

Turning the microscope the other way: How healthy is the health system?

Introducing the 'Gathering of Kindness' — transforming healthcare cultures



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Introduction

The 'Gathering of Kindness' is a social change platform designed to transform healthcare cultures. Using the arts, events, media, debate, music, theatre and literature to facilitate difficult conversations, we inspire action around building a kind and safe health system.

A project of the Hush Foundation www.hushfoundation.org.au

The Gathering of Kindness

In 2017 the movement included coordinated events across six days at 40 healthcare sites with participants from around Australia and across the globe. Events included 10 performances of the Hush play *What Matters*, the launch of books *Beyond the Stethoscope: Doctors' stories of reclaiming hope, heart & healing* by Lucy Mayes, the *Gathering of Kindness Anthology*, edited by Mish Phillips; a large public patient experience forum, conversations, workshops, debates, and media. Gathering of Kindness 2017 touched more than 4,500 healthcare staff, leaders, patients, and policy-makers. In 2018 the Gathering of Kindness involves Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Ireland and the USA.

Why kindness?

Kindness is not a 'warm and fuzzy' add on. Kindness is a key indicator and influencer of a healthy workplace culture and better patient outcomes.



Kindness does four vital things:

Kindness makes the best use of your team — improving communication, teamwork and encouraging supportive work cultures which are key factors affecting quality and safety.

Kindness facilitates safety — by fostering a culture where people aren't afraid to speak up.

Kindness creates unexpected wonderful moments of joy — it restores purpose, hope and meaning to the work of clinicians.

Kindness promotes healing — reduces pain and stress, enhances surgical outcomes and quality of life.

Understanding how cultural change happens

Positive and strengths-focussed language such as kindness = a successful social and organisational change methodology to tackle complex problems.

Healthy culture = safety and quality

- Leading research around the world is revealing healthcare culture as a key component in quality and safety.
- Evidence clearly shows where kind and empathic communication are prevalent, clinical teams are more effective, staff morale is higher, patient complaints are fewer and quality and safety improves.

Key factors in achieving meaningful improvement in healthcare system safety



TRANSPARENCY



CARE INTEGRATION



PATIENT/CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT



RESTORATION OF JOY AND MEANING IN WORK



MEDICAL EDUCATION REFORM

Lucian Leape Institute, established by the US National Patient Safety Foundation

Facilitating difficult conversations

The Gathering of Kindness addresses concerning international trends amongst healthcare professionals:

- Poor communication
 - Bullying
 - Emotional distress
 - Disengagement
 - Burnout
 - Suicide
- These issues lead to worse patient outcomes

Problematic responses

- More policies and procedures
 - Zero tolerance
 - 'Weeding out the bad apples'
- These responses are negative, reactive, ineffective and counter productive.

“ Having attended many conferences about bullying, workplace relations and 'healthy workplaces', I was inspired to see one which addressed the issues head on, with moral courage, practical wisdom and operational nous. At the Gathering of Kindness was a great mix of CEOs, clinicians, academics, patients, creatives and neuroscientists. The audience members were humming in every break, talking about how they would apply the learnings when they got back to their health service. ”

Rose Bryant-Smith, Director – Worklogic, workplace relations lawyer and bullying expert



“ How do we restore hope to clinicians working in systems they describe as 'factory style, conveyor belt medicine,' where training can be 'brutal and dehumanising'; and where the system produces its fair share of 'dysfunctional narcissists?' You do it through reminding practitioners at all levels of their shared humanity. You do it through creating the space for difficult conversations, through shared story, and through kindness. ”

— Lucy Mayes, Author, *Beyond the stethoscope: Doctors' stories of reclaiming hope, heart & healing in medicine*, Committee Member, Gathering of Kindness.

We need to change the conversation and talk instead about a kind health system, and how we may get there.

For more information and inspiration visit:

www.gatheringofkindness.org and www.hush.org.au

The book *Beyond the stethoscope: Doctors' stories of reclaiming hope, heart & healing in medicine* is available at www.lucymayes.com.au and Book Depository/Kindle/Amazon.