



Wendy Leebov's

HeartBeat

On The Quality Patient Experience

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Wendy's Soapbox

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Communicating Emotional Support: Beyond the Basics

A few weeks ago, I received an email from a nurse who works in a hospital in India. How she found me is a mystery. Anyway, she asked me, "How can a nurse communicate hopefully about life ---with a cancer patient who is going to die and she knows it?" While I have no clinical experience, I wanted to respond. So, I did--drawing on my experience as a daughter, friend and sister (with a little help from a healthy dose of therapy over my 60+ years!). [Click here for a glimpse of my response.](#) And please send me YOUR comments and suggestions!



This nurse's question brings to mind the emotionally wrenching communication challenges caregivers handle daily... challenges that demand much more than a mastery of the basics of communication.

- How can I talk with a dying patient?
- What can I say to a family member who is completely distraught about a downturn in their loved one's condition?
- What can I say when a patient tells me they want me to help them die?
- What can I say when a patient asks "What did I do to deserve this pain?"
- How do I communicate in a genuine fashion when I feel disapproving of a patient's behavior or choices?
- ...and many, many more.

Fortunately, there's a growing body of knowledge about effective communication in palliative care. Recently, I read what I thought was [a concretely helpful article](#) aimed at physicians.

But here's where my mind took me. What are the emotional supports available to our caregivers who face challenges like these everyday? I know some organizations have chaplains, ethicists, social workers and nursing leaders who offer a listening ear, wise counsel and emotional support. And some have support groups — dedicated times when nurses get together to share their stories, challenges and solutions.

I shot an email to five nursing leaders in five different hospitals and asked them what support of this sort is available for their nurses? One replied that a psychologist from their Employee Assistance Program runs a support group for residents (not nurses) to help them address emotionally wrenching situations. But the other four



Communicating Emotional Support: Beyond the Basics (continued)

regretfully told me that there is no time for such things anymore. They said they rely on nurse managers to provide coaching on the run, and they admit that it rarely happens.

Since emotional support is so important to patient-centered care and creation of a healing environment, this is very disturbing. It's also disturbing because I imagine that, without such support, many caregivers shut down and steel themselves to avoid the stress of these situations. Then, it's no wonder that patient and family perceptions of the extent to which caregivers really care is disappointing. And, it's no wonder that so many caregivers jump ship, because they are not finding their choice of a helping profession to be gratifying.

In my mind, there's no question that caregivers really care. But to open themselves emotionally to patients, they need wise counsel and support.

What is happening in your organization to provide this support?

- Chaplaincy services available to nurses, not only patients?
- Story-sharing at staff meetings?
- Clinics on hard conversations?
- A squad of mentors available to help with hard conversations?
- A *designed* periodic check-in (and coaching) with each nurse about emotionally challenging situations?
- Training by palliative care experts?

Please drop me a note on what your organization does to provide emotional support and wise counsel to nurses on emotionally challenging conversations. leebovw1@comcast.net



I Value Your Input!

Please take a minute to share your opinion about future webinar topics.

Since I was thrilled with the response to my webinar on **The Nuts and Bolts of Accountability**, I want to offer more webinars to help you and your management team enhance the patient experience.



Please complete this short survey to indicate your interest in several possible topics for you and your colleagues. THANKS!

Invitation from Wendy: An Opportunity for Your Organization

Dear *HeartBeat* Readers,

You've probably read or heard me talk about my video-based training system that builds and hardwires communication skills key to exceptional patient satisfaction -- **The Patient Experience Skill Building System**. Creating this comprehensive, one-of-a-kind system has been like giving birth and I'm really thrilled that the baby is OUT and thriving!

I'm pleased to invite you to watch a recorded presentation that explains the system in detail. [Click here to watch now.](#)

I realize that you may feel like you have too much on your plate to implement a big strategy like this, or to even watch a recorded presentation. You might not be ready now. It does take focus and care to create an implementation plan. You might have executives telling you that EVERYTHING is a priority, which is impossible from a time perspective. You might feel a lot of pressure to improve satisfaction scores, but not have the resources to do so. I know that most healthcare organizations in this economy are very cautious about spending, and though everyone SAYS the patient experience is a priority, it can take a heroic effort to secure funding for a far-reaching initiative like this.

And, I'm sure you are VERY COMMITTED and really want to make improvements happen.

Before you put this invitation aside, I urge you to consider the following important point and bring it to your CEO's attention.

Compared to other services available, *The Patient Experience Skill-Building System* is **extremely cost effective**. You will have a SUSTAINABLE system that elevates patient satisfaction and that does not require you to pay for consultants, trainers or materials year after year. This system is very reasonably priced (In fact, some people tell me I'm giving it away!). It's a **ONE-TIME INVESTMENT** with **NO ADDITIONAL yearly costs**. And you'll reap the benefits of your investment forever. (Watch the presentation to see examples of pricing.)

WHY am I offering this comprehensive and far reaching system at such a reasonable price? Because I KNOW that caring communication has the power to transform the care process and experience for the benefit of patients, families, and staff—and for the benefit of the BOTTOM LINE.

As a fanatical advocate for the patient experience for more than 30 years, I want to spread best communication practices that enhance the patient experience. And I want to help you institute these practices in a way that is convenient, cost effective, sustainable, and extremely effective. That's why I created *The Patient Experience Skill Building System*.

To really UNDERSTAND the tremendous value and scope of this system, you'll need to learn more.

In this presentation, you'll learn about:

- How we established *The Language of Caring* and *GREAT Every Time* communication skills as evidence-based best practices
- How *The Patient Experience Skill Building System* can help you elevate patient satisfaction and achieve breakthroughs in the patient experience
- How the system works
- The nature and quality of the videos and toolkits (one video is included)
- Pricing examples
- How you can install the entire system on your intranet and Learning Management System for ongoing use with only a one-time, reasonable investment

Seize this opportunity to secure the *high-touch advantage* for your organization. Please watch this informative recording with your fellow service champions and executive team. Discuss its potential for you. And, I'll be happy to set up a conference call to answer your questions, or I'll gladly respond via email.

Click on the link below to watch the presentation now.

<http://www.quality-patient-experience.com/video-based-training>

(Please share this link with friends and colleagues.)

Wishing you the best,

Wendy Leebov, CEO

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I Love This "Internal Customer Service Charter"

Internal service quality triggers a chain of events with an ultimate impact on our organization's success in fulfilling its mission and also its financial health. ([Click here](#) to see the terrific diagram *Service Profit Chain* by Heskett et al.)

The Division of Marine and Natural Resources in Ireland has a charter that spells out detailed standards of service for internal customer service. It includes standards for:

- Workplace Culture
- Equality and Diversity
- Corporate Services
- Learning and Professional Development
- Human Resources
- Health and Safety
- Information Communications Technology
- Service Line Agreements
- Business Planning Process
- Information and Internal Communication
- Consultation and Involvement
- Implementation and Monitoring

[Click here to read the charter.](#)

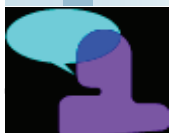
Imagine the impact if your organization instituted, promoted and actively applied such a charter for internal customer relationships!



Quoteworthy:

"The two words information and communication are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through."

—Sydney J. Harris, Journalist



Patients Speak

About Partnering in their Own Care

- "It's my body. What I do should be my decision. I want to hear the options."
- "I wish healthcare people would speak in plain talk. I want to understand what's happening, so I don't have to let others make decisions for me."
- "I don't understand much that the doctor tells me, because I'm so nervous. I need my daughter with me, so she can ask questions and figure out what's best."
- "My doctor said, 'Let's look at the options together' It felt so much better than saying, 'Here are your options', or 'Here's what you should do.'"
- "There's no way I can make decisions about what's best for me. I don't have the experience. I want my doctor to tell me what to do."



Newsbyte

Is the Patient Experience a REAL or Lip-Service Priority?

HealthLeaders Media surveyed more than 200+ senior executives about their organization's patient experience efforts using the *2009 HealthLeaders Media Patient Experience Leadership Survey*. Their survey asked executives to identify patient experience initiatives underway or in the works, who in their organization is in charge of those initiatives, how much they're spending to improve the patient experience, and the biggest stumbling blocks.

The most eye-catching finding: Nearly 90% of senior executives said patient experience is either their top priority or among their top five priorities. BUT (and there's a big BUT), there's a gap between what senior executives say about patient experience and what they're actually doing. The report notes these obstacles: Insufficient leadership, a lack of financial commitment, and uncertainty about what strategies will transform the patient experience. **Download the survey report at <http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/patient-experience/>.**



Ask Your Team This Cage-Rattling Question: A Trigger For Crucial Conversations

"To improve the service we provide, what would you do if you were me?"

Managers, ask your staff this question. Explain in advance that you are not going to discuss or respond directly—that you want to listen, listen, listen and take notes. Then, after you have a chance to think about people's input, you will hold a follow-up discussion.

Then, listen, listen, listen and ask this very helpful question every time there is a lull in the conversation: "What else?"

Then, keep your promise, reflect on the input and hold a follow-up discussion to identify action steps as a result of your team's treasured input.

Hear Wendy speak at the 2010 Conference of the Society for Healthcare Consumer Advocacy April 14-16, 2010 in Pittsburgh.

Topics:

- Keynote: *Achieving Breakthroughs in the Patient Experience*
Wednesday, April 14, 1:45-3:00
- Breakout Session: *Dealing with the Difficult-for-You Patient*
Thursday, April 15, 11:00-12:15

For more information and to register, [click here](#).



Stress-Buster Reduce Entropy!

In physics, the term **entropy** describes the tendency in nature to go from order to disorder. There is no doubt that this term also applies to me! My desk, house, car, kitchen, basement and mind have a tendency to go from order to disorder. And as the disorder increases, I become overwhelmed.

The remedy: I ask myself how I can reduce the entropy—and take steps to change disorder into order.

Case in point: Feeling particularly overwhelmed after a few packed weeks, I decided I needed to restore my sanity with entropy reduction.

- I put together a bookcase and moved piles of jigsaw puzzles, games and books to shelves.
- I collected a couple dozen post-it notes from scattered places and made a list.
- I cleaned a closet and made a run to the thrift store to recycle giveaways.
- I swept this year's leaves off the patio.
- I sorted my bag of tax receipts into folders.

I reduced entropy, and I feel so relieved.

Where is the entropy in your life?

Are there a few tangible, concrete actions you can take to reduce it?

Coming Up

- Helping Physicians Enhance the Patient Experience
- Patients Speak About Complaining



THANK YOU FOR TUNING IN!

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Thank you!

Wendy Leebov

Contact Us

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We're on the WEB!

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**Concrete, Sustainable Solutions
For Your Healthcare Team**