

Book: *Positive Leadership in Health Care: Building on Strengths, Managing Around Weaknesses*

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Book Review:

The negativity surrounding today's healthcare environment creates trying times for healthcare providers and often is counterproductive to delivering the quality of care needed by patients in the system. Contributors to *Positive Leadership in Health Care: Building on Strengths, Managing Around Weaknesses* encourage a move away from this negativity to focus energy on positive leadership. Just as health care is moving from diagnosis and treatment to prevention and screening, management should move to a proactive, positive strategy to get the job done.

The weaving together of psychology, psychiatry, cognitive and neurological sciences into something called "positive psychology" will have enormous influence on the quality of both personal and professional lives according to the authors. While this book seems to be focused primarily at the physician reader, the content can be equally useful to healthcare managers and their relationships with their staff and physicians practicing in their facility.

The first step in creating a more positive self includes a self-assessment focused on behaviors and thoughts one would like to change. Once these behaviors are identified, a re-design of new behaviors that can be modeled and practice is undertaken. Conscious practice of these new behaviors at least twice a day for three weeks should imprint a more positive response when presented with a stimuli. Essentially, the individual is training the response to be positive rather than negative when presented with a stimuli that previously provoked a negative behavior, for example, a late employee or a disruptive physician. The authors feel that self-control will not change behavior, but a conscious practice of re-designed behaviors can neurologically imprint this desired response to stimuli leading to a greater likelihood of use. To practice the behavior, find a quiet place and focus on being relaxed. Take a few deep breaths and then picture the event that caused negative behavior and how you should respond. If one becomes angry when confronting an equally angry employee, how would your new positive response develop when in this situation? If you confront anger with the practiced behavior of saying, "I know you are upset, but let's examine what the issues are that are causing you distress." Repeat this exercise several times. The brain can be retrained with practice.

Assuming you accept this ability to imprint positive behaviors, the next step is to utilize these imprints in your management of relationships and staff. The evolution of the physician-nurse relationship and the move to collaboration between the professionals in the healthcare delivery system is a positive response to the complexity and innovations occurring daily. The authors describe management of disruptive physicians and strategies to change disruptive behavior based on the use of the positive psychology approach. Case examples illustrate this discussion providing a learning tool for the reader. A discussion of using positive psychology to create a workplace built on trust and an environment of creativity, and innovation by idealizing the desired behaviors. Setting stretch goals and modeling the behaviors necessary to attain the goal will challenge staff to greater performance.

The extensive use of case studies, sample policies, flow diagrams and examples of behavior to model make this book an interesting approach to using personal behavior modification rather than behavior modification targeted at the employee. Positive behavior in managers creates positive leadership leading to a positive response in others. The emphasis on the physician executive is not a detriment to the applicability of the text to any manager. Creating a collaborative work environment based on positivity may lead to lower turnover, increased staff satisfaction and, perhaps, even improved financial performance for an organization. Developing positive actions is the key to success, according to the authors.

Abstract

The negativity surrounding today's healthcare environment creates trying times for healthcare providers and often is counterproductive to delivering the quality of care needed by patients in the system. Contributors to this text encourage a move away from this negativity to focus energy on positive leadership. Just as health care is moving from diagnosis and treatment to prevention and screening, management should move to a proactive, positive strategy to get the job done. The weaving together of psychology, psychiatry, cognitive and neurological sciences into something called "positive psychology" will have enormous influence on the quality of both the personal and professional lives according to the authors. While the book seems to be focused primarily at the physician reader, the content can be equally useful to healthcare managers and their relationships with others, including physicians. The gist of the early chapters is that self-control will not change behavior, but a conscious practice of re-designed behaviors can neurologically imprint a desired response to stimuli. Essentially the reader should define what behaviors he or she needs to implement, practice the behaviors and then likelihood of use is greater. Modeling these behaviors for staff leads to trust and an environment of creativity and innovation. Of particular interest in this text is the interesting approach to using personal behavior modification rather than attempting to modify the behavior of the employee. The modeling of one's own behavior creates

a collaborative opportunity in the work environment based on positivity may lead to increased staff satisfaction and, perhaps even, improved financial performance. According to the authors, developing positive actions and a positive work environment is the key to success.

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