

Dimensions in Senior Living

Crying over spilled milk...

By Amy Wilcox-Burns



Recently my husband stopped at McDonald's (my kids' favorite place to eat) to pick dinner up for our family. He brought the meal home and we passed the food out of the bags to each one of us. I opened my kids' sauce for their chicken nuggets and got their apples open, and then went to open their chocolate milk. One of the chocolate milk containers was open and half gone. Obviously this wasn't acceptable and my son was upset as soon as I told him he couldn't drink his chocolate milk.

In an effort to calm my son down, my husband grabbed the chocolate milk and the receipt and went back to McDonald's. Now my husband wasn't sure what type of reaction he was going to get from the staff at McDonald's when he returned. He had gone through the drive-through 20 minutes earlier. Would they believe him? How would they respond?

When he got to McDonald's, he went in with the milk and receipt and explained it to the cashier, who immediately apologized and said he would get my husband new milk. The cashier then got the manager who also apologized and asked what he could get my husband to make up for his inconvenience. Would he like dessert for his family or another sandwich? My husband said that wasn't necessary, but in the bag with his new chocolate milk were two apple pies.

My husband left McDonald's almost feeling like the entire incident had never occurred. His concern had been addressed in a positive manner and he felt that he was valued as a customer by McDonald's. And best of all, my son got his milk and was happy.

So what does this have to do with Senior Living? Well, I think we can take a lesson from McDonald's. How many times do our residents make a request of us or our staff when something hasn't gone as expected? How do we react? Do we react like the McDonald's cashier and manager? Or do we tell people we will get back to them, pass the buck off on someone else and say it isn't our fault or, worst of all, fail to address the issue? In reading our recent satisfaction sur-

“Senior living communities you can depend on.”

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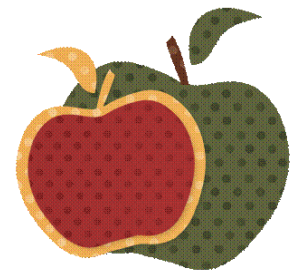
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THE “HOW TO BE LIKEABLE” SERIES. TEN THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY.

By GL Hoffman

Number 4. Assume Goodwill

First, an assume-goodwill story. Years ago, I managed distribution centers for my company. There were twelve of these centers spread across the US, and my job, circa 1980, was to make sure they served our distributors with timely and positive service. Service had gotten so bad that it was all the distributors/dealers would talk/yell about, not how much more they could sell, but how terrible our service was and, for those of you familiar with third party sales channels when your distributors are upset or angry it gets ugly fast.

So, I got the job of fixing them. I had zero warehouse, inventory or operational-type experience. Zilch. I was told the DC managers were so bad, so non-customer service oriented, that I should just start over. I had free rein to do so. Instead, I called a meeting for all the DC managers at the home office. Most had never been to the home office before. They had not drunk the kool-aid yet. They arrived thinking that the new guy (me) was about to fire them all. They were scared, defensive and angry, too.

Even though they were uniformly described as malcontents and sloppy representatives of the company that chances were pretty good, I thought, that they had simply been ignored. In short, I believed they wanted to do better but someone had to show them how.

Once they understood that I was not going to fire them, that I assumed they wanted to fix this common, not-just-them problem, we all buckled down and fixed it within a few months. They even proudly wore the uniforms I strongly suggested they wear while working at the DC office. Of course it helped that everyone in top management stopped by our meetings IN UNIFORM.

My takeaway lesson was we should always assume goodwill in other people instead of jumping on some out-of-control, negative, ain't-they-awful bandwagon. This works in almost all situations. If you are thinking negative thoughts about someone's actions, let your first thought instead be to assume goodwill on their part.

Number 5. We All Like Compliments.

This is a dicey one, because it is very easy to overdo handing out compliments. I'm just saying that people who feel comfortable complimenting others and, who give them sincerely, are more likeable. Honestly, I have noticed that paying even untrue compliments has a positive impact.

Many people are starved for compliments and many spend entire lives without hearing something positive or complimentary. Please look for a way to compliment a co-worker or a customer. It is really quite easy. Obviously, you must do this carefully. Just because you call a pig a horse, doesn't make him one. But there are plenty of ways to compliment on something he just said, compliment on a recent completed project without saying how you would have improved it or even on his thinking process.

I believe people like being valued and a well placed compliment shows them that you value them. Other compliment-rich areas include: anything about their kids, their thoughtfulness, their thinking process, their departments, teams, company, their skills, even their voice.

Number 6. Control Your Insecurities.

I know someone who is constantly saying things like, “well, it's not what you are used to” or “I know you would never buy this, but it is ok for me,” stuff like that.

Maybe he means well, and perhaps is trying to show a bit of humility, but to me, it comes across as being incredibly insecure. Admittedly, we all have a bit of insecurity, it is only normal and natural. But communicating your own insecurity often is a turn off to a lot of people. Therefore, to make yourself more likeable, just watch how you communicate yours.

We all do this, I understand. And, thankfully, we have people who are close to us who understand these moody comments and can help assuage our insecurities. But coworkers might be different. There is a huge difference between admitting a lack of ability or skill as actually a positive, likeable trait as in, “I don't understand the issue or what I must do to solve this problem,” versus “I guess I am too dumb to understand this issue here.” I hope you can hear the difference.



Continued next month



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In Kansas, we started the week at **Tara Gardens** with members of The City Slickers 4-H club visiting us on Sunday. They brought all kinds of projects that they had taken to the fair. They also brought some of their animals. On Monday of National Assisted Living Week, we visited local museums. Tuesday, Tara residents dressed up in their finest cowboy attire for Cowboy Day. We had a full afternoon of fun and games. **Arrowood Lane** resident, Estelle Barker, celebrated a very special birthday on Wednesday, her 100th! That afternoon, we let 100 balloons go in honor of Estelle and then finished the party with delicious birthday cake! In memory of September 11, 2001, we delivered cookies to our local firemen and policemen to honor all that they do for us. Later that afternoon, we went back to Arrowood for Hillbilly Olympics! We ended the week with a bang! We started the day by participating in the Elsmore parade and then back at Tara we were entertained with a magic show and a local family band!



At **Candlelight Lodge**, we celebrated National Assisted Living Week with a different theme each day. Monday was “Love of Music and Dance” day. A senior music group performed their melodic talents for our residents and a square dance demonstration was held in the evening. Tuesday we took a trip to the Bass Pro Shop to show our appreciation for “The Great Outdoors.” Wednesday was a day focused on “Relaxation.” Residents were pampered as they were treated to aromatherapy, relaxing mood music, hand massages and manicures. “Love of Country and Community” was the theme for Thursday. Our local Fire Marshall came and spoke to residents about the emergency response system and fire prevention practices in Boone County. Afterwards, residents also created thank you cards and wrote letters of appreciation to be sent to our Armed Forces overseas. Additionally, the LODGE staff, residents and families participated in collecting donations of coats, hats, gloves and blankets for our “Warm Up Columbia” community drive. Friday was all for the “Love of Fun.” Residents went to the Senior Center for a fun program. In the afternoon, they played card games, roulette and other casino games for prizes. We concluded the week with “Love of Youth,” on Saturday when we heard from a youth singing group that performed for the residents.



Employee

Recognition Tip!

Developing mutual respect among employees is critical to creating a positive work culture. Peer recognition, in all its forms can help you do this. A simple way to start: when an employee tells you about something positive a coworker did, ask them to tell the person as well.

To further encourage peer recognition consider providing the following:

1. “You made my day” cards to employees so that they can informally acknowledge each other. Also provide a simple form that they can fill out, along with the thank you card, to enter the recipient in a quarterly drawing for prizes.
2. Structured time during meetings to acknowledge those that have helped them.
3. Encouragement to develop their own recognition programs.

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A Look Ahead...

December

Identity Theft Prevention and
Awareness Month

Dates to Remember...

- Dec. 4: Extraordinary Work Team
Recognition Day
- Dec. 9: Christmas Card Day
- Dec. 14-20: Tell Someone "He's
Doing a Good Job" Week
- Dec. 15: National Firefighters' Day
- Dec. 21: Winter Begins
- Dec. 22-29: Hanukkah
- Dec. 24: Christmas Eve
- Dec. 25: Christmas Day
- Dec. 26 - Jan. 1: Kwanzaa
- Dec. 28: Card Playing Day,
National Quilters' Day
- Dec. 31: New Year's Eve



Brain Buster of The Month

What turns everything around, but does
not move?

Answer from last month:

None. They all fly away after
hearing the shots.

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veys, unfortunately we find that this does happen in our buildings.

Many times the requests our residents make of us are things we can address and satisfy if we address them head on and, if necessary, think outside the box. We can say yes more often than no if we just focus on the resident rather than the extra work it may cause us.

For example, if a resident sees what's on the menu for the evening and they can't eat the main entrée and aren't fond of the alternate, the resident then requests a peanut butter sandwich. The sandwich isn't on the menu and often times we respond with "no, these are the choices." Do we have the items to make the sandwich? Of course we do; and it costs us very little to make the sandwich. So why not make the sandwich? Doesn't the resident going away happy from the meal out-weigh the extra minute it took to make the sandwich? Of course it does, because that resident walks away feeling appreciated and valued just like my husband did when he left McDonald's. And our residents are valued and deserve to feel that way.

So, I ask that in the coming months, when things are crazy for the holidays and we have a lot of extra visitors in our buildings, that you take the time to figure out how to say yes and encourage you to always address resident concerns in a timely manner. It will boost the spirit in your building, make your residents and families feel satisfied, and it will make you feel good. You are a valued part of your facility and your residents and families will make you feel that way when you show them you value them.



**The spooks
came out for
Halloween!**



Newsletter Ideas???

Do you have any great activities or news that you would like to share with everyone in the Dimensions family? Please e-mail Lisa at lisa@dimsrlvg.com to share your ideas!!