REFLECTIVE PRACTICES TO CREATE A CARING-HEALING ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction: Saint Anthony’s Community Hospital, part of the Bon Secours Charity System, has adopted Jean Watson’s Caring Theory as part of the nursing professional practice model and is developing strategies to incorporate the theory into practice. One strategy is to promote self-care practices for the multi-disciplinary staff by creating a caring-healing environment at our campus. Transforming health care environments that sustain biogenic nurses and staff helps avoid burnout and lead to better patient outcomes and satisfaction with the quality of care they receive. The first step is the practice of self-care and caring-healing practices that help create a caring environment where nurses can stop, pause and reflect in the midst of their busyness that will enable them to “Be-the-Caritas-Field” (Watson, 2008). The Caring room offers a quiet environment where nurses are conscious of their Caritas Practices; create equanimity, heart centered care, and positive energy that transforms to the patient’s environment.

Significance: A quiet, reflective space where staff can reconnect with self during a busy workday is essential. It will initiate the practice of loving-kindness and equanimity towards self and is the foundation to a Caritas Consciousness. Caring for self is the first step in becoming a caring-healing environment for patients. Developing a reflective room at our hospital that surrounds a person with comfort, safety, relaxing music, comfortable chairs and aroma therapy would encourage and invite a staff member to relax, center, reduce stress and offer gratitude. Resources available for staff in this sacred space would be provided to further their knowledge about the Caring Theory, incorporate the Caritas Processes into practice and encourage reflective journaling of their personal and professional journeys.

Purpose: The purpose of the project is multi-faceted. The main purpose is to expose staff to the practice of Caring Science by providing resources to assist with education that encourages the enculturation of the Caritas Processes into daily lives. The reflective space provides staff the opportunity to retreat into a healing space that promotes well-being and self-care rituals. It will assist the staff in discovering their inner caring spirit; that creates a positive energy by using healing modalities that patients will ultimately translate to the care they give their patients. It is “an invitation to restore the heart of our professions and our healing” (Watson, p.41, 2005).

Setting and Participants: The setting is the library located next to the Intensive Care Unit at Saint Anthony’s Community Hospital, which will be transformed into a reflective caring-healing environment. The participants would be all health care providers at the hospital.

Project Description/Process: The process began with a meeting with the Vice President of Operations and Chief Nursing Officer at Saint Anthony’s Community Hospital, where the idea was presented to convert the current library into a reflection room, which both supported but
logistically the room was previously donated to be used for a library and needed to remain a place that provided information and resources. The room was used for reflection during our annual Caritas fair, which gave the Chief Nursing Officer an opportunity to see to the impact and importance of an established environment that promotes self-care practices and how a reflection room impacted the staff. A $3,000.00 estimate was submitted including two comfortable chairs, a desk for writing Caring Moment Stories or journaling, a shredder to let frustrations go, aromatherapy, battery operated candles, touch stones, gratitude board and healing artwork. The carpet, paint and window shade would facilitate a peaceful space. Administration provided all funds for the project. The goal was to make the environment comfortable and inviting for all health care providers who wanted to practice self-care rituals using reflection. The room is also designed to provide educational materials for daily reflections, healing modalities, meditation or to increase knowledge in regard to Caring Science. Having a dual purpose for the room kept the library intact. The project was approved and renovations began in December 2011.

Projected Outcomes: The Caritas room will be completed mid March and all hospital staff will have access to the room. The first projected outcome is that the staff will discover the potential and actual benefits of reflective practice to transform them both personally and professionally. Through the Staff’s adoption of reflective practice and caring for self, another expected outcome will be to see an improvement in patient satisfaction scores as evidenced by HCAHPS (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers System). Lastly, more Caring Moment stories from staff will be written since they now have a reflective healing environment to write.

Projected Evaluations: The room was successfully used during the hospital’s Caritas fair as a quiet healing environment. Participants had the opportunity to experience using the room as a special place to practice the Caring Theory through self-care activities of reflection, journaling, relaxing and centering. Employees expressed an interest for the room to be used for self-care practices and a place to write Caring Moments, which moved the project forward. A written evaluation will be distributed to staff six months after the room is opened evaluating their perception of the usefulness of a reflective environment.

Future Direction: The Caritas room will provide ongoing resources, education and a place for employees to practice self-care. The Caring room promotes self-care, provides knowledge and ways to incorporate Caring Science into professional practice and personal life. This positive impact allows for the nurse to “Become and Be-the-Caritas-Field,” creating many sacred caring moments that impact the lives of the people who experience it.

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References: