



HeartBeat

ON THE QUALITY PATIENT EXPERIENCE™

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



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Soapbox: The Great Patient Experience Makes Memories!

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



Acts of compassion and kindness have a beautiful way of reaching down into a weary heart and making it shine like the rising sun.

Wouldn't it be great if we could make people feel so known, so appreciated, so touched, so important, and so comforted, that they remember us with gratitude many years later? We can do this when we set our minds to it.

To do our part in creating the GREAT patient experience, we need to communicate with care, clarity and empathy in every interaction—every day and night. While this, by itself, is a tall order, there's more we can do than that, and this "more we can do" is most certainly within our power. The fact is, we can go beyond communicating well to deliberately engage in actions that are not only therapeutic in the present moment, but that create unforgettable positive memories for patients, families and coworkers.

In the stunning article "A Small Kindness I'll Never Forget", Lisa Rubisch shares a powerful and touching memory from a traumatic surgery experience. ([Read it here](#)). Readers responded in droves with their own positive healthcare memories. For example:

- **Bridget:** "I had to have emergency surgery to remove an abscess from mastitis gone wrong... My kids were 6 months and 2.5 years old and I was totally strung out and exhausted and emotional. It was also my first time having general anesthetic. Just before I drifted off, the surgeon asked me what color I'd like my pedicure to be, and it made me laugh as I went under. So very kind, so very human."
- **Jocelyn:** "My mom has been quite sick the last 2 weeks. As I was leaving the hospital one night a bit of a wreck, her night nurse stopped me in the hall and went over his plan for her care for the night... he closed his little pep talk {for me} with "and I'm going to just spend some time with her to acknowledge her as a person... because that's all we really need, right?" As a nurse myself, I will never forget his words and how they made me feel in that very scary moment."



“Will, presence,
and discipline
are all it takes.”

- **Brooke:** “Years ago my 85 year old father was in the hospital with a massively painful spine infection. They had him on so many drugs trying to find a way to manage his pain, but the medications were causing him to act out and hallucinate. I was already really scared and stressed trying to be attentive to all the medical information (only child and sole caregiver for him) and trying to placate my agitated father. Plus, I was reeling from the horrible things and physical swipes my father was directing at me which was so unlike his gentle, kind and loving ways. I remember one night toward the end of visiting hours, I was afraid to leave him (worried for his and their safety) and I just lost my grip on my emotions and I started to cry and his nurse came up to me, put her hand on my shoulder, looked directly at me and in the kindest, most loving way reassured me that they would take very good care of him and that everything would be okay. She told me to go home and get some much needed rest. I will never forget her and the relief I felt.”

For more stories, read Kari Bornhorst McHugh, [“Why I’ll never forget my son’s nurses.”](#)

Will, presence, and discipline are all it takes.

We all have the power to create unforgettable moments like these. We have the time (because such moments typically don’t take time). Beyond that, we need three critical elements:

- **Will:** We have to decide that we want to create unforgettable positive memories for patients, families and each other, and that we will!
- **Presence:** When interacting with patients, families and each other, we need to be fully present, noticing cues, reading feelings, tuning in fully, so we perceive people’s needs. This will help us use our best instincts to respond caringly and also give us ideas for special acts of caring.
- **Self-discipline:** While we might intend to create positive memories, in the fray of busy days and nights, we just might not think to do it. That’s why it helps so much to have rituals and other acts of self-discipline to ensure that we deliver on our good intentions.

Making Memories: The One-A-Day Challenge

What if each one of us were to commit to engaging in (at least) one act of kindness or compassion daily with the deliberate intention of creating a positive memory for one patient, family member or coworker—a memory that this person will carry with them as our legacy to their well-being.



"You'll help each other recognize more and more opportunities, give each other memory-making ideas, and spark an epidemic."

Commit—Discipline—Share: Three Steps to Meet the Challenge

Step 1: Inspire your team to commit to the One-a-Day Challenge. Share the examples provided here, and/or invite examples by engaging your team in this inspiring activity:

Instructions

- A.** Think of a time when you were in distress and someone showed you a specific act of kindness or compassion that you are not likely to forget. Share it with a partner. Then, invite a few people to share their stories.
- B.** Think of a time when a patient or coworker was in distress and you showed them a specific act of kindness or compassion that you believe eased their way. Share it with a partner. Then, invite a few people to share their stories.

Then, explain the idea of **Making Memories: The One-a-Day Challenge** and also share why it excites you. Then, ask for people's commitment outright!

Step 2: Discipline yourself to track your memory-making actions and try to convince coworkers to use this tracking approach as well. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld talks about a "Don't Break the Chain" approach to moving toward a goal. When Seinfeld was an up-and-coming comedian, he needed to write better jokes. And he knew that the best way to write better jokes was to practice every day. He got a big wall calendar with the whole year on a single page — and hung it where he would see it daily. Then, daily, he would write a joke and put a red X through that day on the calendar. After a few days, instead of a slew of red Xs, he had a chain. And every time he added an X to the chain, he became more determined not to break the chain. One joke a day, whether he was sick, busy or tired. And every day, he wanted to add that X, because it would have been such a shame to leave a gap in the chain. Why not track your daily acts of kindness and compassion that way?

Step 3: Institute a daily ritual with your team in which people share their previous day's action. Do you have daily huddles? Or staff meetings? Or a few minutes to yak over lunch? Include some stories of your memory-making actions. Not only will you find this uplifting and stress-reducing. You'll help each other recognize more and more opportunities, give each other memory-making ideas, and spark an epidemic.

There you have it...a simple three step process for creating an epidemic of positive memories that are nothing short of GIFTS for patients, families and the entire healthcare team. The result: Valuable and heartwarming benefits for everyone. Patients, families and coworkers will have much better experiences, spread the word about you and your organization, and appreciate you and your team deeply for your emotional generosity and lovingkindness. Also, you and your coworkers will feel gratified and elevated by making the difference in people's lives that drove you to choose healthcare in the first place.

See next month's HeartBeat for Part 2—Creating Positively Unforgettable Patient Experiences: The Keys



 NEWSBYTE

Clinician Communication in the ED—New study identifies key behaviors.

Finefrock et al., *Patient-Centered Communication Behaviors That Correlate with Higher Patient Satisfaction Scores*; **Journal of Patient Experience 2018**, Vol 5(3)231–235)

This study explored whether specific clinician communication behaviors correlate with higher Patient Survey scores in the ED setting. During a quality improvement project, the researchers performed 191 bedside observations of ED clinicians during their initial interaction with patients and recorded the frequency of 8 positive communication behaviors. They then compared the scores of high and low performers on CAHPS. They found that high performers demonstrated 6 of the 8 communication behaviors significantly more often than did low performers. Here are the six key behaviors:

1. Smile and make eye contact.
2. Shake hands.
3. Acknowledge the wait and apologize for it.
4. Begin with open-ended question like “How can I help you?”
5. Do at least 1 non-medical gesture.
6. Overestimate time.

 QUOTEWORTHY

“Kindness can transform someone’s dark moment with a blaze of light.”
Amy Leigh Mercree

“What this world needs is a new kind of army — the army of the kind.”
Cleveland Amory

 STAFF MEETING IDEAS

Team Appreciation Surprise

No doubt, your team relies on other teams, departments, committees or individuals to be effective. Engage your team in identifying a couple of these and planning an “Appreciation Surprise”—an act, a gift, a message or creative approach to showing them appreciation. For instance: A nursing team sent the Environmental Services Department a big jar of whistles (one for everyone in the department). The accompanying note said, “You whistle while you work! We are so grateful to you for your upbeat attitudes and the warmth and caring you show to our patients. THANK YOU!”



Instructions

- A.** Explain the goal—to show appreciation to another team that supports your effectiveness and goals.
- B.** Brainstorm teams that people appreciate.
- C.** Get creative: Ask people as a group or in small groups to choose one team from the list and do a free-wheeling brainstorm of ways to appreciate that team.
- D.** Then, choose one and implement it!
- E.** After your team experiences the delight of the team they appreciated, consider making this Appreciation Surprise a monthly ritual.



Stressors Scavenger Hunt

Do all of the things on the following list to simplify your environment and feel good about it.

- 1.** Locate 10 things you really don't use. Put them in a bag and take them to the Goodwill.
- 2.** Identify five things that you can put away to reduce clutter. Put them away.
- 3.** Identify two process improvements that will keep you more organized... like creating a file for miscellaneous stuff that's scattered all over the place.
- 4.** Pile up papers that are here and there. Schedule 2 hours in which you go through this pile and ACT on each item so you won't have to look at it again.
- 5.** Devote one solid hour to cleaning out your computer files. Create folders by theme to reduce the length of file lists. Delete repeat files. Delete old files you don't need.



Tune in to Language of Caring client Patti Bradley's upcoming webinar with The Beryl Institute!

FREE for HeartBeat Subscribers!

Communication: "The Main Domain" of HCAHPS

February 19, 2-3 PM ET

Patricia A. Bradley, Senior Director of Patient Experience, North Kansas City Hospital

Ask any patient what is the most important aspect of their care, and they will say communication from their care givers. In a health care climate with many uncontrollable variables, the one thing we do control is how we communicate with our patients and their families. This presentation outlines an organization's journey to embrace the need for more compassion and empathy in our communication. This presentation shares content to help you achieve an organizational shift in culture. The keys to success that will be presented: 1). Change begins with Senior Leadership; support, training, expectations and accountability. 2). Strategic organizational launch for all employees; purpose, skill building, inspiration, practice, mastery of content, and application of skills. 3). Performance coaching; creating an atmosphere where peer feedback is integral to the success of the organization 4). Leading your organization; how you take the lead, support the organization and own the initiative.

By joining this webinar, you will:

- Outline an effective strategy to achieve/ sustain improvement in HCAHPS domains, by using an organizational wide approach to improve communication.
- Identify concrete tactics for engaging and supporting organizational leaders through a strategic communication focused initiative, that includes accountability for measurable results.
- Summarize the five success factors that are key to short-term and long-term performance improvement.

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Language of Caring



Driven by a passionate commitment to improve the human experience in healthcare, Language of Caring partners with healthcare organizations to make caring visible in all interactions with patients, families, and coworkers. Our evidence-based solutions effectively engage staff and providers in building the skills for consistently communicating with empathy and for creating a culture that makes caring its defining trait.

“Language of Caring isn’t just a program. Our team members are much more engaged and much more welcoming, warm and enthusiastic not only with patients, but also with each other. And it feels absolutely genuine. If someone asked me about Language of Caring, I’d say—it’s about compassion and it’s about authenticity.”

Carlos Castaneda, Strategic Programs, Adelante Healthcare

[Contact us to learn more!](#)