



Exploring and Working with Values and Beliefs to Create a Shared Purpose

Using Creative Approaches

Why are values and beliefs important?

Our values and beliefs influence our attitudes and therefore our behaviours. Values and beliefs are often not spoken about and so we can make assumptions about the values and beliefs that we are held by others e.g. assume that we share the same values about how we should work together as a team.

Making our values and beliefs explicit is one of the first steps in culture change because talking about them, helps us to begin to make them a reality in our workplace. A match between what we say we value and believe and what we do in practice is one of the characteristics of effective individuals, teams and organisations (Manley, 2000). For example, if we say that we believe that staff should be compassionate, we should expect to see and hear this in interactions between staff and patients.

Talking to the people we care for (patients, service users, residents, families, carers etc.) and the people that we work with (nurses, MDT, ancillary staff, managers etc.) about what they think is important (*values*) and what they feel should happen (*beliefs*) is therefore an important first step in the process of culture change – helping us to transform the way things are done.

What is a shared purpose?

This information – about what matters to people – can be used to create a shared purpose, helping to set a direction; aims; and objectives and goals that individuals and teams can work towards.

Who should be involved?

Ideally, any activity to create a shared purpose should represent the values and beliefs that are held by the people that you care for and the people that you work with.

For example:

People who you care for:	People who you work with:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patients, service users, residents• Relatives, families• Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nurses• Healthcare assistants• Therapists• Doctors• Members of the wider multidisciplinary team• Managers• Ancillary staff<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ward clerks○ Housekeepers○ Caterers○ Porters• Executives and board members• Students• Volunteers

The more people that can be involved in creating the shared purpose, the stronger it will be by (acknowledging differences but):

- helping people to see what connects them (the shared ground, the common interest) e.g. everyone agrees that mealtimes are an important part of the day, rather than the differences e.g. patients and staff, different job roles etc.
- creating a personal connection to the change or transformation that you are trying to achieve

How do I facilitate a creative activity to explore values and beliefs and create a shared purpose?

Ideally these activities should be facilitated with a group of people. If you are not able to get everyone together at the same time, you could run a number of small groups. Usually you would allow 30-60 minutes depending upon the number of people involved.

Suggestions are provided below for doing this using picture cards (see pages 3-4) and also by creating pictures/collages (see pages 5-6).

Working with picture cards

You can buy packs of picture cards (approximately postcard size) from a number of places (see resources at the end), or alternatively you could gather together a collection of postcards, photographs or images from magazines. These can represent anything at all e.g. people, food, scenery, flowers, animals, abstract etc. but ideally should not contain too many words.

You will also need flip charts and sticky notes. Here are a number of steps that you can follow:

Collecting values and beliefs:

- First explain the purpose of the exercise to the group members so that they are clear about what you are asking them to do. For example, asking them to share their values and beliefs or what they think is important, what matters or should happen in relation to *x* (e.g. person-centred care, pain management, teamworking etc.) so that you can agree what you want to work towards with regards to care or practice in your workplace. Reinforce that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and encourage people to contribute as much as they can and to be open and honest
- Working individually and thinking about the subject being explored, ask everyone to look at the pictures and select a few that they are drawn to. At this stage they do not need to know why they have chosen them
- Having chosen their cards, ask them to spend a few minutes considering the following questions:
 - I chose this card because...?
 - List the words that spring to mind
 - What do they mean to me in relation to *x*?
 - What do they tell me about what I think is important about the subject being considered?
- Thinking about their responses, ask the participants to capture the key words or phrases on sticky notes – one idea per note
- Then ask the group members to share these, collecting their sticky notes on to flip charts as they do so

Theming the contributions/values and beliefs:

- Invite the group members to spend a few minutes having a look at all the contributions – at this point they can ask each other to clarify anything to ensure that they understand the meanings
- Then ask the group members to theme or cluster the sticky notes on that chart, identifying a name or descriptor for each theme/cluster:
 - At this stage you are looking for areas of agreement and common ground
 - Remember to work with what you have, do not introduce new ideas at this stage

An example of a theme created by clustering common contributions could be:

Communicating with patients and colleagues:

- Having good communication skills – to talk to patients to gain their confidence, helping patients to open up
- Communicating professionally with staff and patients
- Giving feedback
- Sharing opinions
- Using appropriate language
- Using variety of skills to communicate
- Using body language

Creating a shared purpose from the themes/descriptors:

- Once all the contributions have been clustered and themed, ask the group to use the themes and descriptors to create a shared purpose statement – providing a focus and energy for any development work
- The shared purpose should then be shared, inviting feedback from others before it is launched

An example of a shared purpose statement

We believe the care that we provide should be safe, and effective, keeping patients and their families at the centre of everything that we do.

This can be achieved by working together as an integrated multi-disciplinary team.

The factors that will enable us to achieve this are:

- A clear understanding of our roles and the roles of others
- A commitment to listening to patients and their families
- Opportunities to learn and develop knowledge, skills and competencies
- Effective communication between all team members
- Feeling valued and supported by the team and our managers

What happens next?

Working together to explore values and beliefs to develop a shared purpose is a really useful way of engaging with staff, helping them to identify what unites them, leading to energy, enthusiasm and ownership. Staff will often gain as much from contributing and listening to others as they do from creating the shared purpose. However, this is only the first step. The next step is to work together to critique/evaluate practice at an individual/team level to identify the gaps between what we say we will do in our shared purpose statement (the values and beliefs that are spoken about) and what we actually do (the values and beliefs that are experienced).

Creating pictures or collages

You will need to collect together a box of creative materials e.g. old magazines, glue, scissors, felt pens or crayons or paints and brushes, stickers, glitter, balloons etc.

You will also need flip charts and sticky notes. Here are a number of steps that you can follow:

Creating pictures or collages that reflect the shared purpose:

- First explain the purpose of the exercise to the group members so that they are clear about what you are asking them to do. For example, asking them to share their values and beliefs or what they think is important, what matters or should happen in relation to *x* (e.g. person-centred care, pain management, teamworking etc.) so that you can agree what you want to work towards with regards to care or practice in your workplace. Reinforce that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and encourage people to contribute as much as they can and to be open and honest
- Working individually and thinking about the subject being explored, ask everyone create a picture/collage that reflects: 'If *x* was as good as it possibly could be, what would it look like?'
- Once the pictures have been created, the participants each have an opportunity to share the meanings within their creations and the key words or phrases are captured on sticky notes and collated on a flip chart
- You can also invite the other participants to say talk about what the creation evokes for them. It is helpful if you ask them to phrase this using: I see.... I feel.... I imagine as this helps participants to focus on personal meanings rather than comments about the accomplishment of the work. These ideas can also be captured on sticky notes

Theming the contributions:

- Invite the group members to spend a few minutes having a look at all the contributions and then use these to create a shared purpose. It might be helpful to think about:
 - Creating a statement to summarise the shared purpose
 - Identifying the key features
 - Identifying the factors that will help you to achieve the shared purpose

Hints and tips:

- Try to embrace as many voices as possible, rather than just the voices of a few – a collaborative process
- Some groups/people need more encouragement than others – so be patient and open-minded
- Create opportunities to share the contributions of everyone – there is much to be learnt from listening to the perspectives of others
- Take your time – it is more helpful to move more slowly and gain the involvement of many rather than rush forward with the ideas of a few

References

Manley, K. (2000) Organisational culture and consultant nurse outcomes: Part 1: organisational culture, *Nursing Standard*. Vol. 14. No. 36. pp 34-38.

Wider resources

Picture cards can be purchased from: <http://www.evokecards.com/>

Dewing, J., McCormack, B. and Titchen, A. (2014) *Practice Development Workbook for Nursing, Health and Social Care Teams*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell. Chp 2:

- Knowing and demonstrating values and beliefs about person centred care. pp 17-38.
- Developing a shared vision for person-centred care. pp 39-59.

Dewing, J., McCormack, B. and Titchen, A. (2014) Companion website material for *Practice Development Workbook for Nursing, Health and Social Care Teams*. Chapter 2: Knowing and demonstrating values and beliefs about person-centred care. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. http://higheredbcs.wiley.com/legacy/college/dewing/111867670X/supp/Chapter_2_web.pdf