



The Power of Language to Create Culture

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Blending Innovation & Regulation

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*Have you noticed ...

any undignified language in LTC?

*Welcome to...

The Real Definition

Feeder

- A. a livestock animal fed an enriched diet to fatten it for market
- B. a person living in a nursing home who requires physical assistance in order to eat
- C. a device or apparatus for supplying food, such as a CNA

The Real Definition

Wanderer

- A. someone that goes astray, as from a path or course
- B. someone that may move or travel about without any definite purpose or destination
- C. someone with dementia that does not like to stay in one place for long for various reasons

The Real Definition

Quad

- A. an area defining a college campus
- B. an individual with paralysis of all four limbs
- C. a four wheeled ATV

The Real Definition

The Stroke

- A. to rub gently in one direction
- B. a controlled swing intended to hit a ball
- C. a person living in a nursing home who has experienced a stroke

The Real Definition

Order

- A. an authoritative direction or instruction; command; mandate
- B. what you do at a restaurant
- C. a prescription for medication or therapy given by a physician for LTC residents that for some reason is no longer called a prescription and brings with it an implication that the receiver of the med/therapy has no choice in the matter and that the nurse in charge must follow said order to the letter even if that means coercing or dismissing the wishes of said receiver

The Real Definition

Allow

- A. to give permission to or for; permit
- B. a blessing given to an individual under specific circumstances in which he/she has the power to direct his/her own life, for now, until and unless “we” change our minds
- C. a ridiculous word that implies we have the authority to govern how people live

The Real Definition

Refusal

- A. to express oneself as unwilling to accept
- B. to show or express unwillingness to do or comply with
- C. to make a well thought out choice
- D. (perhaps a small uprising that could fuel a rebellion demanding choice and autonomy)

The Real Definition

Diet

- A. a prescriptive method by which foods (and quantities thereof) a person is allowed to eat are determined
- B. habitual nourishment
- C. a soda void of sugar

The Real Definition

Front line

- A. a military line formed by the most advanced tactical combat units
- B. the direct care givers in a nursing home
- C. a brand name treatment for the elimination of fleas

The Real Definition

Short

- A. not tall or high; not extended in time
- B. not coming up to a measure or requirement
- C. a word used to imply that there are not enough staff members present to get the job done

The Real Definition

“Charge” (Nurse)

- A. a definite quantity of electricity
- B. having control or custody of something
- C. a traditional long term care position that is often highly directive and controlling of those under them

The Real Definition

The Power of Language to Create Culture

The Hulda B. & Maurice L.
Rothschild
FOUNDATION

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www.pioneernetwork.net

aged

- wine
- cheese
- person

Words frame experiences J. Ronch

- Words carry two meanings: definitions and associations
- The same word can evoke different associations in different contexts, i.e. aged
- Words create expectations of meaning as a sentence unfolds
- Names/labels create response tendencies and “listener bias”
- What we call it is how we’ll treat it
- Examples
 - Special needs
 - Confused
 - Little ...



“Institution-speak” Karen Schoeneman

Baby-talk: good with babies, intonation, “let’s go potty”
A study associated with good care, getting good care meant getting baby talk or ... none.

Accommodative speech: compressed, high pitched, slowed

Declinist language: “still,” “she’s so cute,” “we love our residents to death”

Elderspeak: infantilization, diminutives i.e. girl, baby and pseudo questions i.e. “you want to get up, don’t you?”

Person First Language

- People with disability diagnoses are people first.
- People/Person First Language puts the person before the disability, and it describes what a person *has*, not who a person *is*.
- Are you 'myopic' or are you a person who wears glasses? Diabetic or a person with diabetes?

Label Jars, not People



Person First Language

People are not a Disease Causing a Problem

- Blind
- Retarded
- Paraplegic

People are Human Beings with Needs who require assistance

- Someone who is visually challenged
- Someone who is mentally challenged
- Someone who has paraplegia





THE MOST APPROPRIATE LABEL IS USUALLY THE ONE PEOPLE'S PARENTS HAVE GIVEN THEM.

*What would your label be?

Priming at work (Bargh, et.al.) J.Ronch

- Two groups of college students got two lists of words to put into sentences
- Group 1- Florida, ancient, bingo, ancient, retired, lonely, wrinkle.
- Group 2- thirsty, clean, private and other neutral words
- Both groups timed walking out

Results: J. Ronch

- Group 1 (age related words) walked out more slowly than Group 2 did
- Group 1 did not report any notice of the priming words; denied it had any effect on them when told about the words
- Said it wouldn't have mattered
- Does this happen with older people?

Affects of negative and positive stereotypes – “priming” J. Ronch

- Older people who had read an article claiming that age impairs memory did worse on a memory test than did a matched group who read an article claiming that age had little effect on memory (Hess, et al)
- *wise, alert, sage and learned* = ↑ memory
- *decline, senile, decrepit, dementia and confused* = ↓ memory

Multi-tasking J.Ronch


- Negative primes (“Are we ready for our bath?”) trigger stereotype threat and initiate multi-tasking
- Personal adequacy may be undermined by the additional mental work resulting from the negative prime
- “I want to test your memory, OK?”
 - What happens? Tenseness and anxiety suppress memory and interfere with the neurotransmitters you need for memory.

Dignifying our Language

- *Diaper* → **word the person prefers/uses**
- *Patient* → *resident* → **person, neighbor, community member, individual**
- *Elderly* → **senior, older adults** → **people**
- *Hoarder, wanderer, frequent faller* → **person’s name, describe**
- *The quad, the Alzheimer’s, the CVA* → **avoid**
- *The “get ups,” the “put downs”* → **avoid**
- *The Alzheimer’s resident/patient, Memory Care* → **avoid, know the person first, “gated community” for secured/locked**

Dignifying our Language

- *Admitted, placed, put* → ***“We helped Mom move to a nursing home,” new neighbor moved in***
- *Discharge, discharged* → ***moving, moved, relocated***
- *Elope, escape* → ***left the building***
- *Expired* → ***died***
- *Industry* → ***field, profession***
- *Homelike* → ***true home, feel at home, home***
- *Inservice* → ***education***
- *Dietary* → ***dining services***



NURSE
TOILET

Toilet → ***use the bathroom***
(or use if you're in Europe)



GARDEN
DAY ROOM

*Day room, activities room → **community room, family room, living room***

Dignifying our Language

- *Wing, unit, secured unit → **neighborhood unless living (household, house)***
- *Lobby, common area → **living room, parlor, den***
- *Nursing assistants → resident assistants → **companions, eldercare specialists, household/neighbor/elder assistants***
- *Front line workers → **direct care givers, care givers, hands-on staff, team members***
- *Work the floor → **assist residents, say what they do e.g. pass medications***

Dignifying our Language

- *Facility, “X bed facility” → home, community*
- *Census or occupancy → 100 people live here today, 110 could live here*
- *Beds → bedrooms, refer to the people living there, “heads in the beds”*
- *Industry → field, profession*
- *Allow, let → encourage, welcome, support*
- *Long term care → nursing home living, long term living, supportive living, community living, continuing care*



Independent *Living*
Assisted *Living*
Long Term *Care*

SELF-DIRECTED *LIVING*
PERSON-DIRECTED *LIVING*
PREFERENCE-BASED *LIVING*

Living life, real life

- Pet therapy or enjoying animals?
- Art therapy or being creative?
- Walking or ambulation therapy?
- Therapeutic activities, recreation therapy, activity programming, maybe even activities → ***community life, living life, engagement, a meaningful day, vibrant living, “what are you going to do today?”***



Courtesy
Eden
Alternative



Look at the word “**therapy**,” for instance. Why does everything have to be therapy once you live in a nursing home? If I liked to paint before I moved into the nursing home and I paint now that I’m there, why is my hobby now “art therapy?” I mean no insult to the wonderful folks who call themselves therapists and their work, their special training, or their skills. In fact, I’m a massage therapist myself. But in this context, “therapy” is another of those separating words.

Karen Schoeneman, *MayDay* article

Putting the label “therapy” on normal activity has become a tradition in nursing homes and other health care settings in order to establish the “professionalism” of those who do it. This is a case of “**scientism**” (Postman, 1993), a language trend toward elevating status of an action by appropriating medical terminology. People do things that are “**therapeutic**” all the time without therapists around because we feel better when we do them. When you go for a walk, for example, is that physical therapy or just exercise? Doing something you enjoy should not take on a stigma of having something wrong with you and that’s why you do it.

Dr. Judah Ronch, Psychologist
The Power of Language to Create Culture

Dignifying our Language

- *Activity/recreation therapy director*
→ **community life coordinator/developer, life wellness coordinator, life enrichment coordinator, community development guide/advocate**
- *Activity calendar* → **community calendar**
- *Refuse* → **decline, not interested, choosing**
- *“attention seeking”* – **seeking connection**
- Recreation therapist, recreation therapy **risk**:
“creative activity” and “physical activity”

Dignifying our Language

- “Non-compliant,” AMA → **making choices**
- *Difficult resident/combatative* → **avoid, explain**
- *Physician order* → **recommendation/prescription**
- *Behaviors, belligerent, difficult, behavior problems/symptoms* → **reactions, unmet needs, coping, communication**
- “Behaviors are not problems, behaviors are messages.” Rose Marie Fagan
- *Difficult family member* → **care partner who cares**
- Social history → **life history**

Dignifying our Language

- *Care plan* → **Life Plan, Living Plan, is it a plan?, All About Me, My Care Plan, My Goals, My Day, Growth Plan**
- *Problems* → **needs, challenges, preferences**
- *Interventions* → **what I need from you, support needed, assistance needed**
- *Staff* → **team members, care partners, colleague, associate**
 - Puts person in a role not a relationship
 - As a care partner, everyone is equal
 - No staff at home

No more “Feeder” even from CMS

- CMS Tag F550 Resident Rights, treated with respect and dignity:
- *Staff should address residents with the name or pronoun of the resident’s choice,*
- *Residents should not be excluded from conversations during activities or when care is being provided...*
- *Avoiding the use of labels for residents such as “feeders” or “walkers.”*

The Power of Language

Language



Practice

“Clothing protectors” →bibs →bigger than a word or language issue only, a dignity issue, “Would you care for a linen napkin so you can keep your shirt clean?”



“We are people with problems. We are not the problem.”

Sharon Crouse, Ontario Canada’s Council of Resident Councils

WHAT DO RESIDENTS THINK?

What if our words were whispered back to us?

- “Oh Joseph what makes you the miracle you are?” He looked at me and said back to me, “What makes you the miracle you are?”
- I thought about how it felt hearing my own words repeated back, and I thought, **“If every word I spoke were echoed back to me, would I feel celebrated, or just tolerated?”**
- ...Words can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. The words we choose can determine if a situation will be escalated or de-escalated and if a person will be humanized or de-humanized. Sarah Rowan

Effort to change language

- “It often takes serious effort to change habits of speech” Eheart and Power (2009)
- Changing language is awkward at first, you must push through the awkwardness to make a new norm.
- Let’s use the power of language to create the culture we all want to live and work in.

Language Resources

- *Word of the Week*, Joan Devine pioneernetwork.net
- *What are Old People For? How Elders will Change the World*, William Thomas, edenalt.com
- *Creating a New Language*, edenalt.com
- *The Power of Language to Create Culture* funded by Rothschild Foundation www.pioneernetwork.net
- *The Case for Change*, The Power of Language to Create Culture chapter, HealthProfessionsPress
- Kathie Snow www.disabilityisnatural.com
- *Quality of Life: The Differences Between Deficient, Common and Culture Change Practices*, Dignity www.actionpact.com

www.edu-catering.com
www.pioneernetwork.net

Archived shows:
People First Language
Kathie Snow, author,
advocate

***The Power of Language
to Change Culture***
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author



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- Let's change institutional culture!

“Surveyors are expected to be good role models of dignified language.”

**CMS surveyor training re:
new interpretive guidance Dignity 2009**

WHAT LANGUAGE WILL YOU ROLE MODEL?
WHAT IS THE STATUS OF LANGUAGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

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