

CREATING A HEALING SPACE TO DECREASE STRESS IN THE PERIOPERATIVE AREA

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Introduction: The Atlanta Veteran Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) achieved the prestigious Magnet Designation in 2009. As an affiliate of the Watson Caring Science Institute, the Atlanta VAMC is committed to Dr. Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring Science, which provides the theoretical foundation of caring for the professional practice model and continues to transform the Atlanta VAMC into a caring-healing environment. There have been multiple traumatic events in the perioperative arena, with little time or space available for healing from these events. Based on the Theory of Human Caring, the creation of a sacred space where staff can retreat to during high levels of stress will help staff find balance. A meditation room could improve staff health and well-being by creating a space that is healing to mind, body and spirit.

Significance: Meditation is used widely by both clinical and the general public to treat stress and stress-related conditions, as well as to promote health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). When nurses treat themselves with loving-kindness, personal positive consciousness can bring calm and balance to the environment and their workplace. Caring consciousness radiates in an ever-widening circle from self to other to community (Watson, 2008). Caritas Process™ # 8 focuses on the creation of healing environment for physical and spiritual self, which respects human dignity and wholeness (Watson, 2008).

Purpose: The purpose of this project was to provide a meditation room in the perioperative arena where the staff can go to center their thoughts and decrease work stressors through healing breathing for 10 to 15 minutes. The staff will have opportunities to explore Watson's Theory of Caring Science to bring awareness of the value of self-care, and to facilitate the practice of loving-kindness for self and others through creating a healing environment (Watson, 2008). Staff will also learn about the healing effects of meditation. They will be invited to evaluate whether this newly created sacred space is effective in stress reduction, the promotion of self-healing, while building trusting working relationships and improving patient care.

Setting and Participants: The meditation room is located in the perioperative department in a vacant office and is available for staff members who feel they need a short retreat. The participants include staff nurses, surgical technicians, health technicians, anesthesia technicians, physicians, residents, PA's, CRNA's, PSA, and environmental services staff. Staff from the SICU

will also be encouraged to come and enjoy the benefits of the meditation room.

Project Description/Process: Finding a space to create a meditation room was very difficult. Recently the Assistant Nurse Manager obtained a new position and her office was empty. With the Nurse Manager's permission and support of the idea presented to her, the vacant Assistant Nurse Manager's office was transformed into the temporary meditation room. This meditation room provides a tranquil escape for staff that are a little overwhelmed and stressed at work. The meditation room offers:

- A sweet aromatherapy of lavender scent to promote the decrease of stress.
- A reclining chair that has a massaging pad if needed.
- A centering piece of candles and rocks that are inscribed with words, such as love, peace, and healing.
- A selection of calming music that a participant may want to play.
- Affirmation Cards and the Caritas Process™ cards to teach about Caring Science.

On the wall outside the door is a huge bulletin board that educates any staff member who comes into the perioperative area about the value of the meditation room and the benefits of using it. From a recommendation of a co-worker, tokens were created with the Watson Caring Science logo on one side and the word "time-out" on the reverse side. The significance of the 'time-out' token is that before any procedure in the perioperative area, the surgical team does a "time-out" to make sure everyone is on the same accord. So when co-workers see that a colleague is stressed or overwhelmed, they can give a token to that person to take a "time-out" to promote self-care and spiritual healing.

Project Projected Outcomes: It is anticipated that the staff will learn ways to promote self-healing and create a healing environment by relating the Caritas Processes™ to the workday. It is hoped that this project will increase awareness of work stressors and promote self-care among the staff that refreshes mind, body and spirit with needed time-out in the meditation room.

Projected Evaluation: In the meditation room, there is a self-reflection book that allows participating staff to reflect and elaborate on the benefit the room gave them and how the experience affected the remaining part of their day from working with colleagues to patient care. Many staff reflected that taking a 'time out' decreased the stress level and gave them a refreshing restart to their work day.

Future Directions: Once data is gathered on the importance of the meditation room, when and how it is used, and the effect it has on staff health promotion and on increasing a healing environment, it is hoped that a permanent meditation room will be a part of the perioperative unit.

References

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012, October 12). *Meditation program for stress and well-being*. Retrieved March 2, 2013, from <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm>
- Watson, J. (2008). *Nursing: The philosophy and science of caring* (Rev. ed.). Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.