

Lifer Workshop

Title: Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes: Coping with Change, Serving as Agents of Change.

Thursday, March 1, 2018

Facilitators:

Leaders: Gene Beresin, MD, MD MGH/McLean/Harvard Medical School and David Kaye, MD, SUNY Buffalo School of Medicine. Facilitators: Geri Fox, MD, University of Illinois at Chicago, John Sargent, MD, Tufts Medical Center

Educational Objectives:

At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- a) Discuss important challenges that personal and professional changes present to career educators (“Lifers”)
- b) Define strategies for coping with the inevitable losses sustained in personal life and necessary transformations of our professional careers.
- c) Discuss strategies to serve as agents of change in our personal and professional lives and how we may serve to use our experience and insight to help younger educators incorporate historical, ethical, and professional traditions worthy of inclusion in modern trends and demands in our healthcare system.

Practice Gap:

The career of an academic psychiatrist requires coping with changes in personal and professional duties and responsibilities. The process of managing a wide range of changes has rarely been discussed in professional workshops. Additionally, how senior educators can help inform junior colleagues who will be assuming leadership roles about the values and ideals that merit consideration require additional focus. This workshop will help illuminate how we can learn from each other and gain insight into coping with change and serving as agents of change.

Workshop Abstract:

The one constant in our personal and professional life is change. It’s inevitable. And while we should expect the changes life brings to us, many times they surprise us, often resulting in stress. The experiential workshop will focus on the way in which senior academic psychiatrists cope with challenging experiences in our lives. Though discussing our own narratives, we will learn adaptive strategies from each other and be in a better position to cope with adversity, adjust to new demands in our lives, and serve as better mentors for our junior colleagues to help them prepare for changes in their lives.

Coping with Change:

There is growing recognition that managing changes in our work and home life is fundamental for wellbeing. A core skill for coping with adversity is resilience. This is the

ability of an individual to maintain personal and social stability in the face of adversity (1). Resilience is not an inborn trait but rather, a process of skill acquisition. In many ways, it is a double-edged sword – on the one hand it is protective and preventative, fending off hardships; and, on the other hand it is corrective, allowing for effective coping strategies in times of stress and trauma. Engagement, attachment, and personal awareness and reflection all contribute to promote resilience.

While resilience helps us manage adversity, flexibility and creativity assists us in adjusting in our personal and professional lives in situations that require new, sometimes unexpected changes in our relationships and work. Finding innovative ways to navigate new demands is instrumental in minimizing stress.

We will consider the following common situations of change:

Personal:

- Managing losses: Deaths, physical health, empty nests, family changes (e.g. divorce), “the end of the line”
- Financial: Income changes, downsizing, retirement
- Kids and grandchildren moving away
- Resetting priorities: hobbies, socializing, travel, our “bucket lists,” where we want to “make our mark”

Professional:

- Job changes: changes in status; managing transitions
- Navigating changes in healthcare; electronic medical records, RVU’s, private practice, keeping up with demands (e.g. seeing so many patients or choosing not to)
- Role in teaching, supervision, dealing with academic pressures (when you don’t have as much energy)
- Looking back and looking forward: Have I achieved my goals? What else do I wish to do? Are they possible in the current healthcare system? Does anybody care?
- Adaptability to changes in the healthcare system, e.g. Medical homes, Accountable Care Organizations
- Adjusting to innovation: digital media; new models of adult learning

Agents of Change:

Senior career academic psychiatrists have witnessed transformations in the theory and practice of our field as well as in changes in our healthcare system and educational models. With an historical appreciation for the growth of our field, we also have perspective on the values, ideals and mission of psychiatry over time. As medicine and society continue to evolve, we may of service to our junior colleagues, providing insight and assistance as “agents” of change.

We will discuss the following ways in which we may serve in this role:

- In age of change at speed of light, how do we communicate the value of “continuity?” What is worth holding on to? What remains relevant of Aristotle? What remains relevant of Freud? What remains relevant of us?

- Can we be keepers of the faith in the culture of medicine, such as: Maintaining our professional values, attitudes and skills, e.g. values of longitudinal care and abiding relationships with patients and institutions vs. recognizing our limitations and the importance of obligations to our own families and intimate relationships; balancing advocacy for access to care vs. surviving the system; fostering team play vs. supporting solo pilots.
- Is there value to bringing historical perspective to a new generation of psychiatrists? For example: What is the value of psychotherapy in training and practice; what is the place for group involvement in education and practice; how do we keep our eye on the “big picture” vs. balkanized benchmarks in our educational system; should we foster time to process and reflect; how do we understand what is most valuable in curricula, both in terms of content and pedagogical models?
- The value of experience: how do we serve to help navigate changes in residency training, e.g. Milestones, documentation, handoffs?
- The importance of relationships and mentoring.
- How can we shepherd transitions in faculty and leadership positions?

References:

1. LutharSS, Cicchetti D, Becker B: The construct of resilience: a critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. Child Dev. 2000; 71:543-62.