Focus the Flame:  
Attention on Excellence

By

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Objectives

- To identify the importance of developing our “attention” muscle
- To define different strategies to build F.I.R.E.
- To imagine the possibilities for fulfilling the mission and vision
Mission

• Patients and their families rely on nurses at the most vulnerable times of their lives.
• Acute and critical care nurses rely on AACN for expert knowledge and the influence to fulfill their promise to patients and their families.
• AACN drives excellence because nothing less is acceptable.
Excellence

Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny.

Excellence is not a Skill. It's an Attitude.
Excellence

- Excellence in the clinical setting → achieving optimal patient and family outcomes!
- Not static
- Not just reactive → intentional
- Requires
  - continuous improvement
  - constant effort
Focus

“the sudden taking possession of the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one of what seems several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought”.

William James
Philosopher, Psychologist, Physician
ALWAYS REMEMBER:
YOUR FOCUS DETERMINES YOUR REALITY

Qui-Gon Jinn,
StarWars: Episode 1, The phantom force
Focus

Excellence

Outer or systems
Other
Inner or self

Excellence
The Brain

- Corpus callosum: axon fibers connecting two cerebral hemispheres
- Thalamus: relays messages between lower brain centers and cerebral cortex
- Hypothalamus: controls maintenance functions such as eating; helps govern endocrine system; linked to emotion and reward
- Pituitary: master endocrine gland
- Reticular formation: helps control arousal
- Medulla: controls heartbeat and breathing
- Spinal cord: pathway for neural fibers traveling to and from brain; controls simple reflexes
- Cerebellum: coordinates voluntary movement and balance

My interpretation

Logical

Emotional
Time Out
Focus on self

• Self-awareness
  – **Selective**: focus on one target
  – **Open**: absorbing everything without and within
Top vs Bottom

Executive function or cognitive control
→ directs focus on 1 thing
Cognitive control of impulse
→ higher rates of success

Amygdala Hijack

By focusing on a specific thing we can suppress the bottom up activity and reign in the emotion
Focus on self

[Image of children participating in the Marshmallow Test]
Focus on Other

• Cognitive empathy
  – Understand others way of seeing and thinking

• Emotional empathy
  – Join in those feelings

• Empathetic concern
  – Leads us to caring and to action
Focus on Other

Self awareness $\leftrightarrow$ Empathy

- Gain information about ourselves and others in same neural networks
- Read people by tuning into ourselves
Compassion builds on empathy
Distractions → Erode empathy and compassion
TPJ response

Walls off emotion and other distractions from the task at hand
Focus on outer

- No specific brain circuitry
- Takes an effort to learn systems
- Systems awareness
  - Detect and map patterns and order within chaos
- Use rules to make sense
Balancing foci leads to excellence
Why does it matter?

We don’t do right things to create excellence, we embody excellence to do right things.
How do we understand clinical excellence?

• Nurse patient interaction
• More than skills → Attitude
• Authentic commitment
• Requires presence
Ways of knowing: Carper +1

- Empirical
- Aesthetic
- Personal
- Ethical
- Intuitive
Vision of focus on excellence

License plate from Margaret Eklund’s car
• Fearlessness
• Inquiry
• Resilience
• Engagement
Fearlessness

Fear is the cheapest room in the house. I would like to see you living in better conditions.

~ Hafiz
Fearlessness

• Recognize the fear and name it
  – Quiets the fight or flight response
  – Executive control tames bottom up fear

• Explore the fear
  – More direct engagement → the less fearful
  – Transform energy spent on fear to fuel

• Allow yourself to be vulnerable

• Start small → Celebrate success → Build on it → Increase your fearless capacity
Inquiry
Inquiry

...an ambitious yet actionable question that can begin to shift the way we perceive or think about something—and that might serve as a catalyst to bring about change”.

~Warren Berger, 2014, A More Beautiful Question

Asking Big Beautiful Questions
challenging
provocative
game changing
It is not the answer that enlightens, it is the question.

~Eugène Ionesco
Resiliency

You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them

~ Maya Angelou

• Ability to adapt and overcome and then move forward
• Grows from anticipating disruptions
Resiliency

“the resilient caregiver is one who can withstand the routine joys and sorrow within the chaos of the clinical setting and stay balanced, calm and able to make good choices for self and others”

~ Dorrie Fontaine
Resiliency
Characteristics of resiliency

• Able to accept the reality necessary for survival

• Able to make meaning out of the circumstance

• Able to improvise
Learning and developing resilience

• **F**: FAT thinking—flexible, accurate, thorough
  – Helps you see other perspectives → Try new strategies
  – More solution focused

• **O**: Optimism
  – Know what’s in your control
  – How you stay grounded during stress

• **C**: Connections
  – Who you can lean on and building connections

• **U**: Understand the big picture
  – Understand what gives meaning an purpose

• **S**: Self
  – Build self awareness, self-regulation and self efficacy

Paula Davis-Laack
http://pauladavislaack.com/resilience
• Become part of an uncertain discovery process to figure out how things work in different settings
• Shifting from my task → our task
• Doing something meaningful
• Contribute to the world around you
• Committed to the success of what you are doing
Optimal Patient Outcomes

Clinical Excellence

Healthy Work Environment

- Skilled Communication
- Authentic Leadership
- Meaningful Recognition
- Appropriate Staffing
- Effective Decision Making
- True Collaboration

Ulrich, et al
Critical Care Nurse. 34:64

American Association of Critical Care Nurses
Healthy Work Environment Standards

## Strategies for engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of engagement</th>
<th>Do you...............</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in meaningful work</td>
<td>Have confidence in the meaning of your work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connect through demonstrations of valuing colleagues</td>
<td>Develop relationships with coworkers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity in expectations</td>
<td>Clearly understand your role, not just your job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convey feedback</td>
<td>Accept and use feedback to grow and develop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congratulate on performance</td>
<td>Only hear the negative over the positive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consult on workflow</td>
<td>Complain to others but not share with your supervisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborate to achieve goals</td>
<td>Participate in setting, attaining, evaluating goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Care about upholding ethics</td>
<td>Work from a basis of integrity</td>
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Making sense of the chaos

chaos is the new standard.
Making sense of the chaos

• View the world as a dynamic process
• Recognize the interconnectedness of everything
• Develop our outer focus and look for patterns → Identify what MAY happen
• Understand the impact of small changes
• Pause and focus on possibilities
• Explore and encourage multiple perspectives
Making sense of the chaos

- Embrace role of chaos in creating new order
- Look for patterns that emerge by shifting our vision from parts to the whole

Meg Wheatley
Making sense of the chaos

- What called you here?

- What were you dreaming you might accomplish?

- Listen to ourselves and our colleagues → “inner belief that you can leave the world a little different in a small way” → feel ENERGY
Conclusion

A health to the [wo]man on trail this night; may the grub hold out; may the dogs keep their legs; may the matches never miss fire

Paraphrased ~ Malemute Kid in Jack London’s “Man on the trail”
resources

- Resilience model accessed from [http://pauladavislaack.com/resilience/more-info/](http://pauladavislaack.com/resilience/more-info/)