

Where Heart and Soul Meet the Bottom Line

USING THE MODEL OF WHOLE-PERSON CARING™ TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

HOW DO YOU create health and wellness in your organization? Albert Einstein in his notable quote states, “We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used to create them.” In other words, if you want to create a movement toward health and wellness in your organization, a major paradigmatic shift in ideology may be necessary.

The Story Begins

Something quite unexpected happened after I offered a Day of Renewal for the nursing staff at a mid-sized hospital. The program focused on self-care and self-healing and provided participants with tools and resources to help create more positive ways of being.

A month after delivering the program, I received a call from the unit manager saying that “the whole environment in the workplace had changed.” She stated that doctors, who normally would come into her office to complain about the nursing care, were now coming in to compliment the work of her staff. Moreover, she said that patient satisfaction had improved dramatically.

While I clearly understood the relationship between a healthy and vital workforce and organizational performance, I was skeptical that a one-day program could create such dramatic changes. I asked the manager if there were other variables that might account for the remarkable shift. “Did you hire more staff?” “Were employees’ salaries increased?” “Was patient acuity down?” She replied, “I’ve been working here for

eighteen years. I know the staff and I know the unit. Your Day of Renewal is the only variable that affected the entire group – IT has made the difference.”

We observed the patient satisfaction data, and after three months the increased levels gradually declined to the previous baseline. Nonetheless, the positive spike caught the attention of a hospital administrator and we began discussing strategies for a sustainable outcome.

We realized that, in order to create change in the organizational culture, it was important for the movement to be all-inclusive and all-pervasive. An interdisciplinary approach was imperative. A decision was made to develop a comprehensive program available not only to nurses, but to other interested staff including respiratory therapists, dieticians, chaplains, administrators, and physicians.

Creating an Interdisciplinary Model That Works

Prior to program development, it was necessary to create a model of care that every discipline could relate to. The Model of Whole-Person Caring™ was developed and became the foundation for

subsequent programs and organizational transformation.

Benefits of an Interdisciplinary Organizational Model:

- Creates a Common Vision
- Aligns People Around Shared Value
- Provides a Common Ground for Practice
- Creates Synergy
- Facilitates Cultural Transformation

A Spiritual Orientation

Defining who we are is the first step in establishing a model of care. This model utilizes the work of nurse theorists Florence Nightingale, Martha Rogers, and Jean Watson. Florence Nightingale stated, “We are a reflection of the divine, with physical, metaphysical, and intellectual attributes.” Martha Rogers saw each person as an “irreducible, indivisible, pandimensional energy field that is open and infinite in nature and inseparable from the environment.” Jean Watson, a contemporary nurse theorist, states, “We are sacred beings [and] we must regard each other with deepest respect, dignity, mystery, and awe.”

These concepts coalesced into the definition that we are: “An energy field that is infinite and spiritual in essence and in continual mutual process with the envi-



ronment. Each person manifests unique physical, mental, emotional, and social/relational patterns that are interrelated, inseparable, and continually evolving.”

As we begin to see our existence as “spiritual,” the way we treat ourselves and each other dramatically changes. Our interactions, work, and relationships begin to arise from a place of deep regard and reverence. A big difference between this definition and others is that the “spiritual dimension” is considered the “essence and foundation” of who we are rather than an “aspect” of our being. This definition aligns with the thinking of Teilhard de Chardin, who stated, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, rather we are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

The following “key concepts” are foundational to the Model of Whole-Person Caring™ and its associated programs:

- Sacredness of being
- Self-care and self-healing
- Optimal health and wellness
- Therapeutic partnering
- Transformational leadership
- Caring as sacred practice

While the model was created to meet the needs of healthcare organizations, the definitions and key concepts are applicable to any organization. So, while “caring” is a central phenomenon in nursing and considered “sacred practice,” we could easily substitute that “business interactions” are sacred practice. This may be a far stretch for those in the corporate world, unless we take a look at what spirituality means and how that translates in the workplace.

Dispelling the Spirituality Myth

I asked a prominent businessman, “How do you think spirituality affects the bottom line in your organization?” He quickly replied, “It doesn’t, and if you think getting everyone together to hold hands and sing ‘Kumbaya’ is going to increase our sales production, you are delusional!” Therein is the challenge of getting your organization to embrace a spiritual orientation.

Clearly defining what is meant by

“spiritual” is an important first step so that people don’t confuse “spirituality” with “religion” or things that happen at church camp. The Model of Whole-Person Caring™ defines the spiritual dimension as: “A unifying force that integrates the physical, mental, emotional, and social/relational aspects of being. The spiritual dimension is the essence of self and also transcends the self. It is our closest, most direct experience of the universal life force.”

“Spiritually oriented organizations maintain better rapport with their stakeholders, starting with their workforce, and thereby remain capable of reinventing themselves in a fast-changing environment such as our current corporate world.” *Spirituality in the Workplace, 2007*

Spirituality has to do with wholeness, meaning, and connection. When we interact from our spiritual dimension, our thoughts and actions arise from a place of knowingness, love, and compassion.

Spirituality manifests in organizations in a variety of ways. From an emotional perspective, individuals exhibit empathetic, empowering, and caring behavior; management style is flexible, values-driven, participative, and inclusive, and promotes creativity, shared governance, and teamwork.

Attention to spirituality and spiritual values is often seen as important but is unfortunately neglected. Organization leaders, looking for ways to address the current lack of meaning and purpose in organizations, have begun to embrace spiritual values as a way of renewing workplace morale. The thesis for numerous publications is that major paradigm shifts incorporating spirituality are needed for managing effectively and renewing vitality in the workplace.

Improving the Bottom Line and Creating Sustainability: The Rest of the Story

Significant cost savings were attributed to the implementation of the Model of Whole-Person Caring™ and its associated programs in the aforementioned hospital nursing unit. The annual turnover rate dropped to 3 percent compared to the national nursing turnover rate of 18 percent. This unit employed 120 full-time nurses; by decreasing their turnover by 15 percent, they retained 18 more nurses than the national average. They even found it necessary to create a waiting list for nurses requesting to be transferred in.

In a 2003 study, the cost of replacing a medical-surgical nurse was estimated to be \$92,442. We can extrapolate a savings of \$1,663,956 in one year from incorporating a spiritually based model of care!

Creating a work environment that nurtures the heart and soul of its employees and those they serve positively affects the bottom line. If we are interested in creating organizations that are truly sustainable, we must understand that embracing a spiritual orientation is not only useful but essential. **U**



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