Focus the Flame: 
Attention on Excellence

Lisa Riggs RN, MSN, ACNS-BC
Secretary, AACN

Objectives
- Identify the importance of developing our "attention" or "focus"
- Define different strategies to build and maintain your F.I.R.E.
- Imagine the possibilities for fulfilling the mission and vision

Teri Lynn Kiss, RN, MS, MSSW, CNML, CMSRN
President, AACN
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 not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude” – Colin Powell

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

Aristotle

Excellence in the clinical setting → achieving optimal patient and family outcomes!
• Not static
• Not just reactive → intentional
• Requires
• Continuous improvement
• Constant effort
Excellence

- Creating change to improve outcomes

http://www.aacn.org

Excellence

- Opposite of excellence → mediocrity
- “Doing the right thing every time”
- Setting the standard, not meeting the standard
- Achieved by...
  - Paying attention to detail
  - Acting with integrity
  - Balancing structure and flexibility
  - Continuously learning and inquiring
  - FOCUS!

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
The Brain

Focus on self

- Self-awareness
  - Decode internal cues
  - Being in touch with your self
- 2 Types
  - Selective: focus on one target
  - Open: absorbing everything around and within
Top vs Bottom

Executive function or

cognitive control

→ directs focus on 1 thing

Cognitive control of impulse

→ higher rates of success

Focus on self

Focus on Other

- Cognitive empathy
  - Understand another’s way of seeing and thinking

- Emotional empathy
  - Join another in feelings

- Empathetic concern
  - Compassionate attitude
  - 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 $\rightarrow$
Requires a focus on others

Compassion
Fatigue

Being out of touch
Too little
Too much

Distractions $\rightarrow$ Erode empathy and compassion
Temporal-parietal junction response

Protects focus!
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

Excellence
Inner
Other
Outer
We don’t do right things to create excellence, we embody excellence to do right things.

• Fearlessness
• Inquiry
• Resilience
• Engagement
Fearlessness

- NOT the absence of fear!
- Putting yourself out there, trying new things → uncomfortable and scary
- Necessary to move forward

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

- 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

It is not the answer that enlightens, it is the question
~Eugène Ionesco

...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
**Inquiry**

- **Why**
  - Starts innovative questioning
  - Helps us articulate the challenge
- **What if**
  - Generates ideas or possible solutions
  - Seeds of innovation
- **How**
  - How do I actually get this done

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**Resiliency**

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

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

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**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
Characteristics of resilient individuals

- Able to accept the reality necessary for survival → prepared to act in ways to endure hardship
- Able to make meaning out of the circumstance
- Able to improvise
  - Flexibility to think differently
  - Innovative ways to cope

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

- 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
Strategies for engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of engagement</th>
<th>Do you...</th>
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</thead>
<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 coworkers</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>
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<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 the person or 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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</tbody>
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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

Drive Excellence!
Conclusion

A health to the woman 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/

focustheflame@aacn.org