

Pablo Picasso

"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."

touch

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Building Effective Communication Skills at Crestwood

Communication is conveying a message to another person through language – both verbal and nonverbal. The basic steps of communication are thinking about the message, communicating that message and making sure it was heard and understood as intended by the recipients.

Communication in our Crestwood campuses is of paramount importance. It is the lynch pin in relationships, safety, effectiveness of services, satisfaction and sustainability of services in behavioral health. Communication can be as basic as breathing and as complicated as neurosurgery.



Effective communication begins with these essential skills:

Listening: being a good listener is one of the best ways to be a good communicator and it requires paying attention.

Nonverbal Communication: your body language, eye contact, hand gestures, and tone of voice all play into communication, so be aware of what you are communicating.

Clarity and Concision: good verbal communication means saying what you mean, just enough and not too much.

Friendliness: through a friendly tone and smile you will encourage others to engage in open and honest communication with you.

Confidence: it is important to be confident in your interactions with others. Confidence shows that you believe in what you're saying and will follow through. Exuding confidence can be as simple as making eye contact or using a firm, but friendly tone. Be sure you are always listening to and empathizing with the other person.

Empathy: using phrases as simple as "I understand where you are coming from" demonstrate that you have been listening to the other person and respect their opinions.

Open-Mindedness: in situations where you disagree with what someone else has to say, it is important to sympathize with their point of view, rather than simply try to get your message across. Respect the opinion of others and never resort to demeaning those who do not agree with you.

Respect: respecting what others have to say and acknowledging them is an important aspect of communication. Being respectful can be as simple as paying attention to what they have to say, using that person's name, and not being distracted. By respecting others, the other person will feel appreciated, which will lead to a more honest and productive conversation. (thebalancecareers.com)

What makes communication work well is attention and intention.

Effective communication is simple and exquisite, yet not easy. What makes communication work well is attention and intention. You need to pay attention to what and how you are communicating and focus on the intention, which should be honest, transparent, values-driven and beneficial so that it helps, not hurts the other person. By practicing and continuing to develop these essential communication skills, will help us to improve, foster and build stronger relationships with co-workers and clients throughout our Crestwood campuses.



The Practice of Forgiveness

What is the impact of forgiveness on ourselves or others? How do we forgive when there is no apology or amends? How do we open our hearts to forgive when we are still in pain? Where does forgiveness come in when the harm is still being done? Does forgiveness change behaviors? Does forgiveness provide relief to pain? How does forgiveness impact our lives? These are the questions that provide a platform to study forgiveness.

The common definition of forgiveness is the intentional and voluntary process by which a person changes feelings and attitudes regarding an offense; letting go of negative emotions such as anger, resentment, vengefulness or desire to punish the offender, although it's justified; and then replacing those emotions with compassion, love and positive regard. It does not equate to condoning or excusing behavior. Forgiveness requires gratitude and compassion.

The Stanford University Forgiveness Project's study defines forgiveness as primarily of taking less personal offense, reducing anger and blaming of the offender, and developing an increased understanding of situations that lead to hurt and anger. This understanding may lead to greater empathy. Forgiveness is not granted because a person deserves to be forgiven, instead, it is an act of love, mercy, and grace.

According to the Greater Good Science at UC Berkeley, forgiveness provides a healthy physiological, emotional, psychological and spiritual impact contrasting with the harmful effects aligned with being unforgiving of others, which include depression, high blood pressure, muscle tension and an increased heart rate. Our ability to enjoy and be present in the moment is an outcome of forgiveness, while unforgiving practices can reduce confidence, comfort and lower self-esteem. Possessing the strength and willpower to embrace forgiveness will not only reduce these harmful traits, it can also create a renewed sense of hope, inner peace, gratitude and happiness.

There are three kinds of forgiveness that are all interrelated. There is self-forgiveness, which enables us to release our guilt and perfectionism. There is the forgiveness we extend to others and receive from them. And there is the forgiveness of God or our higher power or our universe that assures us of our worth and strengthens us for this practice.

All the spiritual traditions raise up the value of forgiveness, but many people still find it to be a nearly impossible ideal. Just start somewhere. Look truthfully at one hurt you have not been able to forgive. Identify any associated feelings you might have, such as anger, denial, guilt, shame, or embarrassment. Imagine what it would be like to live without feeling this offense. Then let it go.

Forgiveness does not require an apology or amends. It is ours to provide and practice.

According to Web MD your heart health and mental health may depend on your ability to reduce hurt and anger at yourself. The significant impact of the health benefits of forgiveness led Stanford University Forgiveness Project to look at how we can teach it as a practice, rather than a concept. The project is currently undertaking a study to learn how forgiveness can enhance health and relationships and even prevent disease. Part of that study has found that we forgive others with greater ease than we forgive ourselves. I speculate that until we master self-forgiveness, authentic and complete forgiveness of others cannot occur, thus anger still lingers underneath our conscious awareness. According to Juliana Breines, PhD, from Brandeis University, the lack of self-forgiveness is linked with suicide attempts, eating disorders, and alcohol abuse. Self-forgiveness and learning the practice of self-forgiveness may be the cornerstone to lasting personal wellness.

So how do we forgive ourselves or others? Dr. Frederic Luskin, Director of the Stanford University Forgiveness Project, has identified four stages to forgiveness.

Stage One: We recognize we feel self-justified anger. We may feel wounded or convinced that the offense is so great that it does not deserve a pardon. At this stage there usually is both active and submerged anger, as well as a great deal of pain.

Stage Two: We realize that our hurt and anger does not feel good and may be causing health and life balance challenges. You may wish to repair the damage to the relationship and take steps toward forgiveness. You no longer feel activated by anger. This process of forgiveness can be applied to anger at oneself or others.

Stage Three: As we start to experience the results of forgiveness – less stress, hurt and pain; we choose to let go of a new grievance more rapidly. In this stage, you choose to feel the hurt for a shorter period and then work to either repair the relationship or not see the situation as a problem. In either case, you are aware that you control the time and energy spent on the grievance and you decide to forgive because you have had more practice with it and see the clear benefit in your life.

Stage Four: The fourth stage of forgiveness involves the choice to reframe the world and your experiences. You prepare to forgive in advance of a trigger such as anger or pain. You recognize that your time in anger may be wasted time or have a negative impact on your health and wellness. You recognize that you can forgive yourself, others, your circumstances and God.

Much like playing piano or baseball, forgiveness takes practice. It takes mindful awareness of identifying a grievance and choosing your response. It requires self-reflection, observation and gratitude. It is a practice, that like exercise or healthy eating, will have a positive effect on your health and wellness. It is worth the effort and self-forgiveness is where it starts.

Forgiveness does not require an apology or amends. It is ours to provide and practice. Forgiveness changes our behavior and it has the potential to change a situation that harms, into a response that increases our self-esteem, improves our physical health and opens the door to overall wellness.

Contributed by: Patty Blum PhD, CPRP, Crestwood Executive Vice President

THE CRESTWOOD PRAXIS

Over the years, Crestwood has developed a set of practices, protocols, and tools that we employ across our organization and they have become part of our service model, programs, and reputation.

This service model is what you see when you come into any of our Crestwood programs and it includes Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), Trauma-Informed Approaches; homelike environments; employee and person-served wellness; peers in the workforce; Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT); employing people at all levels of care with disabilities through Dreamcatchers Empowerment Network; and mind, body, spirit wellness. This service model has become our Crestwood Praxis, which is a process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practiced, embodied, or realized.



Rutgers University Researchers' visit at the Crestwood Sacramento Home Office.

Crestwood has seen the results of this Praxis in successful discharges, shorter lengths of stay, working with individuals who challenge the system at all levels, and building relationships with communities. So, for our next step, we wanted to start looking at how to measure and study the impact of the Praxis and the individuals we serve in a more scientific and quantifiable manner. After searching for the right University-sponsored research, we found Rutgers University, who had two researchers that could evaluate our Praxis as a whole, as well as individual elements across the levels of care we provide that includes our skilled nursing facility programs, acute crisis programs, long-term residential programs and community-based, peer-operated programs.

This past January, after several months of working with our team to determine how we might best collaborate in the researching and publishing of the efficacy of our initiatives, two leading researchers from Rutgers University, Nora Barrett, MSW, LCSW, CPRP and Associate Professor and Vice Chairperson of the Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation & Counseling and Aaron Levitt, PhD, Director of the Integrated Employment Institute, visited eight Crestwood campuses and the Sacramento Home Office on a 5-day visit. During the visit, the researchers analyzed each of our Crestwood initiatives such as WRAP; Dreamcatchers' Peer Employment Program; Compassionate Care;

Trauma-Informed Approaches; Wellness with our heart-healthy diets and Zumba; Peer Providers; and our therapeutic, homelike environments. Nora and Aaron also met with Elaine Miller-Karas from the Trauma Resource Institute; Raul Almazar on Trauma-Informed Approaches; Matthew Federici from the Copeland Center on WRAP and Organizational Wellness Landscape; and Lori Ashcraft from Resilience Inc. on peers, so that they could talk to the source of each training that we use for our programs and staff, as well as to gain a better understanding of each of the elements of that practice.



Rutgers University Researchers, Nora Barrett and Aaron Levitt, with Campus Administrator Joel Mensonides, during their visit to the San Francisco Healing Center.

The visit was a great success, with the Rutgers researchers initiating a formal review to create a scientific platform for the analysis of our Crestwood initiatives and practices, which ultimately will then lead to publication of our Praxis. We look forward to working with Nora, Aaron and Rutgers University during the next several years to study the specific elements of our service model Praxis and its impact in general on the people we serve, our employees, and communities.

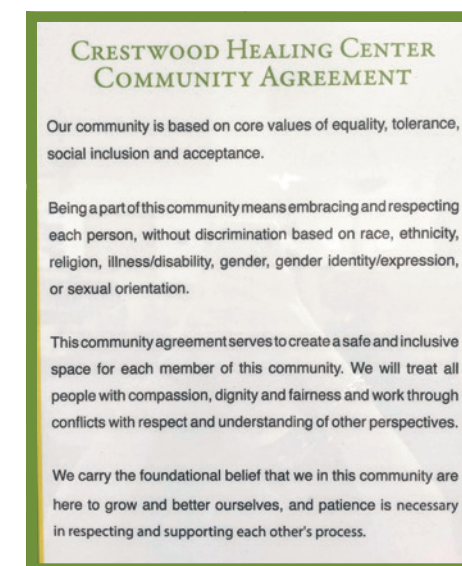
Contributed by: Patty Blum PhD, CPRP, Crestwood Executive Vice President

In Pleasant Hill, we have the great fortune of having a campus, Crestwood Healing Center, with two residential programs for our residents. Crestwood Healing Center serves adults of all ages, needs and interests; employs staff in different departments who work various days and shifts; and has the normal difficulties of getting everyone on the same page. In late 2017, in an attempt to bring our campus closer together, we set out on a process to create a community agreement that would set guidelines for how everyone on our campus is expected to treat one another.

Building Campus Community Connections

Like with most activities on our campus, this process was inclusive and open to any interested residents and employees. As we began gathering ideas around our community, it became clear that the focus of our agreement would be centered on respect and inclusiveness. As the process continued, it added elements of holding patience and an understanding for one another, as all of us are going through our own experiences. The developing community agreement included input from individuals, groups and members from our monthly Community Meeting. The team leading this process sought out as many voices as possible, and a few months later, the campus agreed on a final version.

Our Community Agreement hangs on our walls throughout the campus and is read before the start of each monthly Community Meeting. It is introduced to new residents and new employees and is the basis for how we all, staff and residents alike, conduct ourselves. It informs decisions throughout the campus and works together with our campus' mission statement. It is not always a perfect solution to ensure respect is given because as human beings we all have tough moments and make mistakes, but it is a reminder for all of us of what it means to live and work together.



Crestwood Healing Center's Community Agreement.

Our Community Agreement is about building more community on our campus and has hopefully made us a little more connected and brought us strength in our togetherness. Our campus culture is increasingly one of respect and embracing differences and by making the agreement a living part of the campus ensures that we will keep moving forward in that direction. While it took time to get to our final version of our Community Agreement, the process itself was meaningful, and certainly replicable across the rest of our Crestwood campuses. We're happy to help anyone who is interested in getting started!

Contributed by: Travis Curran, Campus Administrator, Crestwood Healing Center, Pleasant Hill

Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc.

Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc. is proud to be California's leading provider of mental health services, assisting thousands of clients from across the state. Our focus is on creating strong relationships with counties in which we both have a financial commitment, providing the services which are tailored to meet clients' specific needs, and reinforcing a common set of values that guide our practices and policies.



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spotlight

"When thinking about Crestwood, it is hard for me to not get emotional knowing that what started as a venture by my Grandfather 51 years ago, has evolved into a family of more than 3,000 employees, with a common mission of life-changing work. I cannot imagine a more rewarding role. It is touching that so many wonderful people share our values and our mission, as these are the people that truly separate Crestwood from the rest."

- Derek J. Dobbins, Crestwood President and COO



accreditation

Crestwood Behavioral Health Inc. is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), which requires a higher standard of care than the licensing standards in California. Crestwood believes this accreditation demonstrates our unwavering commitment to achieving and maintaining the highest level of care and rehabilitation.

Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc. complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

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