



January 2018

VISITING VIGNETTES

A monthly newsletter to all Mended Hearts members.

Fredonia B. Williams, Ed.D.
Mended Hearts National Visiting Chair



At the beginning of each year, many of us wish our friends, family, and colleagues a Happy New Year, but have you ever thought about starting the new year by saying "Thank You?" Think about the last time you got an unexpected gift and how special that made you feel. An unexpected "Thank You" works the same way. It makes a person feel uniquely valued.

For all of our Mended Hearts members and everyone associated with Mended Hearts, my gift is a start-of-the-year Thank You to volunteers and supporters just to say how much we appreciate you and the worthwhile work you are doing and how it makes a difference to heart patients and their families. Your time given has been a blessing to heart patients and their families in need of an extra smile, a listening ear and the assurance that we are there to offer encouragement and support during their heart event as they struggle with this new challenge that they now face. They need to know that they are not facing this challenge alone.

Your time and caring cannot be measured in human terms but is most certainly warmly felt in the hearts of those whom you have visited or called. By giving generously of your time, you continue to demonstrate that, by working together, Mended Hearts members and Mended Hearts Accredited Visitors can create a stronger peer-to-peer support system for a lot of people. Time is a commodity we all enjoy and we all have the same



amount as far as a day goes. It is up to each individual to determine the use of time. ***How much time can you give to help spread the word about our peer-to-peer support group?***

SAFETY MATTERS

Because the country is in the middle of a flu epidemic and some hospitals have restricted volunteers from visiting, we can continue doing what we do best by focusing on follow up calls and maybe emails to patients visited during the past 3 months.

As with other forms of visiting, in an email, briefly tell the patient or family members who you are and that you have had open-heart surgery or another heart procedure. End the email by asking them if they have any questions or concerns and offering your support. Also, ask them if they would like to receive informational emails from Mended Hearts.



Telephone visits require even more active listening skills than in-person visits because the listener cannot see non-verbal cues and body language. It is very important to listen carefully to what the patient or family members are telling you and use active listening skills by paraphrasing and reflecting. Before concluding a telephone visit, invite the patient and his family to attend a chapter meeting or group meeting. Also, offer to send the patient and family a chapter or group newsletter and other communication.

Helpful tips for phone visiting



Identify yourself when calling a patient.

For example, say, "This is Mary Hunter calling for Mended Hearts."

Pay attention to your voice.

It's through your tone that the caller hears your true intentions. Whether in phone or person, this conveys more than the words that come out of your mouth. The key to professionally talking on the phone is to smile inwardly!

Establish rapport through empathy.

Place yourself in the patient's shoes. Doing this alone can help greatly. It's called "verbal nodding" and it helps the patient feel understood. Listening with empathy

means not telling patient or family members what they should do, how they should feel, or even about your feelings and experiences before you have listened. Listening with empathy shows that you care and understand the patient, family member or caregiver. Thus, they will enjoy talking to you and open up more.

End the conversation professionally.

With sincerity in your voice say, "Thanks for talking with me. Have a great day!"

Several chapters have shared that they added a new task for their Accredited Visitors who were not actively visiting in the hospital for various reasons (taking a break, illness, etc.) In addition to their chapter newsletter, they are mailing letters or cards to the patients visited in the hospital. Below is a sample letter.

Dear (Patient's Name):

During your hospital stay, you were visited by an Accredited Visitor from Chapter # of the Mended Hearts, Inc. At that time, you requested that we keep in touch with you about our chapter's activities.

As you know from talking with our Accredited Visitors and from the materials left with you, our organization is made up of "mended hearts" such as yourself. We are a support group providing inspiration and information to other heart patients. As you recover and become active again, we would be pleased if you and your family could attend our meeting. Our programs and speakers are of interest to heart patients and others. Professionals in all areas of heart care are speakers to our group. We are interested in subjects related to our maintaining a "heart-healthy" style of living. Members can ask questions of our speakers and discuss experiences with others who "have been there".

Chapter #____ meets (day of week) of each month at (time), (place). Our speaker this month is _____ of _____. (His/Her) topic is _____. We are looking forward to seeing you again!

Chapter President and/or Visiting Chair

Heartfelt Regards,



Dr. Fredonia B. Williams
National Visiting Chair
Southern Regional Director



Future Questions/Topics

We want to hear from you!

Other challenging questions for this newsletter may be emailed to fredoniabw@att.net.



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