



HeartBeat

ON THE QUALITY PATIENT EXPERIENCE™

Insights, tips, tools and resources to help you achieve the unparalleled patient, family and employee experience

RESHAPING
THE CULTURE
OF CARE



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 SOAPBOX:
SELF-REFLECTION: THE BEST
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT METHOD
EVER
- 2 WORTH READING
- 3 NEWSBYTE
- 4 QUOTEWORTHY
- 5 STAFF MEETING ACTIVITY
- 6 ENJOY THIS POEM

Self-Reflection: The Best Professional Development Method Ever

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Have you ever?

1. Ended your workday with a sinking feeling and just wanted to jump in your car and switch gears?
2. Felt lighthearted at the end of a day, thinking to yourself, “Yes, that was a good one!”
3. Realized you passed by an opportunity to help someone because you just didn’t want to be bothered right then?
4. Felt disappointed by a coworker’s reaction to a story you told them about your family?
5. Felt annoyed with yourself for not being your best self when a coworker said NO to your request for help?
6. Reacted defensively when a patient or family complained to you about their experience?
7. Ranted to a friend about a frustrating interaction with a patient—that left you feeling annoyed?

If you’ve felt any of these ways, did you deliberately *reflect* on what happened, how you felt, and what this meant about you?

Talking about self-reflection, an experience I had comes to mind. My friend had cancer surgery and I didn’t visit until the second day after surgery. When I walked in, she said, “I thought you’d never come!” I replied, “Well, I’m here now and very glad to see you! So, how are you feeling?” My visit with my friend went fine after that, except that I felt furious. When I got home, I grabbed my iPad and did jigsaw puzzles, no doubt with an instinct to distract myself and calm down. Later, I got a text from my friend thanking me for visiting and saying how much I lifted her spirits. I thought to myself, “Yeah, sure!” and realized I was still annoyed with her *welcoming* comment, “I thought you’d never come.”

Thankfully, I felt unsettled enough that I tuned in to my inner dialogue. I said to myself, “Self, you are waaaaay overreacting. This is your beloved friend.

Received this from
a colleague?

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“...employees who spent 15 minutes at the end of the day reflecting about lessons learned performed 23% better...”

REFLECT on this and figure out what triggered you. Then, you can stop this kind of overreaction in the future and not let a single comment by your beloved friend (who is after all at death’s door) make you so angry that it could hurt your relationship.”

Then, I sat down with a cup of tea (no iPad in hand), and I **reflected** on what happened and on my reaction.

Reflecting for no more than five minutes, I realized a few things:

- My friend’s comment “I thought you’d never come” might have meant, “I’m so glad you’re here. I was impatient to see you.” It didn’t have to mean that she expected little of me and was being snide. I could have assumed she had positive intent.
- She had just had traumatic, life-threatening surgery and was on pain-killers. No matter WHAT she said, I could have just accepted it lovingly, realizing she was undoubtedly distressed and yearning for support.
- I don’t want to let people down—ever. When I was a kid, I got the message in my family that I was never “enough,” that somehow or other, I had let them down. This message caused me great pain and I knocked myself out to get their approval. And over time, I developed a pattern of being hyper-vigilant and angry when someone says anything to me that indicates I have let them down.

After reflecting about this incident with my friend, I felt much better, and I vowed to monitor myself for overreaction when anyone said anything to me that I heard as “You’re never enough”. I decided that, in the future, I would try to breathe, assume that they have positive intent, and respond with empathy. Self-reflection really helped me move forward with a positive frame of mind.

Self-Reflection: Moving from Just Experiencing to Understanding

“Reflection gives the brain an opportunity to pause amidst the chaos, untangle and sort through observations and experiences, consider multiple possible interpretations, and create meaning. This meaning becomes learning, which can then inform future mindsets and actions. This “meaning making” is crucial to our ongoing growth and development.”

J Porter, *Why you should take time for self-reflection (even if you hate doing it)*; HBR; March 21, 2017

Research by Di Stefano et al demonstrated that employees who spent 15 minutes at the end of the day reflecting about lessons learned performed 23% better after 10 days than those who did not reflect. Also, a study in the UK revealed that, when people who used their commute to think about and plan for their day, they were happier, more productive, and less burned out than people who didn’t.



“...when we self-reflect about our strengths, we build our confidence for juggling diverse needs and handling challenges in the future.”

Self-reflection has compelling benefits!

- 1. Self-reflection strengthens our emotional intelligence:** When taking time to self-reflect, we look inwards. This helps us achieve self-awareness and self-regulation, the two main aspects of emotional intelligence. Self awareness gives us the ability to understand our emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values and goals, and recognize their impact on others. Self-regulation involves the ability to control or redirect our disruptive emotions and impulses and adapt to changing circumstances.
- 2. Self-reflection helps us act with integrity:** Especially when we're stressed, our integrity may be tested. Self-reflection helps us review our recent decisions and actions and evaluate them against our values, so we can make better decisions and act with integrity in the future.
- 3. Self-reflection builds our confidence:** Our lives are busy and complex and we have so many needs and responsibilities (family, work, community, our health, and more). Especially when we self-reflect about our strengths, we build our confidence for juggling diverse needs and handling challenges in the future.

Self-Reflection in Six Steps

- 1. Select a reflection process that fits you best.** Some people write in a journal. Some talk with a colleague (and that works unless you just chat or commiserate.) You can sit, stand, walk, take a bike ride, talk, write or think.
- 2. Schedule a time for reflecting without interruption and commit to it.** If you have to cancel your appointment with yourself, don't do it unless you can move your appointment with yourself into a nearby time slot. Start small with a short bit of time.
- 3. Decide on topics to explore and develop questions.** Ask yourself questions about times you felt uneasy, think about a desire you had to have acted differently, a critical incident at work, something that went unusually well, an action that led to problems, feedback you received, a frustrating challenge, or an action that made a difference and felt great.
- 4. During your reflection:**
 - For each topic/question, answer three questions: "What?" "So what?" "Now what?" This will help you make your self-reflection a learning experience and an impetus to better yourself.
 - Jot down your answers to each question. Be honest--this is for YOU and does not need to be shared with anyone.
 - Identify action steps: What will you start, stop or continue doing? Do you want to be more grateful, empathic, open, supportive, and collaborative? Or, do you want to commit to actions, such as sending fewer emails and initiating more face-to-face conversations?
- 5. Then, just do it. If you're having trouble doing it, ask for help.** Consider working with a colleague, friend or coach to help you keep your time commitment, to listen to you, be a thought partner, and hold you accountable.



“Self-reflection is amazingly powerful, do-it-yourself professional development.”

Ten Great Questions for Self Reflection

Ask yourself: What? So what? Now what?

1. Which patient did you find most challenging today? What was it about this patient that challenged you? What did you do and how did you feel about how you did it?
2. Which patients and families do you prefer? Why?
3. Which patients and families tend to fade into the woodwork or escape your notice? How do you explain that?
4. When you meet a new patient, how do you talk to them? What do you tend to think about people “like them”? How might your approach to them be influenced by biases or stereotypes?
5. What did a patient say or do today that surprised you? Why was it surprising? What were you assuming about them that made you react with surprise?
6. What have you done this week that made you feel proud—even little things?
7. Are there coworkers you find it hard to get along with? How do you feel about this? How does it influence your behavior with them?
8. Think about your interactions with patients today. Which made you feel great—connected to your purpose? Which made you feel unsettled—that you wish you could have done better?
9. If you charted the time you spent this week on different activities, what would it look like? How would you feel about it? To what extent would your time chart fit with your idea of how you want to use your time?
10. If you could give yourself a gift of the skills, knowledge and attitudes that would have made this past week a much more satisfying week for you, what gift would you give yourself?

Five Realizations, Upon Reflection

1. Self-reflection is amazingly powerful, **do-it-yourself** professional development.
2. Self-reflection is impossible if you are distracted. Whether for ten minutes or an hour, it requires your full concentration.
3. Self-reflection is a great way to think deeply (and privately) about people’s reactions to your behavior and whether there’s an important message this is sending you.
4. You don’t have to self-reflect alone. You can seek feedback from **loving critics**—people who have your best interests in mind and are willing to tell you the truth. Then, you can self-reflect on what they said and decide for yourself what, if anything, you want to change.
5. Self-reflection is not about focusing solely on the negative, it also enables you to think about what you do well, and this fuels your confidence and helps you play to your strengths.

Self-reflection—it’s a gift you give yourself to strengthen your relationships, your effectiveness, your contribution, and your sense of well-being.

(Read more about Self-Reflection: Tasha Eurich, *What Self-Awareness Really Is (and How to Cultivate It)*; Harvard Business Review; January 04, 2018)



“Follow effective action with quiet reflection; from the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.”

Peter F. Drucker

“We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.”

John Dewey



Reflecting on Quotes

Write several quotes, each on a slip of paper and put them in a hat. Ask people to draw a strip of paper from the hat, to read the quote and think about it—and then prepare to share it, explaining what they think it means, and how it relates to the team’s work.

[Click here](#) for a few quotes that you can use—or find your own.



One Smile

One smile has the power to...

Calm fears.

Soften stone walls.

Warm a cold heart.

Invite a new friend.

Mimic a loving hug.

Beautify the bearer.

Lighten heavy loads.

Promote good deeds.

Brighten a gloomy day.

Comfort a grieving spirit.

Offer hope to the forlorn.

Send a message of caring.

Lift the downtrodden soul.

Patch up invisible wounds.

Weaken the hold of misery.

Act as medicine for suffering.

Attract the companionship of angels.

Fulfill the human need for recognition.

Who knew changing the world would prove so simple?”

By Richelle E. Goodrich, Smile Anyway



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