

## **Creating Healing Environments**

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Providing a healing environment is essential to patient-centered care and aids in reducing anxiety and stress.

Healing is not the same as curing. "Curing is restoration of health, an absence of symptoms, and a remedy of disease. Healing, on the other hand, is restoration of wholeness--not the level of wholeness before the diagnosis, but restoration of wholeness that is new, different, and comparatively better than before the onset of disease. Healing is not the removal or cessation of symptoms, but rather an integrative process that transcends the physical and includes mental, emotional, and spiritual vitality and wellness" (Mooney, M 2013, para 2). Persons can be healed even though they are not cured.

The environment can encourage or discourage interactions among people. The environment can also influence behavior and motivation that can affect mood.

Privacy is one of our basic human needs. Providing a private room gives the patient and family a sense of control over their environment, including the ability to adjust lighting and temperature or choose a music station or television channel.

Stress is an important medical consideration. The stress of a noisy, confusing hospital room may result in the patient and/or family feeling worried, sad, or helpless. Hormones are released in response to emotional stress which can result in increased blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension.

When I think about how I can create a healing environment in my work place, I look at Jean Watson's theory of nursing and the *Ten Caritas Process: Guidelines for putting Love/Heart-Centered Caring practice into action* (Watson, 2008). Here are the processes as outlined by Watson:

1. Practice loving-kindness and equanimity within the context of caring consciousness.
2. Be authentically present, enabling and sustaining the faith, hope and belief system of self and other.
3. Cultivate one's own spiritual practices and transpersonal self, going beyond ego self.
4. Develop and sustain a helping, trusting, authentic caring relationship.
5. Be present and support the expression of positive and negative feelings.
6. Creatively use one's self and all ways of knowing as part of the caring process, engaging in artistry of caring-healing practices.
7. Engage in genuine teaching-learning experience that attends to wholeness and meaning, attempting to stay within the other's frame of reference.
8. Create a healing environment at all levels, whereby wholeness, beauty, comfort, dignity, and peace are potentiated.
9. Assist with basic needs, with an intentional caring consciousness, administering 'human care essentials,' which potentiate the alignment of mind-body-spirit and wholeness in all aspects of care.

10. Be open and attend to the mysterious dimensions of one's life-death, including soul care for self and the one being cared for.

The company I work for has achieved this in many ways. The Mission statement for Wesley Medical Center states "Above all else, we are committed to the care and improvement of human life by bringing exceptional health to every human being."

Wesley Medical Center stands behind the ICARE values.

- **Integrity.** Doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.
- **Compassion.** Be empathetic to the needs of others and sympathize with their situation.
- **Accountability.** Take ownership for how actions impact outcomes.
- **Respect.** Value others and embrace diversity
- **Excellence.** Take personal pride in exceeding expectations.

Physically, Wesley is able to help promote a healing environment for patients and their families by providing all patients with private rooms. There is also an outdoor corridor that provides views of the serene landscaped garden, the smell of fresh flowers, and contact with nature.

A "comfort care cart" program was started by a former Hesston College nurse graduate two years ago. "Because We Care" comfort carts have gone national. The carts were started by nurses and are maintained by nurses. The carts are designed to provide comfort to patients and their families either at the time of passing or any other difficult or traumatic moment during a hospital stay. The carts are stocked with a wide range of items, from tissue, hard candy and phone charges, to blankets and spiritual aides to suit every faith and family. The blankets are placed over a loved one at the time of his or her passing with a note that reads: "because we care," and the family is invited to take the blanket home as a remembrance.

Wesley Medical Center also has a chapel and chaplaincy services are available twenty-four hours a day seven days a week to provide spiritual and emotional support to patients and families. These services help connect families with their own faith or spiritual tradition enabling them to explore the comfort, hope, and strength their traditions provide.

## References

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## About the Author



**Jessica Clasen, RN**, works as a nurse in the Emergency Department at Wesley Medical Center in Wichita, Kansas. From 2003-2009, she lived in Denver, Colorado where she worked as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and applied to the Nursing Program at the Community College of Denver. After her initial days as a nursing student were interrupted by a diagnosis of Hodgkin's Lymphoma, she eventually moved back to Kansas in late 2009 to finish Nursing School. She graduated from Hesston College with an Associate's degree in 2012. Jessica has now

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