Relationships Matter.
Effective Communication Works.
Psychologists Can Help it Happen.
VHA National Center for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention (NCP)

NCP is:
VA’s primary source for healthy living, prevention, and health education

NCP does the following:
• Provides evidence-based programs, training, resources, policy guidance to engage Veterans in Healthy Living. Led COVID-19 vaccination for VHA.
• Promotes whole health and prevention to reduce chronic disease
• Supports Healthy Living Teams and clinicians, including Health Behavior Coordinators (HBCs).
• HBCs support patient-centered communication skill training for clinicians, lead MI training, support HP work including stress management.
Key Psychologist Knowledge Areas

• Key concepts in Healthy Living and stress management
• Person-centered communication skills
• Self-care/self-management skills
• Consulting skills for teams and individuals
• Health Care System organizational culture change & implementation science
• Parallel process awareness
• Promotional skills- helping leaders see the value of this work

All of these needed now, more than ever in recent history!
The Burnout Epidemic, Even Pre-Pandemic

- Alarming numbers of healthcare workers report sx of burnout
  - 2015 study: over 50% physicians report burnout
  - 2018 article: 47.9% psychologists reported mod-hi levels emotional exhaustion
  - 2021 study with half of healthcare workers reporting burnout amid COVID 19 (Sara Berg, Physician Health)
  - 2021 Nurses survey: 75% felt stressed, 10% felt “worthless”

- Compassion Fatigue is a challenge as is vicarious traumatization & emotional exhaustion from exposure to traumatic events during the pandemic

- Psychologists can play a key role in bolstering resilience and responding to distress
Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI): Finding Joy in Work: Psychological PPE

• The most joyful, productive, engaged staff:
  – Feel both physically and psychologically safe
  – Appreciate the meaning and purpose of their work
  – Have some choice and control over their time
  – Experience camaraderie with others at work
  – Perceive their work life to be fair

• There are proven methods for creating a positive work environment that creates these conditions and ensures the commitment to deliver high-quality care to patients, even in stressful times.
Four Steps Leaders can Take to Improve the Joy in Work-
IHI White Paper

1. Ask staff “What matters to you?” (Think about what makes things a
good workday, feel proud for you to work here... When you are at your
best, what does that look like?)

2. Identify unique impediments to joy in work in the local context. This
can help you set priorities and address them together

3. Commit to a systems approach to making joy in work a shared
responsibility at all levels of the organization

4. Use improvement science to test approaches to improving joy in work
in your organization
10 Core Values of Effective Workplaces in Healthcare

1. Person Centeredness (Relationship-Centered Leadership)

   Working with Others
   2. Open Communication
   3. High Support and High Challenge
   4. Involvement, participation and collaboration with stakeholders.
   5. Teamwork
   6. Leadership Development

   Effective Care
   7. Evidence use and development
   8. Lifelong learning
   9. Positive attitude to change
   10. Safety (holistic)

Source: Manley et al., International Practice Development Journal, Nov. 2011
VHA Sites that Deliver Both Evidence-Based and Patient-Centered Care Feature Clinician and Patient Empowerment

- Qualitative study at 12 VA sites selected based on EBP and PCC
- VHA sites exhibiting high performance in both quality performance measures and patient experience exhibited a culture that empowered clinicians to engage in:
  - Evidence-based practice (e.g., performance improvement projects)
  - Shared decision-making with patients
  - Multidisciplinary care practices that emphasized communication across disciplines
  - Inclusion of patients as members of committees overseeing care processes.

Source: Engle et al, Health Care Management Review, 2021
How can we foster a relationship-centered culture?

- Reduces emotional exhaustion
- Increases professional efficacy
- Increases job satisfaction
- Increases career satisfaction

Adapted from Anthony L. Suchman, MD, MA
McArdle Ramerman Center
Creating Person-centeredness in Workgroups – Sample Meeting Practices

- Build relationships: check-in
- Actively engage participants: co-creation of agenda, nominal group process
- Develop process awareness: co-creation of ground rules, reflective time out, appreciative debriefing

Adapted from Anthony L. Suchman, MD, MA
McArdle Ramerman Center

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Suggestions to foster productive conversations with leaders about the value of Healthy Living work.

The strategies listed are based on OARS strategies from Motivational Interviewing and TEACH. We suggest applying the strategies in the natural flow of your interactions, rather than as a step-by-step script.

Open-Ended Questions:
• What is your vision for patient-centered care (and/or Health Psychology)?
  o What must happen to realize that vision?
  o How does (health psychology) fit with your vision?
  o What is your sense of the role that a Health Psychologist can play in helping you to realize this vision?
• What are some of the challenges and priorities you face as a leader?
  o How are you responding to the current challenges and priorities?
  o How might (Health Psychology) help with (the challenges, priorities, barriers)?
Key Qualities Psychologists Can Bring to Healthcare Success and Compassionate Care Systems

- Helpfulness and flexibility
- Appreciation/empathy for clinician dilemmas (shadow)
- Time management skills and focus with strong work ethic
- Collaborative style, team orientation
- Engaging presentation/delivery skills
- Broad spectrum knowledge base, like PCMHI
- Willingness to learn medical concepts for behavior management
- Resourcefulness for accessing support, latest evidence, mining for promising practices
- Health Care System organizational culture change & implementation science
- Promotional skills- helping leaders see the value of this work
What can you do in your role as a Psychologist?

- Review some of the resources shared today for ideas and strategies for successfully engaging in your work and collaborating with other co-workers.
- Acknowledge person-centeredness when you see it! We can affirm/shape positive behaviors, and help colleagues and leaders shift their communications.
- Have conversations with team members, supervisors about how to balance, prioritize work.
- Listen and respond with empathy. This work is stressful; we are here to support each other.
- Simply ask a colleague in distress, “How can I support you?”
- Participate in person-centered communication training, encourage colleagues to do so, collaborate with your HBC around helping staff and leaders develop the skills.

Reflection: What next steps can you take to support a more person-centered culture in your workplace?
The Silver Linings

• The worldwide pandemic highlights the critical need to address prevention and healthy living, including quality of work life
• Pandemic stress fueled increased substance misuse, depression, anxiety, PTSD, interpersonal discord, healthcare worker burnout, financial strain, insomnia, isolation etc.
• People are making mindful choices about work, prioritizing work-life balance, often leaving un-supportive environments.
• We have effective communication skills and management concepts to support positive work environments.
• Despite a long history of often rigid structures, a transformation is underway
• Psychologists can play a key role in supporting the transition to a more relationship-centered workplace. No other healthcare system has such a rich resource to help foster this shift, if we choose to participate in meaningful ways
Additional resources for dealing with communication challenges

• Academy of Communication in Healthcare resources: https://achonline.org/Resources/ACH-Resources
• The Empathy Project: https://www.empathyproject.com/
• Patient Priorities Care: https://patientprioritiescare.org/
• MI Lead resources and Servant Leadership training through National Center for Organizational Development
• Whole Health Education, Training Options: https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VHAOPCC/Education/SitePages/Home.aspx
Additional VA Resources

• VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
  • REBOOT Task Force efforts underway in VHA to support Employee Whole Health in a variety of ways

• VHA National Center for Organizational Development
  • VA Voices Program
  • SMART Change: resources to help you begin a project and gather support
  • COVID-19 Resources and Employee Support Toolkit

• Transformational Coaching

• Employee Whole Health SharePoint: Employee Whole Health - Home (sharepoint.com)
Select References


- Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) [Joy in Work | IHI - Institute for Healthcare Improvement](https://www.ihi.org)


Structural Obstacles to Clinicians’ Well-Being

- **Medical Exceptionalism** – regarding health care workers (HCWs) as self-sacrificing establishes institutional expectations for self-negation – masks harmful practices/policies

- **Medicalization** – considering HCWs with stress responses as “sick” or “impaired” - stigmatizes, blames

- **Individual Responsibility** – considering HCWs personally obliged to maintain own wellness – tasks individuals, not institutions with advancing workplace health

**Conclusion** --> Addressing clinician well-being is an organizational responsibility that requires changes in workplace conditions

COVID-related occupational stressors (CROS) among HCWs & FRs and potential mitigation strategies: Direct and Contextual

Core CROS Factors:
- Volume
- Demoralization
- Risk

Source: Hendrickson et al, JGIM, 2021
Moving Veterans to...Tools: Applying MI and TEACH

5 Key Steps to Promote Veteran Engagement in change

- **Ask Permission to discuss** (vaccines, activity levels, weight management ...)

- **Explore readiness and experience** (Ask before Tell)

- **Support and Affirm** ANY interest, benefits, current/past success

- **Confirm Next Steps**

Health Promotion & Disease Prevention - Moving To Tools - All Documents (sharepoint.com)
What is Self-Management Support?

Institute of Medicine Definition:

“The systematic provision of education and supportive interventions to increase patients’ skills and confidence in managing their health problems, including regular assessment of progress and problems, goal setting, and problem-solving support.”

[Adams, IOM, 2003; Pearson, AHRQ, 2007]
Sample Clinical Tools to Support Behavior Change

My Health Choices

Choose one healthy living goal you want to work on.

Manage Stress  Limit Alcohol  Be Physically Active

Limit Alcohol  Be Involved in your Health Care  Be Safe

Strive for a Healthy Weight  Eat Wisely  Get Recommended Screening Tests & Immunizations

Or write in your own healthy living goal:


Things that might get in my way:

I can overcome these things by:

Confidence in reaching my goal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all confident</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Extremely confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow-up Date: ________  Follow-up Method: □ Phone  □ In-person  □ Other

Motivational Interviewing OARS — Strategies for Engaging Veterans

Open-ended questions and statements

- Involve Veterans in sharing their "stories"
- Explore concerns, values, needs, priorities, ideas, feelings, beliefs, and expectations
- Encourage Veterans to share what is most important to them

Examples:

- "What reasons do you have...?"
- "How important is that to you...?"
- "How do you feel about...?"
- "What are your most important concerns...?"
- "Tell me about something you are planning to do..."

Affirmations

- Statements that reinforce Veterans strengths
- Acknowledge current or past behaviors that reflect positive behaviors or change
- Must be genuine and heartfelt

Examples:

- "It's impressive how you...
- "You showed a lot of self-control in the way you...
- "You have a great outlook...
- "You are versatile and adaptable...
- "You have really made progress..."

Reflective listening

- Reflect what the Veteran said, expressed, meant:
- Simple — restating or paraphrasing the Veteran's message
- Complex — reflecting deeper meanings, feelings, values
- Strategic — simplify, up or reframe a point
- Wait — allow the Veteran to connect, confirm, elaborate
- Stress to increase the ratio of reflections to questions

Stems:

- "To what extent...
- "How are you feeling...
- "I'm hearing you are concerned about...

Summaries

- A series of reflections you offer the Veteran
- Allow Veteran to confirm, elaborate or correct
- May use to selectively reinforce change talk
- May use to shift towards planning or taking steps

Example:

- "Say you have several reasons for wanting to quit smoking, including improving your ability to keep up with your kids, reducing your risk of having a heart attack, and being able to spend time with your family needs. Through your own contemplation of what you hope to gain and anticipate the barriers that will get in your way, where would you like to go from here?"

Importance RULER

"On a scale of 0–10, how important do you think it is to...?"

Not at All Important  A Little  Somewhat  Very  Extremely Important

Follow-up Questions

- Explore why not a higher number: e.g., "Why is it a 0, and not a 1 or 2?"
- Explore how to increase it: e.g., "What would it take to move it to a 7?"
How Can Psychologists Support Healthcare Teams?

Clinician training and coaching helps clinicians have satisfying, efficient and productive interactions with patients, while building trust and enhancing the patient experience.

Patient-facing tools and resources - health literate, with the information and strategies needed to prevent disease and optimize health.

Clinical programs that are accessible, evidence-based, and promote measurable improvement in health, while preventing illness and morbidity.

All of the above help medical facilities provide personalized, whole health care that empowers and engages patients in their own health.

Bottom-line: The Healthy Living Team helps save TIME, reduce WORK, and improve health care and patient health.