



Crestwood Recovery Resilience Solutions

The Beating Heart

by Dr. Lori Ashcraft

Many of us have spent years in training learning approaches and techniques to treat mental illnesses and restore wellness to those we serve. I myself have spent far too many years going to school, earning degrees that helped me feel like I was worthy of doing this work. Along the way I've learned something far more important, and that is this: One can have all the degrees possible, have lots of certificates on the wall displaying the various special course we've taken to learn additional theories and techniques to treatment, but.... If we do not approach the people we serve with respect, present attention; If we stay in our head – trying to figure things out; If we don't move from our head to our heart, If we are not willing to love those we serve (yes I said "love") we will not make much of a difference for them or for ourselves.

Coming from the heart is especially important for leaders, since their attitudes and actions affect both those who work under their direction and those who are served in the program. You will see a wonderful example of this in this prerecorded interview with Patty Blum. Patty continues to be in top leadership positions in the Crestwood organization. She has been faithful to the messages of the heart for over 30 years and continues to move the needle at every opportunity.

As you listen to Patty, you'll find the steps she took to create good programming interesting. But try to focus beyond the content and listen for what motivates her and causes her to keep looking for better ways to provide services. Look past the doing and find the being. You'll hear a heart beating. A heart that relentlessly moves her, gives her courage to feel the pain of those she wants to set up for recovery; a heart that holds hope for people who need it the most. Leaders who are willing to operate at this level are the leaders who make a difference, who influence programs in a heartfelt way and bring real life to what otherwise could be meaningless.

If you are a hope holding, heart moving kind of leader, you know that your passion is not always appreciated by others who want to get on with the business of your organization. You're messy. You're not necessarily focused on the bottom line. You get irrational and upset when your organization loses sight of its values and its "true north." But please, you must keep doing what you are doing. Without you nothing makes any sense and the rest of us may as well go home. Hang in there precious ones! You are a gift!