

## Therapeutic Relationships: What and Why

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Excerpts taken from the book *See Me as a Person* by Mary Koloroutis and Michael Trout

Have you ever considered the essentiality of therapeutic relationships in health care and the effects they have on outcomes? Cited in their book *See Me as a Person*, Mary Koloroutis and Michael Trout, state “the efficacy of care, and perhaps just as importantly, the patient experience of care- depends heavily on authentic human connection.” Koloroutis and Trout describe four therapeutic relational practices which create authentic connection with patients.

### What are the therapeutic practices?

- Attuning is the act of “tuning in” to another person. We define attuning as “the doorway to human connection.” When we attune to a person, we notice things about the person’s state – mental, physical, emotional – and the impact we may be having on them. Attuning is mindful awareness of the self and other. When we attune to a patient, we remember that what might be routine for us, is highly significant to the person receiving care.
- Wondering is a state of mind characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance – a joyful not-knowing and an intentional elimination of our own agenda. When we are present and interested there is a natural wonder about our patients that makes us ask the questions to get to know them better, to find their back story, their history, their wants, their needs, their beliefs, and their uniqueness.
- “Following is a series of intentional acts that demonstrate devotion on the part of the clinician to being led and taught by the patient and family.” This following includes attention to body language, touch, voice tone, and the self. It is an intentional listening to where the patient and family are leading. We follow when we listen for the person’s perspective and include their perspective in the provision of care.
- Holding is a conscious decision to lift up, affirm, and dignify that which the patient or family has taught, resulting in intense focus on the patient or family member while treasuring both the information and the person. Holding creates a safe haven for patients.

### Why therapeutic practices are important

It is important as clinicians that we balance the technical aspects of care with the human aspects of care. When we lose the balance of technical and human care, our patients and families suffer, and we do too. As cited in *See Me as a Person*, The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Health Care (2012) has compiled research on the value of compassionate connections between health care clinicians and patients and families. According to their research effective caregiver communication and relationships are associated with the following measures:

1. Enhanced patient satisfaction
2. Informed, shared decision making
3. Increased adherence to recommended treatments
4. Improved health outcomes
5. Reduced malpractice claim.

Therapeutic relational practices are essential for our patients and families. How do we ensure that everyone on our team understands the importance and establishes these practices in their everyday interactions with patients and families? By making certain our teams know and understand the importance of the therapeutic relational practices.

Relationships are the heart of what we do at Creative Health Care Management. Whether it be through Relationship-Based Care (RBC), *See Me as a Person*, *Re-igniting the Spirit of Caring*, or any other culture-enhancing implementation that provides strategies and solutions to improve your culture, relationships are at the center.

Creative Health Care Management has the resources, programs, and solutions to discover your team's strengths regarding relational practices and identify areas to improve. In addition, we provide education and support to improve areas of opportunity.

Contact us to request information on how we can partner with you to enhance relational practices in your organization.