A Relational Approach to Collaborative Engagement

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Frame for Conflict Engagement

Power
- A power-based mindset focuses on authority, competition & enforcement
- Typical exercises of power include war, strikes, & other escalation of conflict

Rights
- A rights-based mindset focuses on individual grievances and entitlements
- Typical ways to codify and vindicate rights include litigation, legislation, regulation, arbitration, and organizational policy-making

Interests
- An interest-based mindset focuses on the parties' desires, needs, and hopes
- Typical ways to address interests include negotiation, diplomacy, & mediation

Relationship
- A relationship-based mindset focuses on the relationship dynamics between participants -- respect, trust, fairness, inclusivity, transparency, empathy, & authentic
- Typical methods to address relationship dynamics include mediation, dialogue, coaching, & reconciliation

Browning and Solomon (2004) define relational intelligence as,

“The ability to learn, understand, and comprehend knowledge as it relates to interpersonal dynamics. It is the capacity to connect with other people with skill, warmth, authenticity and compassion.”

Strain of Relational Work

• Healthcare is fundamentally a relational endeavor.

• The strain of being in relationship to patients and others creates anxiety as nurses absorb the pain, fear, frustration, and other emotions felt by the patients and their families.

• Dysfunctional coping patterns emerge when there are not “holding spaces” for processing the anxiety. These patterns look like conflict.

• Kahn, Holding Fast, 2011
Do no harm...
Dysfunctional Relational Patterns

- Blaming and scapegoating
- Bullying/ abuse of power
- Triangling/ gossiping
- Disengagement
- Distancing behaviors
- Holding on to past events and retelling the story (years later)
- Other protective stances…
1. **Self-attunement**
   - Reflective practice
   - Noticing strengths, habits & triggers
   - Recognizing choice points and making a new choice

2. **Creating connection to others**
   - Emotional and social intelligence (PEARLA)

3. **Compassion Practices** (self and others)
Conflict Stories
Conflict Story Patterns

• Conclusions/ judgments about the facts, the other person are fixed.

• Accusations or attributions of fault or blame are wrapped around the facts

• All or nothing thinking

• Totalizing descriptions- this version of the story is the total picture- simplified presentation of a more complex situation.
You in Conflict

• What pattern do you notice about yourself when faced with conflict?

• What is one thing you could shift that would help you engage more fully, be more present in the heat of the moment?
Connect

• To Connect, use the following algorithm:

• PEARLA
  – P- presence
  – E- empathy
  – A- acknowledgement
  – R- reflect/ reframe
  – L- listen openly
  – A- ask questions
Some Improvisation Principles

1. Be present
2. Listen openly
3. Solve the problem together (Yes, and)
4. Make the other person look good!

Have fun...
Mind Full, or Mindful?
Recognizing Offers

“Seeing a world full of offers feels very different from seeing a world full of problems.”

“The opposite of listening is preparing to speak.”

William Isaacs, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*
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