Talking Circles: The Art of Communication for Physician Leaders

Erica T. Mahady MA
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Erica_T.Mahady@lvhn.org

Jody Millard MA
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Jody.Millard@lvhn.org

Jarret R. Patton MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Jarret_R.Patton@lvhn.org

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarlyworks.lvhn.org/administration-leadership

Part of the Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons, Business and Corporate Communications Commons, Health and Medical Administration Commons, and the Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods Commons

Published In/Presented At

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by LVHN Scholarly Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in LVHN Scholarly Works by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact LibraryServices@lvhn.org.
Talking Circles: The Art of Communication for Physician Leaders

Erica T. Mahady, MA; Jody Millard, MA; and Jarret Patton, MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania

Talking Circles -
Leadership Development Opportunity
High potential physician leaders identified a need for a confidential group forum to communicate challenging leadership issues and receive coaching from peers and senior executives.

What is a Talking Circle?
- Promotes active listening and problem solving
- Values respect for others and honors collective wisdom
- Encourages participants to speak freely from the heart about what is on their mind
- Utilizes talking stick to facilitate communication

Guidelines for Creating Safe Space
- Acknowledge that all members are equal and belong to the circle
- Commit to keeping all that is shared in the circle confidential
- Set an intention to open your heart to understand and connect with others
- Express points of view or comments in a nonjudgmental way
- Be respectful of others and listen without interruption
- Be open to silence

“Give me the courage to share, and the courage to listen. It is a native tradition to sit in a circle and talk—to share what is in your heart.”
John Peters (Slow Turtle), medicine man of the Mashpee Wampanoag Indian tribe

How Does the Talking Circle Work at LVHN?
- Facilitator (senior executive) opens talking circle, leads introduction process and reviews creating safe space guidelines
- Participants (physicians) reflect on current leadership challenges and agree upon one for discussion
- Facilitator gives talking stick to participant who volunteered topic
- Participant presents challenge and request of the circle
- Talking stick is passed to the left until each person in the circle is offered the opportunity to share their point of view (interruptions not permitted)
- Facilitator provides high level summary of what was discussed, shares additional insights and places the talking stick in the center of the circle for open discussion
- Facilitator provides final remarks after open discussion and closes circle

Impact of Talking Circles at LVHN
- Averaged 4.7 out of 5 (very great) level of satisfaction
- Problem solving around leadership issues—healthcare reform, employee morale and satisfaction, LEAN implementation, balance of administrative/clinical responsibilities
- Provided additional access to senior leadership
- Incorporated into high potential leadership development program curriculum