

WHAT DO YOU WANT CHANGED ABOUT THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF MEDICINE?

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The system of health care in the United States has become increasingly complicated, expensive, and impersonal. Unfortunately, many people feel that physicians and their care teams are to blame – that they are somehow less committed and compassionate than in the past, or at the very least that they are complicit in the troubled state of health care today. In truth, I think that caregivers are no less passionate about providing great care. In fact, they are every bit as frustrated as their patients by the limitations and inequities that have become

part of the landscape as the result of decades of inconsistent health care policy.

I would like the public to recognize that their caregivers are highly sympathetic to the impact the current state of health care is having on them, that they fight against it every day, and that they will be their most powerful ally in making the changes that desperately need to occur to restore the “health” of our health care system.

Erik Emaus, DO, CPE
President, Affinity Medical Group



A partnership of Ministry Health Care and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare

BALANCE is a quarterly newsletter for Affinity Health System medical staff. The purpose of this newsletter is to raise awareness of medical staff health and wellness issues. If you would like to contribute, please contact any member of the editorial board: Jen Norden, MD, Trish Howe, MD, Sudeep Sodhi, MD, Cookie Fielkow, Carole Bleck, Affinity Marketing department or e-mail: joegan@affinityhealth.org.

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Balance



Balance

A newsletter dedicated to promoting and enhancing clinician wellness

January 2009

SENSING A GOOD MOOD

How our environment affects tranquility

Need a lift? Look no further than the nose on your face... or the eyes, ears, skin. “Everything around us affects our mood. Our senses detect stimuli in the environment and send signals to the brain, affecting our emotions, creativity and productivity,” says Corrine Anderson, CMT, CCAP, massage therapist for Affinity Health System. The trick is learning how to take in the right triggers, so you can create your own bliss. Keep these four factors in mind.

Aromatherapy

The sense of smell is powerful. In an instant, the aroma of fresh baked bread can transport us to Grandma’s house in childhood. Or a whiff of peppermint may flash memories of that regretful night in college when studying should’ve taken precedence over schnapps. Beyond its memory-inducing strength, smell can affect present mood.

“When we inhale a scent, this input travels through the nasal passage to the limbic part of the brain, where it’s analyzed. The limbic system then tells the body how to respond – to relax, wake up, be happy or sad,” says Anderson. We can use this process to our advantage through aromatherapy. For creating a tranquil mood, she recommends the following 100-percent pure therapeutic grade essential oils:

- Lavender (*lavandula angustifolia*): relaxing
- Citruses such as bergamot (*citrus bergamia*) or orange (*citrus sinensis*): uplifting
- Roman chamomile (*chamomelum nobile*): soothing, sedative
- Sandalwood (*santalum album*): sedative



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INBOX OVERLOAD

Tips for Managing Your E-mail

You're booked back-to-back with patients all day long, answering pages and triage calls in between. When you finally get a moment to sit, you're bombarded by an influx of new e-mail messages, all vying for the remaining morsels of your attention. What's a doc to do?

E-mail can be an efficient form of communication, but when your inbox hits overload, it's time to clean house. Here's how.

Virtual File Cabinet

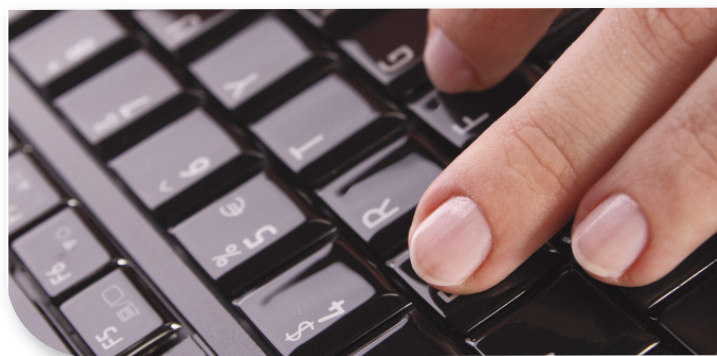
Is your inbox a warehouse for received mail? Take advantage of the folder system offered in Outlook and other e-mail service providers. Label each folder according to your needs, like a filing cabinet. If a message must be saved for later reference, file it and spare your inbox the mess.

Greet and Delete

Aim for touching an e-mail only once. Read, then reply, delete or file. Saving messages for later will only compound the problem when the next day's crop pours in.

Ban Spam

Be careful when giving out your e-mail address. Even seemingly harmless professional subscriptions or online services can become sources of spam, clogging your inbox. If you change your mind about a subscription or receive one unwillingly, click the "unsubscribe" option.



Keep It Short

Whether originating an e-mail or replying, try keeping it to ten sentences or less. Communicate your main point in the first sentence or two, and CC only those people who really need to hear the news. This will prevent cluttering somebody else's inbox.

Be Subject-Line Savvy

Label subject lines with descriptive words that make sense at a glance. For example, "Wellness Committee Summary – Jan. 12" is better than "follow up." For short notes, type the whole message in the subject line: "Brown bag lunch seminar at noon in the conference room."

Pick up the Phone

E-communication can't properly convey tone of voice and should not be used in emotional situations. For sensitive topics or problem-solving that spins endlessly through the reply cycle, it's best just to make a phone call or meet in person.

WHAT DO YOU WANT CHANGED ABOUT THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF MEDICINE?

I'd like to see an improvement in how people perceive their role as an active participant in their own treatment. I love it when my patients ask questions about their treatment, conditions, prognosis, etc. All too often people can go to a medical provider and are too passive in the process and never raise concerns or issues about what is being done to them. Ideally, medicine should be about what the provider and the patient are doing together.

I'd also like to see a change in the public perception of behavioral health treatment. Sadly, there is still a stigma about behavioral health that ultimately impedes people getting help. This puzzles me because almost every family has one or more members who are going to need mental health services at one or more times in their life.

Ethan Everett, PsyD
Psychology

I am concerned that the public places too much faith in technology. Basic things such as eating healthy foods, exercising and avoiding tobacco are important preventive health measures that too often seem to fall by the wayside as people look for a quick fix. I try to support families in setting small, attainable goals so they can build a foundation for successful change.

Barbara Strand, MD
Pediatrics



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FAMILY EXERCISE PROGRAMS

How to start a fitness routine for you and your kids

You know exercise is good for you – so why not make it a family affair? Modeling healthy habits can encourage your children to make fitness a part of their daily routine. Or, if you're the parent of active sports participants, you could take a lesson from your kids! Here are some suggestions for staying fit as a family.

Play Outside

For parents of young children, exercise can be as simple as kicking a ball around the back yard. Play hide and seek, swing golf clubs, or take the dog for a walk to the neighborhood park. "The key is to have fun while moving. It's about trading in the TV and stationary video games for fresh air and creativity," says Sandy Campbell, wellness specialist for Affinity Health System. And winter weather is no excuse for skimping. Kids love to build snow forts and sled downhill (which means walking back uphill – great exercise for all).

Train Together

Older kids, especially those playing organized sports, may already be involved in a training regimen outlined by their coach. Offer to be your child's training partner – take that daily run together or spot for each other in the weight room. Working out side by side can motivate both of you to succeed.

"Younger siblings can participate in a modified version of the training routine, as appropriate for their age. This may even give them a leg up when they're old enough to try out for the team," Campbell says.

Join the Club

Family memberships to the YMCA or other fitness clubs are great tools for exercise and quality time. Many clubs offer family activities or special events in addition to regular classes and open gyms. Campbell suggests scheduling time at the fitness center as routinely as you plan other items on your agenda.

"Parents are busy people – there's no doubt about it. Between work, school, music lessons, scouts and a list of other regular activities, finding time for exercise may be tricky, but it's vital to your family's health," Campbell says. Many fitness clubs open their doors at 5 a.m. and stay open late to accommodate a variety of schedules.

SENSING A GOOD MOOD

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Three options for use:

1. Apply one to two drops of essential oil to a cotton ball or tissue and inhale.
2. Add one to two drops of essential oil to 1 Tbsp massage oil and use the blend in aromatherapy massage.
3. Insert one to two drops of essential oil in a candle diffuser to scent an entire room.

Massage

Massage can be an effective tool in boosting mood, because it increases levels of serotonin and dopamine and decreases levels of cortisol in those on the receiving end. Massage also relieves muscle tension, and reduces pain and anxiety.

But did you know there are benefits to giving as well as receiving? According to Anderson, a healthy nervous system depends on the sense of touch. "Touch is the first sensory input in life while the baby is still in the womb," she says. "We need to be touched and to touch others for survival. Our growth and development depend on it." You can benefit not just by receiving a massage, but also by performing self-massage or by giving a massage to another person. Even petting the family dog can be therapeutic.

Music

Most of us have a favorite type of music, but some sounds are naturally better mood-boosters. "Rhythm affects the human heart-beat, causing either excitement and agitation or relaxation. Music that alternates between fast and slow rhythms and pauses can reduce sympathetic activity," Anderson says.

But one person's Beethoven is another's James Brown. "Different types of music can affect individuals in different ways, and all kinds of music improve mood," Anderson says. She suggests experimenting with different instruments and tempos to find what works best for lifting your mood. If it makes you happy, crank it up.

Mood Lighting

Sunlight and natural light are mood enhancers, while dim lights trigger the pineal gland of the brain to secrete melatonin, creating feelings of sleepiness. When you need to relax, Anderson recommends creating a tranquil environment with candles, or spending time in natural sunlight to combat crankiness. Likewise, the colors of our surroundings affect our spirits. Blue and purple are calming, while orange and red are energizing.

What NOT to Do

To maintain a steady mood, Anderson says, avoid over-stimulation of any of the five senses. Loud noises, fluorescent lights, long hours at the computer – all of these can send the body into sensory overload. "Be aware of how the environment around you affects your mood," she suggests. "If you live or work in hectic surroundings, take breaks throughout the day."

How to switch gears? Steal a few minutes of quick sensory aid. Keep a stash of essential oils at your desk, pop in your favorite CD at lunchtime, or exchange neck rubs with your spouse at the end of each day. The more aware you are of your environment's affect on your mood, the better equipped you'll be to keep a happy face.