



HeartBeat

ON THE QUALITY PATIENT EXPERIENCE™

*Insights, tips, tools and resources to help you achieve
the unparalleled patient, family and employee experience*

**RESHAPING
THE CULTURE
OF CARE**



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Soapbox: From OW To WOW!How to Create Positively Unforgettable Patient Experiences (Part 2, "The Great Patient Experience Makes Memories")

By Jill Golde, Partner and Sr. Vice President,
Language of Caring



As I discussed in the last HeartBeat, creating unforgettable positive memories for patients, residents, families and coworkers is not difficult if you set your mind to it. And the payoffs for both you and the other person are significant.

In focus groups and workshops, I've had the pleasure of hearing staff and patients share unforgettable positive memories. As I listened, I began to hear themes, and it occurred to me that knowing these themes might help people get even more creative and intentional about creating unforgettable experiences for people in their everyday interactions.

Five Keys to Creating Unforgettable Experiences

Key 1: Listen in an exceptional way—beyond what people expect. Staff have so much to do and patients know it. In an atmosphere in which task-orientation is commonplace, the staff member who sits down, becomes present to the patient, and tunes in—with rapt attention to the person, great empathy and no judgment creates an unforgettable experience. And this can take a very few minutes.

Example: Listen in an exceptional way... beyond what people expect.

"The patient was dying and her twin sister couldn't believe her UTI was going to kill her. Her sister had been on steroids for a decade, so she was immunosuppressed and had poor organ function. Either the infection was going to kill her or the antibiotics were. I really didn't have the time (crazy busy night), but I knew that one of the ruder doctors we have on staff had sat down with the sister that morning and told her that her twin was going to die and needed to be a DNR. The sister made her a DNR, but was off and on crying in the room. All I did was sit and listen to her. She told me about her twin sister. She spoke of their childhood, how they were always together, her sister's wedding, all kinds of stuff. I only spent about 15 minutes, but the family felt grateful because the patient's twin was able to share memories about her sister with someone who cared enough to listen. I know this made" a difference." RN

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"By focusing on a person's strengths, you create what is likely to become the person's treasure."

Key 2: Help a patient look better to feel better. It's not uncommon for patients to feel self-conscious about how they look. Many look in the mirror and grunt. Perhaps, their health issues, confinement to bed and/or lack of sun makes them appear pallid or sickly. And it is difficult to maintain their personal grooming habits. That's why patients appreciate and remember small efforts on our part to help them feel better about how they look.

Example: Help a patient look better to feel better.

"I carry hair detangler and nail polish in my work bag. You'd be surprised what brushing a patient's matted hair and painting her toenails will do for her attitude. Had an RT tell me after watching me do it, 'I hope you're my nurse if I ever get admitted.'"

Key 3: Write a note to appreciate a person's special strengths. First of all, most people don't write! So, when you do write, not only can the recipient save your note, reread it and show it to people, they are likely to experience your note as an intensely thoughtful and generous act on your part. By focusing on a person's strengths (often unacknowledged by others), you create what is likely to become the person's treasure.

Example: Personal Note of Appreciation

Dear Mrs. Johnson,

On my way home from work yesterday, I found myself thinking about you. I realize you have been really suffering, and I wish there was more I could do to help. What came to my mind was how positive you are despite your suffering. You show interest in other people. You say things to your family to ease their minds. You smile and welcome people who come in and out of your room. And you do everything possible for yourself because you're determined to be independent. I want you to know that I really admire you—your kindness, your positive thinking, and your caring for others. You have a lot of courage and I really admire you for it.

THANK YOU for being an inspiration to me and for welcoming me as part of your care team. It really is a privilege.

*Sincerely,
Pam Martin, RN*

Key 4: Give a surprise gift that shows you had tuned in to the person in a special way.

Example: Personalized Surprise Gift

"I had a patient in my ICU who was riddled with cancer and dying. All he wanted before he died was to sit with his buddies and have some whiskey. I spoke at length to our hospitalist, then to our palliative care MD, and got the order that he could have alcohol. It was heart-warming to walk into that ICU room and see him sitting around, chatting with his buddies and raising a cup."



"Patients and families so often feel powerless as healthcare staff go about their business..."

Key 5: Advocate for the patient when you have more power than they do.

Patients and families so often feel powerless as healthcare staff do things to them, while disregarding what the patient and family want. The staff member who recognizes that an affront to the patient is happening and steps in to stop it is a staff member that the patient and family will remember with fondness and appreciation for years to come.

Example: Advocate for the patient when you have more power than they do.

"I was lying in a hospital bed after my mastectomy. I had drains hanging from my chest. My doctor told me she would probably remove the drains after 2 more days. That same afternoon, two medical residents came into my room and announced they were there to remove my drains. I exclaimed that my doctor had told me that the drains should stay in for two more days. The residents said this wasn't correct and they approached me to remove the drains. Thankfully, my nurse was there and heard this. And she stepped in between the residents and me and stated firmly, 'Ms. J. said she does NOT want those drains removed without the express approval of her doctor. You may not do this.' The residents were annoyed and sputtering, but they left! I will never forget that nurse. She stuck up for me when I couldn't stick up for myself."

In Closing

By following these keys, you will demonstrate your caring. You will brighten people's experience with you and our healthcare system. Your impact will be more healing—and memorable. And you will enjoy the heartwarming and energizing feelings that come to you when you act on your caring mission.

More Good Reads on Creating Unforgettable Patient Experiences

- ***Losing Face; A Memoir of Lost Identity and Self Discovery*** (book) and ***video***: Kathy Torpie describes her powerful and compelling story. After a car accident, this physically active, fiercely independent woman woke up in an intensive care unit on life support. Physically helpless and emotionally vulnerable, her life depended on strangers who spoke in a language she didn't understand and who knew her only as the 'multi trauma'.
- ***18 Heart-Warming Acts of Kindness That Will Make You Cry***: While these acts are not specific to health care, they remind us of the powerful feelings generated in ourselves and others when we engage in acts of kindness.



STAFF MEETING IDEAS

Share Memory-Making Successes

Instructions

1. Intro:
 - “In our work interactions, we each have the power to create positive memories that people will carry with them into the future. These memories extend our impact over months and years.”
 - “What if each one of us were to engage in one act of connection, kindness or compassion daily with the deliberate intention of creating a positive memory for one other person, whether a patient, resident, family member or coworker?”
2. Form pairs. Ask people to share with their partner an example of a time when they went above and beyond and hopefully left the other person with a very positive memory of their experience.
3. Invite a few people to share their stories with the whole group.
4. End by asking people to turn to their partner one more time and identify an act they commit to doing today to create a positive memory for those they serve.



QUOTEWORTHY

Quoteworthy

“Healthcare’s focus on physical disease and bio-medicine is unbalanced. We need to pay much more attention to emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing and the huge importance of healing relationships.”

Robin Youngson, MD in *Time to Care*



NEWSBYTE

Rege, *How Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic + 7 other hospitals are fighting burnout*; Becker’s Hospital Review, December 5, 2018

According to the American Medical Association, about 50 percent of physicians report at least one symptom of burnout. **This is twice the rate of other American employees.** This article discusses how nine organizations are taking action to reduce physician burnout. Notable is the effort of Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. While Henry Ford’s physicians reported slightly lower levels of burnout than the national average, stress levels were still very high. Henry Ford implemented several tactics aimed to establish *a culture of caring and create meaning in work*, including monthly wellness rounds and educational sessions about physician well-being.



Breaking News from Language of Caring



PLANETREE
INTERNATIONAL



Language of Caring
A BRANCH OF PLANETREE INTERNATIONAL

Language of Caring Completes Strategic Merger with Planetree International

Two pioneers in patient-centered care... One great mission

Today begins an exciting new chapter - Language of Caring will join forces with Planetree International to expand the impact of our efforts to make caring communication and person-centered care standard practice worldwide.

For 40 years, Planetree has helped healthcare teams around the world improve outcomes by engaging patients and families and connecting healthcare personnel to the meaning inherent in their work. Given our alignment of mission, culture and strategy, it is a natural fit for Language of Caring to join forces with Planetree to magnify our impact to make healthcare better for all.

Read the full announcement [here!](#)



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Upcoming Webinar

**Language of Caring's
New Merger Partner:
Planetree International**

WEDNESDAY,
FEB 27, 2019
1 PM EST

REGISTER NOW!



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Caring Experience.

Language of Caring partners with organizations to improve the human experience in healthcare. By engaging staff and clinicians in developing advanced, evidence-based communication skills, our clients achieve improved relationships and rapport with patients and families, enhanced clinical outcomes, and a culture that makes caring its defining characteristic.

Learn more about our evidence-based solutions.



Language of Caring

Contact Us!



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Jill Golde, MS, Dorothy Sisneros, MS, MBA and Wendy Leebov, EdD—partners at Language of Caring.

Spread the Resources

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- Share and tweet!

Join our LinkedIn Group “**Patient Experience & Communication**” and add to the rich discussions.

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Language of Caring

Making Caring Visible