

Learning to be a Person-Centered Care Leader

Preparation is Key to Maximizing the Meeting by Diane L. Dixon in *Caring for the Ages*, March 2006, Vol. 7, Number 3, page 41.

Being an administrator of a nursing home that is moving toward person-centered care requires participation in continuing education programs. Dr. Rosalie Kane shared her perspective on how to prepare for a symposium and get the most information from conferences in her interview for *Caring for the Ages* newspaper.

For continuing education programs to be most beneficial to nursing home administrators, the administrators need to take an honest look at how they and their homes are moving to a more person-centered model of care. Long-term care leaders need to avoid denial and recognize the challenges that are present in their homes. They need to identify them in their heads and feel them in their hearts. The shift to person-centered communities of care requires constant learning by attending education sessions, reading articles and books, networking with colleagues, and also “reflecting on what all of this means to you personally”. It is easier for many leaders to overcome the challenges associated with disease management, but to change the quality of life requires changing one’s philosophy of care. This requires reflection on one’s own abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, “Do I need to be more confident? Do I need to be more in tune with my self-esteem issues? Do I need to be more honest? Do I need to be more holistic and integrated as a person?”

Prior to attending a symposium, the administrator should ask the above questions and investigate what he/she needs to improve upon to manage the long-term care challenges effectively. The administrator should review or develop objectives to accomplish at the symposium. The list of participants should be reviewed in order to determine which colleagues one should interact with to enhance development as a leader and clinician. The conference brochure is a great aid to identify which sessions to attend to fulfill objectives. The brochure is also helpful in setting up priorities.

Also, prior to leaving, the administrator should prepare his/her residents, clients, staff, family and anyone else who relies on him/her for his/her absence. This includes establishing guidelines for when it is necessary to contact the administrator while he/she is gone. Too many interruptions during a conference decrease the engagement of the participant.

Sometimes priorities have to be reorganized upon arriving at the conference. However, sticking to one’s intentions is more productive than attending session after session without being able to effectively process new information. Dr. Kane recommends keeping an activity attendance record and journaling thoughts and questions in order to gain insight and deepen self-awareness. She also recommends leaving some time to relax and have fun. Following the conference, Dr. Kane suggests reviewing one’s symposium participation plan and leadership development objectives. This is also an appropriate time to develop a list of follow-up actions. This may include choosing books to read, peers to contact, and activities that will enhance the administrator’s growth as a leader.

With proper preparation, engagement, and commitment the experience of learning can be more meaningful and productive.

There are many good resources easily available at www.ksu.edu/peak and www.agingkansas.org for the advancement of nursing home administrators' knowledge in many areas critical for residents' and staff quality of life.

Implications: Getting the most from continuing education should be the goal of all staff in a person-centered care environment. These tips should be shared with anyone attending a continuing education conference. Perhaps someone on staff could develop a checklist or a log for bringing helpful information back to the long-term care community.