

Action Pact, Inc.

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"Ask Pact" is our own question-and-answer column where people can ask their Culture Change questions and have them answered by our seasoned team of trainers and educators. You may find some topics here that are relevant to you - if not, feel free to Ask Pact!

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html](http://www.culturechange
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Morale

Dear Ask Pact,

We are in the process of Culture Transformation. The facility that I work at sent me and two other staff to Florida to attend a seminar. When we returned we were all excited and happy! Now that our staffing is down and we don't know when there will be new staff added, the morale in our facility is at the lowest that I have ever seen. I would like some ideas as to what can be done to make it a happier place to work again. Thank you for your time.

- Maurine

Dear Maurine,

Well, I'm guessing part of your morale problem is because people feel rushed to get everything done because there is not enough staff to cover. That can really stink. Low morale in any work place happens when people feel production and "efficiency" are valued more than the people themselves, both those providing service or product and those consuming. The answer then is

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putting the focus on people and relationships.

You're going to think we're crazy, but we'll suggest you spend more time with the residents. "What?!" you say, "We don't have time to do that." Well, the energy that sustains low morale is already costing you time. If you don't have the authority to authorize folks to spend more time with residents, take it to your Steering Team (if your transformation is that far along) or whoever does have the authority (this may be the person who sent you to the seminar in Florida). Try this. Each staff person takes 5-10 minutes a day to sit down, talk and get to know a resident. You can even structure it the way you do breaks - not that this should replace a break, but that times are staggered and time limits kept. After a week or two, get the staff together for a learning circle ([go to: http://www.culturechangenow.com/free_resources.html](http://www.culturechangenow.com/free_resources.html) for *learning circle directions*). Include residents too. Ask each staff member to introduce the elder they've been visiting with by telling the group what they've learned about the resident. You could even have the residents introduce the staff members they've been visiting with. Then keep it up. Make it part of the job. It may not have to be in such a formal matter, but make people spending time with each other a priority. Staff will be better able to

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Morale, continued

serve residents because they will better understand them and their needs. And, residents will gain more confidence in the staff because they know and trust them. Remember, folks got into this line of work because they wanted to care for people, not because they wanted to check off tasks.

Here's a simple handout with a few ideas for connecting with residents. You may want to post it around to give folks some ideas or, you may want to ask people to add to the list.

The other thing would be to get residents and staff together to plan some change or event; maybe adding some homey touches to the bathroom, throwing a holiday or "no reason at all" party or arranging to get residents together for a coffee klatch or cards. Use a learning circle to get input from everyone and then figure out together how to make it work. This will keep the momentum of change moving and also integrate resident direction into daily life. All these things should help remind people why the work they do is important and that they are valued.

Sincerely,

A. Pact



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Handout

17 things you can do to be involved in the lives of elders at your facility

1. Share your special talent
2. Share your coffee break
3. Share your family, bring them in to visit
4. Help put up holiday decorations
5. Take a resident outside with you for a break on a nice day
6. Bring in flowers or produce from your garden
7. Read a book or magazine together
8. Share stories
9. Share photos
10. Listen
11. Share and make a favorite recipe
12. Share "the one that got away" tales
13. Have a secret "hello" sign you can show while passing
14. Let them share their special talent with you
15. Help write letters or emails
16. Play cards
17. Laugh together

