



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Leading with Knowledge – Serving with Heart: Awareness in the Development of a Servant Leader

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Welcome to the new year! So many possibilities and so many opportunities spread before us. This is a time of reflection for most people, and servant leaders are no exception. It is a time to let go of things that do not add value to our lives, our work, as well as our organizations. In this letting go, what new practice can we work on to fill the space? In this new year, I challenge each of us to work on the servant leadership concept of awareness.

Awareness in Servant Leadership

Awareness is one of the central characteristics of servant leadership. “General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader. Awareness aids one in understanding issues involving ethics and values, and it enables one to approach situations from a more integrated, holistic position.”¹

Awareness has potentially fallen by the wayside in a society that bombards us with electronic messages 24/7. Are we so caught up in the barrage of postings, insta-moments, best life pictures, and “winning” that we forget to see what is actually before us and in our present reality? As leaders, we need to hone our ability to be aware, so we can understand others, see where they are within our organization and create that space in real time for them.

Awareness for Our Future

When we are aware of where we are now, we can create a future others can start to visualize with us. Awareness enables us to see things as interconnected, so instead of practicing in silos, we can see the global potential of our component and our overriding organization.

Several years ago, I requested to take over the management of the Phase II recovery area of my hospital. I was very aware that Phase I and Phase II, under two different managers, was not working as cohesively as I envisioned it could. There were certainly growing pains, anger, frustration, and even some employees leaving the unit. However, I wanted these nurses to identify themselves as perianesthesia nurses that were experts in discharging patients, not just “discharge nurses.” I had listened and became aware over time they were so much more. This group of nurses rose to the challenge and began to identify areas of improvement, process changes and research opportunities. One nurse came to me and stated, “You had a vision of where we needed to go. We didn’t see it at first, but now we can see it, too.” It started with awareness.

Self-Awareness – Another Component of Awareness

Just as important on this journey to awareness is the concept of self-awareness and how we impact the world around us. In the article, “Great Leadership Starts with Self-Awareness,” author Chinwe Esimai states, “Self-awareness has been cited as the most important capability for leaders to develop. Successful leaders know where their natural inclinations lie and use this knowledge to boost those inclinations or compensate for them.”²

In other words, by understanding or being aware of your own strengths and weaknesses as a leader, you can utilize these strengths to the benefit of others and yet see in which areas you are lacking, and seek out those who do possess talent in those areas.

Victor Lipman writes, "Self-awareness isn't one of those big marquee leadership qualities like vision, charisma, strategic thinking or the ability to speak eloquently to an audience the size of a small city... but it's a quieter ancillary quality that enables the high-octane ones to work. To use a chemistry concept, it's a psychological catalyst."³

As leaders, we are called to be aware of what triggers our emotional responses and figure out how to temper those responses with positive and productive dialogue. We need to seek out trusted colleagues who can identify our intent and our blind spots. We need these people to help us recognize if we are able to convey our message in a positive and empathetic style or, do we miss the boat? Sometimes, we need to assess our personal style and determine if it enhances or hinders a certain interaction.

Above all, we need to be able to constantly evaluate ourselves and understand our human condition, as it is always in a state of growth. So, be gentle with yourself. It is easy to be critical of who we are and how we manage things. But, by being aware, we also understand we can continue to develop as leaders. It is part of our journey. This is how we will continue to lead with knowledge and serve with heart. Happy New Year!

REFERENCES

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