says to us, ‘I care about your suffering,’ a deep healing begins.” - *Thich Nhat Hanh*

“Empathy isn’t just something that happens to us - a meteor shower of synapses firing across the brain. It’s also a choice we make: to pay attention, to extend ourselves.” - *Leslie Jamison*

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” - *Dalai Lama*





## X. Closing with a Heart-Head-Heart Message FOR YOU!

### ♥ Heart:

Thank you for embracing the Heart-Head-Heart Method and using it to enhance the experience of patients, residents, families, coworkers, and others you care about in your life.

### 🧠 Head:

When people come to you for care and caring, here's what they see.

Yours are the eyes they look into when they're frightened and lonely.

Yours are the voices people hear when they ride the elevators and when they try to sleep and when they try to forget their problems. You are what they hear on their way to appointments that could affect their destinies, and what they hear after they leave those appointments.

Yours are the comments people hear even when you think they can't. Yours is the intelligence and caring that people hope they'll find in you.

No person can ever know the real you, the you that you know is there – unless you let them see it. All they can know is what they see and hear and experience.

### ♥ Heart:

THANK YOU for making your caring visible and for ALL you're doing to make the human experience in health care effective, heartwarming and healing.




# Appendix

## A. Want updates, ideas, more information?

Sign up for Language of Caring's free newsletter (HeartBeat on the Quality Patient Experience) at

1. <https://www.languageofcaring.org>

Follow us:

2.  @languageofcare  
 <https://www.facebook.com/Language-of-Caring-383439288436890>  
 <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4215290>

## B. Reference List: The Impact of Empathy in Health Care

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## Communicating Empathy

THE HEART-HEAD-HEART™ METHOD

### Heart-Head-Heart Worksheet #1

## Warm-Up: What Would You Say?

Situation	Response
<p><b>Patient:</b> “I’m back here again with the same problem. I need to know what’s going on.”</p>	
<p><b>Coworker:</b> “Our patients/residents/coworkers/ leaders are not always right. We don’t get any support!”</p>	



# **Communicating Empathy**

THE HEART-HEAD-HEART™ METHOD

## **Heart-Head-Heart Worksheet #2**

# **Communicating Empathy: The Heart-Head-Heart Method**

## **Video Notes**

**Heart-Head-Heart Worksheet #3**

## An Example of the Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich

**Patient says:**

“I’m back here again with the same problem. I need to know what’s going on.”

**What does this patient seem to be feeling?**

Frustrated and worried

**Heart:**

I’m sorry. I can see how concerning this is, and I really want to help you get better.

**Head** (Information, tasks, options, solutions):

How about if we start with you updating me on what has been going on recently? Then I’ll talk with your care team and together we can develop a plan.

**Heart Again:**

I realize you’re frustrated and I feel confident that we can come up with a solid plan to get you feeling better. I’m here for you.



## **Communicating Empathy**

THE HEART-HEAD-HEART™ METHOD

### **Heart-Head-Heart Worksheet #4**

**Develop a Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich in response to this situation:**

**A Coworker says:**

“When you ask ME for help, I’m there for you. Now, I see it’s a one-way street!”

**What does this person seem to be feeling?**

**Heart:**

**Head** (Information, tasks, options, solutions):

**Heart Again:**



### Heart-Head-Heart Worksheet #5

**Develop a Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich in response to this situation:**

**Situation:** A patient's family member has been trying to contact the doctor to find out the results of the patient's biopsy. They cannot seem to meet up with the doctor and he is not returning their calls.

**What does this patient's family member seem to be feeling?**

**Heart:**

**Head** (Information, tasks, options, solutions):

**Heart Again:**

## Heart-Head-Heart Worksheet #6

### HEART-HEAD-HEART METHOD AT A GLANCE

To come across as both competent and caring, combine HEART and HEAD messages in your communication.

#### Messages

- ♥ **HEART** messages express caring; they deal with emotions and feel personal and heartwarming.
- 🗨️ **HEAD** messages are about the tasks, information and the business at hand.

#### Tips

- The HEART-HEAD-HEART Sandwich technique helps you remember to mix HEART and HEAD messages and use at least twice as much HEART as HEAD.
- Start with ♥ **HEART**: Address the person's feelings and anxieties. Make your caring felt immediately.
  - Say your 🗨️ **HEAD** messages: Meet needs for information, decisions and actions.
  - End with ♥ **HEART**: Close on a personal or feeling note.







## **Communicating Empathy**

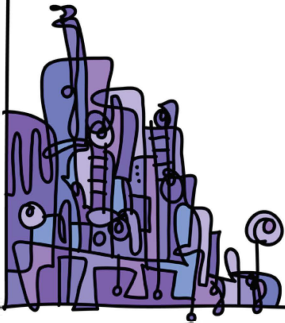
THE HEART-HEAD-HEART™ METHOD

### **Heart-Head-Heart Worksheet #7**

**Develop a Heart-Head-Heart Sandwich in response to your own situation**

<b>Situation:</b>
<b>What does this person seem to be feeling?</b>
<b>Heart:</b>
<b>Head</b> (Information, tasks, options, solutions):
<b>Heart Again:</b>

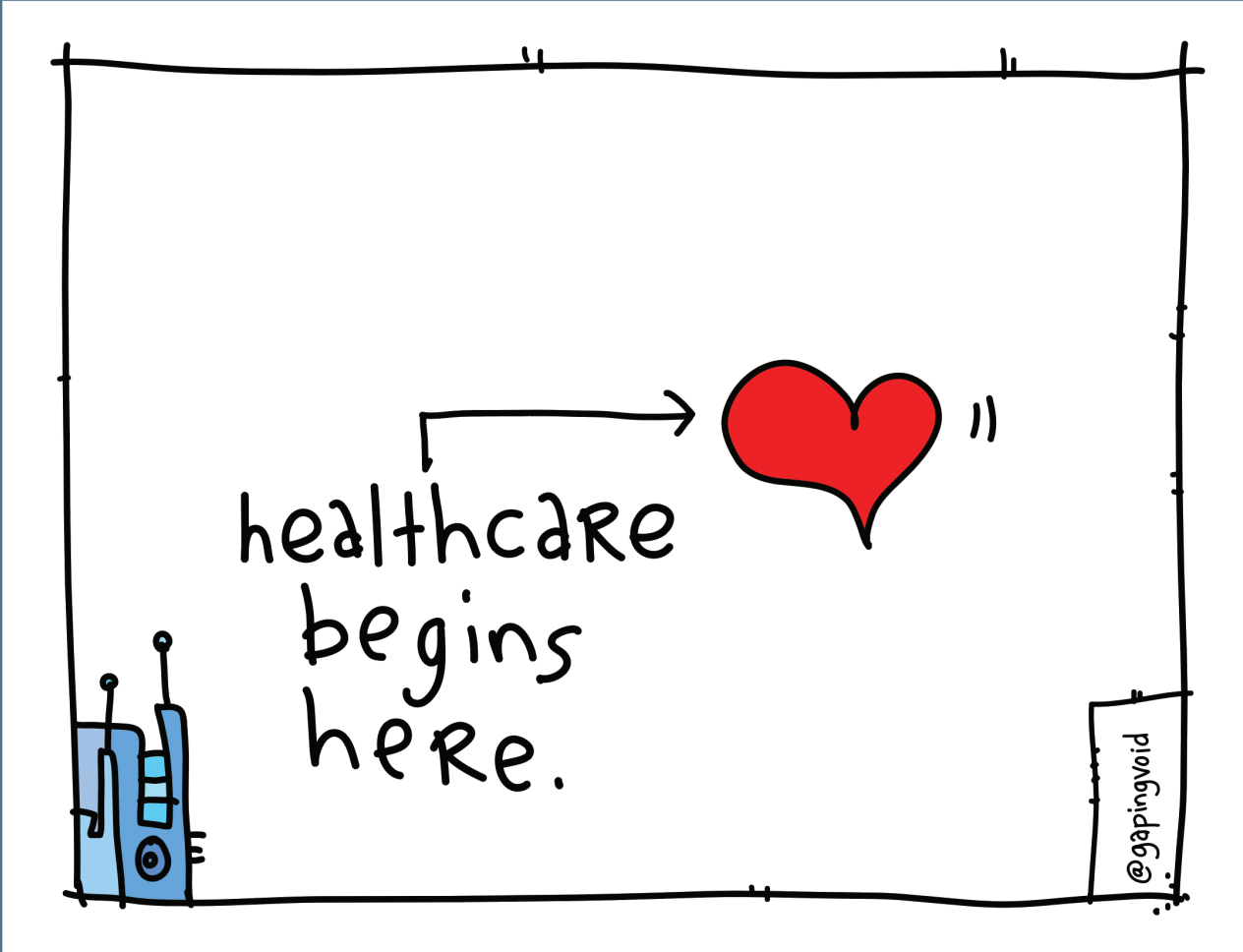
ONE PERSON  
CAN ~~ONLY~~ DO  
SO MUCH!



@gapingvoid

# The Heart-Head-Heart Handbook:

Tips, Tools, Stories and Inspiration



 Language of Caring  
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