Aligning Heart Intelligence for Strategic Impact

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Background: Memorial Hospital & Health System is a midwestern, level 2 trauma center and health system with more than 4000 employees. We are a community-owned, not-for-profit hospital/health system with a more than 100-year history of serving with innovative excellence. Memorial began its partnership with HeartMath in 2002 as part of our Wellness initiative, reconnecting in 2008 to invigorate our “Great Place to Work” journey.

Introduction: We highlighted the fertile ground we prepared over 20 years to ensure a healthy, well-integrated reception for the concept/practice of coherence. The evolution of the organization included a strategic focus on leadership development and intentional people-related tactics.

Method: We believe that “stand alone” programs have strength by themselves but can be even stronger and more sustainable when linked or integrated with other like concepts or ideas. We summarized our 20-year journey of striving to become the “best place to work.” In 1992, we partnered with Stephen Covey and introduced *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* to all of our senior and mid-level leaders. We emphasized emotional and spiritual intelligence, building on the concept of the whole-person paradigm.

We built the Memorial brand around the flame of individual passion ignited by the four intelligences: spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical. We enlisted the executive leaders as our “fire starters,” charging them with being the “Keepers of the Flame.” Building on the primary principle of effectiveness—Be Proactive—we added the concept of coherence as the basis for decision-making and action in the organization.

Adding Covey’s notion of *Holistic Renewal*, we held leaders accountable for self-renewal and work regeneration. In 2000, we introduced the Hartman Value Profile. This tool assesses one’s value system, measuring critical-thinking skills, morale, and amount of stress. It also measures self-care and self-criticism. We believe you can’t improve what you can’t measure. We now had a tool that could measure progress in managing personal and work-related stress. This opened the door in 2002 to a formal partnership with HeartMath as the experts on “The Power to Change Performance.” We offered workshops on a twice-monthly basis; participants volunteered to attend. Pleased with the number of registrants, we realized we were only touching the tip of the iceberg. Soon after, HeartMath created the POQA, which gave us another measure of the workshops’ impact. We finally had the combination of assessment tools to guarantee progress and scientific rigor for our journey.

Results: Two events ignited our Coherence Journey: (1) implementation of the Baron EQ-I assessment for leaders (2005); among the strong predictors of success are stress management and general mood and (2) HeartMath introduced Transforming Stress (2008) to our executive leadership team. As our champions, these team members enlisted their teams in learning the skills.

Conclusion: We reached more than 900 individuals and continue to offer a variety of learning formats. We adapt to the pressures our healthcare associates experience in these changing times. Coherence is the heart of our healing environment.

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