

Four C's in Today's Health Care Journey

By Dee Dee Raap

Care. Customers. Communication. Change. Those four words effectively describe some of the biggest concerns health care is dealing with today.

Today's health care customers demand care. Focus group participants relate it to healing, as well as to cost. A health care focus group participant once said of his hospital stay, "If it's going to cost me \$60,000 to be here for two days, I expect to be treated at least as well as I would be at a Marriott."

What was he looking for? Technical competence, of course. But I believe people entering hospitals assume that you've got the technical competence. Care adds value to your technical skills in huge ways: great word of mouth advertising, resulting in a great reputation. And in health care, we know that reputation can't be bought. It's earned.

What constitutes care? Little things, and lots of them. Using patient names. Not turning the overhead lights on at night. Refilling water. Listening. Touching feet, shoulders, arms. Being gentle. Being kind. Keeping them informed.

Care elevates a notch or two when safety is a concern. Patients and family members need to see a name tag. All patients seem to like an introduction from the person entering their room, whether it's a housekeeper or technician.

What is not care?

Care is not eating a graham cracker in front of a hungry patient, and then telling her since the floor is filling up, the nurse will have to spend her time with the other patients who are sick. You're just there for surgery recovery, after all.

Care is not replying to a patient's "Hi! How are you?" at 2 a.m. with "I'll be better at 7 a.m." and then explaining that's when your shift is done.

Care is not filing a report that says the lump needs an immediate biopsy, and then finding the report two weeks later, calling the patient with the news.

Care is paying attention to little things, and using communication to show you care. Body language is key here, since it's 58% of the meaning, and the meaning we want to communicate is that we can be trusted, we're professional, we care.

Care is a smile. Open arms. Touch. Another smile. Get the picture?

Tone of voice is important as well. A gentle tone of voice that encourages patients to do what they're supposed to do to help in their own healing process. Not sarcasm, not condescension.

Words count also. Be careful in the words, and use the manners your mother tried to teach you.
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Change is the one constant in the world today is now a cliché, but like many clichés, one borne in truth. How we deal with change is key to how stressed we become.

Letting go of resistance sooner is a goal many of us share. How can we let go sooner?

See the good instead of just the bad. Reframe the change into opportunity, challenge, instead of other creative words we all use. Ask yourself how you can implement smoothly. Maybe you can find a balance point that allows you to let go of something else. Communicate with your team. Silence rarely helps us adjust. Be there for each other in times of change. Make it fun. Find ways to wear a cheesehead!

And above all, be gentle with yourself. Know how you deal with change. After moving five times for professional reasons, my last move should have been easy. You'd think I'd be used to it by now! Especially when it was a move I really wanted.

Well, moving is hard for me. I "nest" wherever I land, and pulling up that nest, those roots were hard. I had to give myself time to journal, to be alone, to say good bye, to relish all the good that had happened in my life up to that point.

Adjustments take time. But the one thing I have learned about life is that the sooner I find the good in the situation instead of looking at the door that was closed, I get to a better place.

Find the good. Claim it. Share it with your team. Don't look at the door that closed. Look ahead. The journey is great. We just can't plan it all the way we'd like to. It'll change. I know that for certain.

Interested in scheduling a motivational speech? Looking for a great meeting facilitator? Call or email Dee Dee and let's get started on this great journey together!

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