



## Commitment to My Co-Workers<sup>®</sup>: A Brief History

Chris Bjork and Marie Manthey

In the mid-1980s, Marie Manthey was consulting at a hospital that was working through painful relationship problems within the nursing staff. On the wall of a break room, she saw a poster about how co-workers should treat each other, and sensed in it a framework for addressing the relationship problems facing the staff:

- negative behavior
- bickering, back-biting and blaming (the 3 Bs)
- lack of respect between people based on titles and educational preparation

She realized that a statement of commitment to treating co-workers well should not be a creed or an oath. It has to be a personal commitment among staff members to be responsible for healthy relationships. Managers can know the "top-down" issues and can train staff in skills for healthy relationships, but it is staff members themselves who must own the commitment to healthy relationships.

In 1988, Creative Health Care Management (then called Creative Nursing Management) published the first *Commitment to My Co-Workers<sup>®</sup>* as a 3 x 5-inch laminated card. Initially focused on nursing relationships, *Commitment to My Co-Workers<sup>®</sup>* was soon discovered by people in other disciplines who loved the concepts. An interdisciplinary version was published in card and poster formats in 1989. Several new versions were developed in the mid-1990s to address the needs of educators, committees and task forces, the long-term care environment, and nurse/physician relationships.

### Commitment to My Co-Workers<sup>®</sup> Health Care Version

As your co-worker and with our shared goal of excellent patient care, I commit to the following:

- I will accept responsibility for establishing and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships with you and every other member of this team.
- I will talk to you promptly if I am having a problem with you. The only time I will discuss it with another person is when I need advice or help in deciding how to communicate with you appropriately.
- I will establish and maintain a relationship of functional trust with you and every other member of this team. My relationships with each of you will be equally respectful, regardless of job title, level of educational preparation, or any other differences that may exist.
- I will not engage in the "3Bs" (Bickering, Back-biting and Blaming) and ask you not to as well.
- I will practice the "3Cs" (Caring, Commitment and Collaboration) in my relationship with you and ask you to do the same with me.
- I will not complain about another team member and ask you not to as well. If I hear you doing so, I will ask you to talk to that person.
- I will accept you as you are today, forgiving past problems and ask you to do the same with me.



- I will be committed to finding solutions to problems, rather than complaining about them or blaming someone for them, and ask you to do the same.
- I will affirm your contribution to the quality of our work.
- I will remember that neither of us is perfect and that human errors are opportunities, not for shame or guilt, but for forgiveness and growth.

Compiled by Marie Manthey

Copyright © 2000, 2010, Creative Health Care Management, Inc.

Since most of the users of the commitment statement are in health care, all the multiple versions have been consolidated into three: Health Care, Nursing, and Interdisciplinary. The Health Care version was created in 2000 when it was realized that all people who work in health care settings have the patient as the center of their caring practice – whether they work at the bedside or in the boardroom. It has become our most popular version and has been licensed for adaptation by hospitals as well as non-health care organizations. An increasing number of health care facilities have chosen to customize the statement for their unique characteristics; some license it for use in their employee manuals.

To date, an estimated 1,000,000 *Commitment to My Co-Workers*® cards, posters and licenses have been sold across the United States and around the world.

They are used daily by health care and business clients, including a major shipping company based in Memphis, Tennessee. The *Commitment to My Co-Workers*® statement has been translated into Japanese and German. It continues to address the critical need for each of us to take personal responsibility for building and maintaining healthy relationships in our work and personal lives.

For more information about Commitment to My Co-Workers® please visit: [chcm.com](http://chcm.com)

*Chris Bjork is Resources Director of Creative Health Care Management.*

*Marie Manthey, MNA, FRCN, FAAN, is President Emeritus of Creative Health Care Management, author of The Practice of Primary Nursing, and Editor-in-Chief of Creative Nursing.*

*This article was originally published in Creative Nursing, Volume 3, 2007 and is adapted and reprinted with permission.*