



NATIONAL *Relationship-Based Care* SYMPOSIUM
JULY 28-31, 2009

Our Touchy, Feely Work

By: Kim Richards, RN

I recently was invited to participate in Creative Healthcare Management's "Relationship-Based Care" Symposium in Verona, NY. Creative Health Care Management was founded in 1979 by Marie Manthey, world-recognized expert on Primary Nursing. Since then, the company has grown into the creator and leading proponent of Relationship-Based Care. I was asked to lead daily yoga and meditation classes for the participants and talk about the sustainable "self care" program I founded, NurseFit®. Practicing care for self is one of the pillars of Relationship-Based Care. Sweet! This was going to be great! With yoga mat, lavender scented hand towels and some inspirational music, off I went!

What I experienced was far beyond my expectations. What I absorbed from the participants and speakers was genuine compassion and the absolute belief that what makes a hospital great is its human dimension. Yes, we all talk a lot about compassion, authenticity and the "humanness" of caring, but how many of us truly practice our beliefs in our work environment on a daily basis? How many of us attend wonderful workshops, drink the Kool-Aid, get pumped up to bring our new found energy and excitement back to our facilities, only to be met by an eye-rolling, disengaged skeptic who always has the daily census/financial report front and center on his/her desk? We feel the all too familiar cringe of disappointment; yet continue to ponder how improving relationships between caregivers, patients, families and colleagues could drive patient satisfaction, safety, employee satisfaction and retention, operational efficiency and the bottom line.



And yet, I was among a community of small, medium and mega sized forward- looking organizations that HAD actually walked their talk and were thrilled to share their success stories and positive outcomes with others! CEO's, CNO's, staff nurses, managers and physicians collectively engaging in energizing and inspiring discussions surrounding how investing in their workforce, particularly empowering their front-line staff has created a culture of excellence. The transformational power they described and the improvement in meaningful metrics were truly awe inspiring. The evidence based outcomes that were directly attributed to "caring" would make even the most skeptical administrator rethink their beliefs.

To lead a group of over 50 people through breathing, movement, relaxation and visualization was an honor I will not soon forget. We created our own sanctuary of renewal in a space that had served as our dining room earlier! The palpable energy, collective compassion, mindfulness and connectedness became a virus. Imagine the important improvements in meaningful measurements if colleagues were able to conveniently participate in such offerings...the possibilities are endless.

As I heard a physician say during the symposium, "I am tired of feeling like I should apologize when someone sarcastically comments on how I am just being too 'touchy, feely'. Healing and caring for people IS a 'touchy, feely' business! Isn't that why we all became healthcare professionals?"

Here's hoping you MAKE the time to create your own opportunity to surround yourself with touchy, feely events, people and environments. Your care giving spirit will soar, your engagement will re-ignite and your outlook will be uplifted. A change of heart changes everything. Take good care of YOU!

Kim Richards, RN

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