WE ARE THE ENVIRONMENT: ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SACRED SPACE

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Introduction: Kaiser Permanente as an organization has been weaving Jean Watson’s Theory of Human Caring and Caring Science into their model of care, reengaging nurses to care for self and improve patient’s experiences; our medical/surgical unit at Kaiser Hayward has been exploring the Caritas Processes™ and discovering what they mean to our care providers. Caring Science emphasizes the importance of presence, relationship, authenticity, and intention in every interaction (Watson, 2008). Another important aspect of caring science is attention and reflection as a means to transform both internal and external environments (Watson, 2008). Healthcare providers, according to Watson, are the environment and affect the quality of care with how they live out and practice caring science (Watson, 2008). The focus of this project is to help the care providers on the 4th floor at Kaiser, Hayward recognize how they affect the environment on the unit, and in each person’s room by creating a threshold that reminds them of their sacred commitment to provide a caring and respectful patient care environment. The threshold serves to center each person as they enter the room, reminding them of the importance of respect for space, honor for each individual, treating each person with dignity and love, reminding them to be conscious and intentional in their practice and care provided.

Significance: Caritas Process 8™: Creating a healing environment at all levels with the goal of providing care that is holistic and maintains the dignity of each person combined with Caritas Process 9™: Reverentially and respectfully assisting with basic needs by providing care that is sacred and intentional are crucial to fulfilling nursing’s sacred covenant to offer loving care to humanity (Watson, 2008). Jean Watson states, “If one holds higher-thought consciousness, the entire field can be, and is being, repatterned by the nurses consciousness. The nurse-self, the Caritas Nurse, then indeed Becomes the environment, affecting the entire field” (Watson, 2008, p.140). This concept is powerful, and emphasizes one’s inner environment, which each care provider has the ability to guide; providers are generally very busy doing, rushing from task to task, and often may not be present or have neglected to acknowledge or recognize how this impacts the environment. In creating a threshold into a sacred space, the rushed energy can be transformed into one of presence and intentionality, enhancing the practitioner’s energy, changing the field, and supporting a healing environment for our patients.

Purpose: The purpose of this project was to raise the consciousness of care providers, increasing their understanding that they carry the ability to shape another’s care environment and experience by enhancing their connection to their own inner environment. The threshold increases awareness that, as a caregiver enters another’s sacred space, it is important to breathe and center before entering, to knock to respect space, to have clean hands and purposeful presence when entering,
and to be aware of how each caregiver’s energy affects the environment and the relationship developed.

Setting and Participants: The threshold was created on two patient room doorways on a busy medical/surgical floor. The staff was educated about the purpose of the project using the questions from page 139 in The Philosophy and Science of Caring, that ask the care provider: If I am the environment, how can I be more caring-healing, safe, heart-centered, conscious and intentional, to inspire thought (Watson, 2008)…. The initial participants are from the nursing leadership, nursing staff, patient care technicians, and unit assistants of the 4th floor.

Project Description/ Process: The initial phase of this project was to create a threshold, which consisted of painting Lavender around the doorway, placing a lotus flower decal on the door, removing unnecessary door clutter, and garnishing the doorway with signs that reminded practitioners to pause to be present before entering. This project included about 100 care providers on the 4th floor, which included representation from every shift.

Project Outcome: The intended project outcome is to increase staff consciousness about how important they are to creating and re-patterning the care environment, and to remind them to slow-down so they can be present to and for their patients. The conscious intention to the sacred nature of each individual’s space and needs will help to create trust and respect in relationships to promote caring and healing. It is also hoped that by slowing down, there will be fewer errors and increase patient satisfaction and higher quality care.

Projected Project Evaluation: This project will be evaluated through focused daily visits of nursing leadership with the patients whose rooms have the enhanced thresholds to assess their perception of their provider’s presence, if their space felt respected and overall their care experience.

Future Direction: It is anticipated that the threshold will enhance patient and practitioner experience and that this project will be extended to the entire department. Future goals will be to expand this project to other units at Kaiser Hayward and strengthen Caring Science as the foundation for practice at Kaiser.

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Reference: