Special Feature

Cultivating Your Enthusiasm

Sara J. White, MS, FASHP*

Are there days you aren't eager to get to work? Do you feel like you have lost your enthusiasm for pharmacy? At work, do you find yourself thinking more about what you do in your personal life? Are you thinking about changing jobs or just waiting for your retirement?

WHY ENTHUSIASM IS IMPORTANT

Enthusiasm implies the ability to be interested in and excited about work and life, even when the going is tough. It also means being optimistic, which is expecting the best and working to make good things happen rather than expecting bad things to happen. Think of enthusiasm as the spark that keeps you motivated and brings to fruition even the biggest dreams and the most naïve expectations throughout your career. Enthusiasm is contagious; so when you do something, do it with all your might. Enthusiasm increases your motivation to be more passionate, more positive, and thus cheerful. Think of staying motivated as the ability to move from one failure to the next without the loss of enthusiasm. Enthusiastic people tend to be happier than bored and grouchy people. To cultivate and maintain your enthusiasm, you need to not "retire on the job," to manage your attitude, and to minimize enthusiasm drains.

DON'T RETIRE ON THE JOB

Retiring on the job has nothing to do with age. If you are just going through the motions at work, you have already retired on the job. Likewise, if most of your thoughts during the workday are about what you did last weekend or what you will do when you go home, you have retired on the job. Retiring on the job means you have lost your passion or enthusiasm for pharmacy. Changing jobs isn't always an answer; there is no perfect job, just different circumstances. Once the newness wears off, you may be back to just going through the motions. Likewise, having a title such as clinical coordinator or director does not guarantee you will find your work continually exciting and challenging. Money

and material things may boost your short-term enthusiasm but will not ensure it for the long run.

The key to cultivating your enthusiasm is to commit yourself to a cause that transcends your self-interest and that you are passionate about. This cause compels you to attack your life and career with a spirit of commitment and adventure. Rather than thinking about your paycheck, your focus is on your cause. As you think about your passionate cause, be aware that whatever your position description happens to be, see it as the floor and not the ceiling of what you are willing and able to do. In other words, see your job as the platform upon which you add your special strengths and talents.

One place to find a cause is the changing health care environment. Rather than resisting it, ask where the opportunities are, such as roles for pharmacists in accountable health care organizations and medical homes. Consider how to improve the current computerized physician order entry and barcode administration systems. Are there better ways to ensure that the desired drug therapy outcomes are achieved for each patient, such as improving our practice model? What about a truly fail-safe medication use system? How can we use new technology, such as the tablet computers (iPad), smart phones, or unit-based automation? In an ideal world, what should pharmacists be doing? What are the unmet medication needs of patients? Can these needs be developed into unique niches for pharmacy? Just being curious and having a quest for knowledge will direct your thinking beyond your day-to-day routine.

Additionally, think about what you spend your personal time doing. Ask yourself whether you already have skills that could benefit your organization. For example, if most of your personal time is spent parenting, what about volunteering at work to mentor students, residents, or young practitioners? If your children are grown, seek out opportunities to teach with schools of pharmacy or technician training programs. If you are active in leadership roles in your church or community groups, volunteer to represent pharmacy on committees or to be the lead for a pharmacy project.

*(Ret.) Director of Pharmacy, Stanford Hospital and Clinics, and Pharmacy Leadership Coach. Address correspondence to Ms. White at 550 Ortega Ave, B123, Mountain View, CA 94040; e-mail: RxSJW@yahoo.com

Don't limit your thinking by discounting anything based on potential obstacles, because there are always ways to overcome them. You just have to be creative and innovative. If the first pharmacists who joined physicians on rounds or implemented intravenous admixture programs had let the conventional wisdom that these were not pharmacists' roles stop them from exploring how to best utilize our drug knowledge, where would these services and patient care be today?

Another way to identify your passion is to think about the things that frustrate you or seem like a waste of time. Use these frustrations as an impetus to develop and propose possible solutions. Be willing to do the actual work to implement your ideas.

Also giving back, such as precepting, speaking, and publishing, can cultivate your enthusiasm. It is exciting to help others, and it can be a boost to see your name in print. Working with young people can generate a lot of enthusiasm for you and them.

Another way to think about something that transcends your self-interests is to think about your professional legacy. A legacy is how the people you have worked with will remember you when you are no longer present. No matter your age, you are creating your legacy every day with all your interests and actions. Based on your present approach, what will your coworkers remember? A passionate person who is fun to work with or a bored and constant complainer? Think about what you would like your impact or contribution to be and make sure you work toward it. How are you going to make a difference?

Once you have identified your passion, nurture it. Get up earlier each morning and invest time in learning something educational, motivational, or spiritual, rewrite your goals every day from memory so they truly become yours, plan your day in advance, make a list and establish priorities, discipline yourself to concentrate on your top priority, use your commute time to listen to educational material as a mobile classroom. At the end of the day, ask yourself 2 questions: What did I do right, and what would I do differently?

The key to maintaining passion and enthusiasm throughout your career is to immediately identify a new passion as you approach achieving your goal. This way, your focus will remain on the future and you will not dwell on the past. In addition to not retiring on your job, you need to manage your attitude to cultivate your enthusiasm.

MANAGING YOUR ATTITUDE

Your attitude is critical, because it affects how people perceive and interact with you. It is the outward

manifestation of your enthusiasm. Your coworkers are very conscious of your attitude, even if you aren't. Think about the people you enjoy spending time with. Are they generally positive, optimistic, and thus enthusiastic? Their upbeat attitude is infectious. People are attracted to them and thus they are successful. Your attitude and enthusiasm also assist you in being resilient in difficult or challenging times.

What is your typical attitude or mood? Is it positive or negative? Remember, you choose your attitude and your response to life's challenges, so take responsibility for them. Each day, focus on what is going right and the possibilities available to you. Make today a masterpiece by focusing on the present and the future and not dwelling on the past. Look for the silver lining in every situation, and never close the door on opportunities that come your way. Your attitude doesn't depend on your circumstances, but rather your response to them. Your attitude creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, so managing it is critical for your enthusiasm and success. You tend to get what you expect out of life, both personal and professional.

To manage your attitude, be aware of your actions. Choose to be nice, kind, and helpful to others. Praise others and be proud of your work and accomplishments. Treat everyone you interact with, no matter what their position, as you would like to be treated. Smiling displays "positive" without saying a word and projects your warmth and internal feelings. Smiling also shows you are happy, open, and confident, so it sets the tone for every encounter.

Minimize worrying and choose to be happy. Seeing the good in things instead of the bad is a choice worth making. Try and see the opportunities available. When you encounter obstacles, see them as challenges instead of a problem, so your mind gets in the habit of finding possible solutions. Never let the negative things affect you for more than 5 minutes, and try to never have a "bad day." Have something nice or humorous to say at work to maintain your positive attitude, even when things aren't going well.

The people you spend time with are a major influence on your attitude. Know when to change or expand this group of people by thinking about their characteristics. Are they confident and optimistic or an emotional quicksand? Seek out people who have the qualities you admire and would like to emulate. Avoid toxic negativity such as criticizing, complaining, finger pointing, whining, and gossiping. Turn every complaint into a call for action, then do it or drop it, but don't dwell on it. Create a support group environment for yourself that has the following characteristics.

Conversations should be confidential, so what is said does not become grist for the rumor mill. Gossip should be treated as shameful. Interactions should be optimistic, expecting the best outcome from every action.

Challenges to your positive attitude are everywhere. The key is to be positive when it really counts. It's much more difficult, but far more important, to maintain your enthusiasm when you run into those inevitable obstacles and setbacks. Expect to face hurdles and obstacles as a normal part of life instead of fearing them.

How can you make sure you can stay positive? Prepare yourself by reading books and listening to audiotapes that inspire you, cultivate relationships with positive people, and avoid the company of negative people. Make the commitment to yourself that when you run into those speed bumps, you will remain passionate, motivated, and optimistic. Accept the reality of the situation and don't waste time whining about or blaming someone else. Focus on the options that are available. Think of life as 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it.

Now that you know how to cultivate your passion and manage your attitude, let's look at ways to minimize enthusiasm drains.

MINIMIZE ENTHUSIASM DRAINS

Think about your coworkers and identify who adds to your energy and who drains it. What about you? Are you an energy faucet or an energy drain? Energy faucets have a smile and kind words for everyone and exhibit a positive, enthusiastic attitude. Energy drains deplete the energy from the atmosphere with a frown, a critical, cynical, or pessimistic comment, and a negative attitude. Think of drains as the thieves that steal from people their most precious resources: their energy and enthusiasm.

Energy and enthusiasm are life. The feeling of fatigue that can hold us back from pursuing our passion is often more emotional than it is physical. If you are frazzled, frustrated, and exhausted, force yourself to do something physical to increase your energy. To ignite your enthusiasm, concentrate on your

passion. Enthusiasm, like personal energy, is the ultimate renewable resource; the more you use it, the more you will have.

Another way to recharge your enthusiasm faucet is to periodically evaluate the source of your satisfaction and your challenges and focus your activities in these areas. For example, if your satisfaction comes from improving pharmacy services and helping patients, then look for ways to continue to innovate. If your challenge comes from learning new things, then seek out teaching, mentoring, or coaching opportunities at work. When was the last time you did something new? Push yourself out of your comfort zone. Vary your daily routine. The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth.

An additional approach to bolstering your energy and minimizing the drain on your enthusiasm is to master the fine art of strategic laziness. We all need quiet time – time alone for reflection and introspection. Sometimes the most productive thing you can do is to stop working on the urgent demands that always seem to be at hand and take some time to think about the important matters that can profoundly change the direction of your life. By relaxing and doing something radically different, you will allow your unconscious mind to present unique opportunities that you might not have thought of otherwise.

When you are passionate and enthusiastic about what you do, the journey is an adventure. When you love what you do, you will have the enthusiasm throughout your career to overcome any obstacle and create new sources of enjoyment.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Covey SR, Colosimo J. *Great Work, Great Career. How to Create Your Ultimate Job and Make an Extraordinary Contribution*. New York: Franklin Covey; 2010.

Gitomer J. *Little Gold Book of Yes Attitude. How to Find, Build, and Keep a Yes Attitude for a Lifetime of Success*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Education; 2007.

Tracy B. *No Excuses! The Power of Self-Discipline*. New York: Vanguard Press; 2011. ■