

The Leadership Law of Connection: Satisfaction Through Listening & Empowerment

Leadership Development for Campus Leaders

Troy Culbertson
MC5 Culture Change Coalition
www.momc5.com
Missourimc5@gmail.com

Culture Lens

See your campus through the eyes of those you serve and lead

Listening Model

Master presence and empathetic listening as your leadership superpower

Empowerment Ladder

Guide teams from identifying needs to anticipating and empowering action

Hardwiring Tools

Apply rounding, managing up, Vowels of empowerment, and keywords at key times

What You'll Walk Away With Today

Today's session equips you with four powerful frameworks to elevate satisfaction through authentic connection and strategic empowerment

- *These frameworks create sustainable change by addressing the root cause of satisfaction breakdown—lack of genuine connection and empowerment*
- *You'll leave with practical tools ready to implement within seven days, not abstract theories requiring months of planning*
- *The session balances inspiration with actionable steps, using real stories and interactive elements.*

Poll: Where Does Satisfaction Break Down?

Where does satisfaction break down most on your campus?

- [x] Communication gaps from Management?
- [x] Unmet expectations from Families or neighbors
- [x] Staff feeling disempowered, ignored, or ineffective
- [x] Lack of follow-through
- [x] All of the above

- Take a moment to reflect on your campus right now—which area causes the most friction with residents, families, or your team
- This poll creates our shared baseline for our conversation.
- We have all failed satisfying a customer somewhere. Then we are in recovery mode….that is not who we want to be in LTC. We have one chance for a good first impression



Story - Rita Part 1: The Expectation Failure

- Rita **expected personalized attention and felt like just another task** on a checklist, despite staff working hard to meet care requirements
- The **team focused on completing care tasks** efficiently but missed the emotional connection that creates the feeling of being cared for
- This scenario repeats daily across campuses—staff exhausted from effort while **residents and families remain dissatisfied because connection is missing**
- **The problem isn't lack of effort or competence; it's the absence of intentional connection and empowerment in how we lead and deliver care**

Campus Leadership Insight: Effort Isn't the Issue

The Gap

High staff effort + Low connection = Persistent dissatisfaction

The Reality

People don't remember what you did; they remember how you made them feel

- Campus leaders face mounting pressure to improve scores while teams feel increasingly burned out from doing more without seeing results improve
- The missing ingredient is **intentional connection—creating emotional bonds through listening, presence, and empowerment rather than just task completion**
- Traditional approaches focus on compliance and efficiency, training staff to complete tasks rather than training them to **connect authentically**
- **This shifts your leadership from managing tasks to cultivating connection as the foundation for sustainable satisfaction improvement**

The Leadership Law of Connection

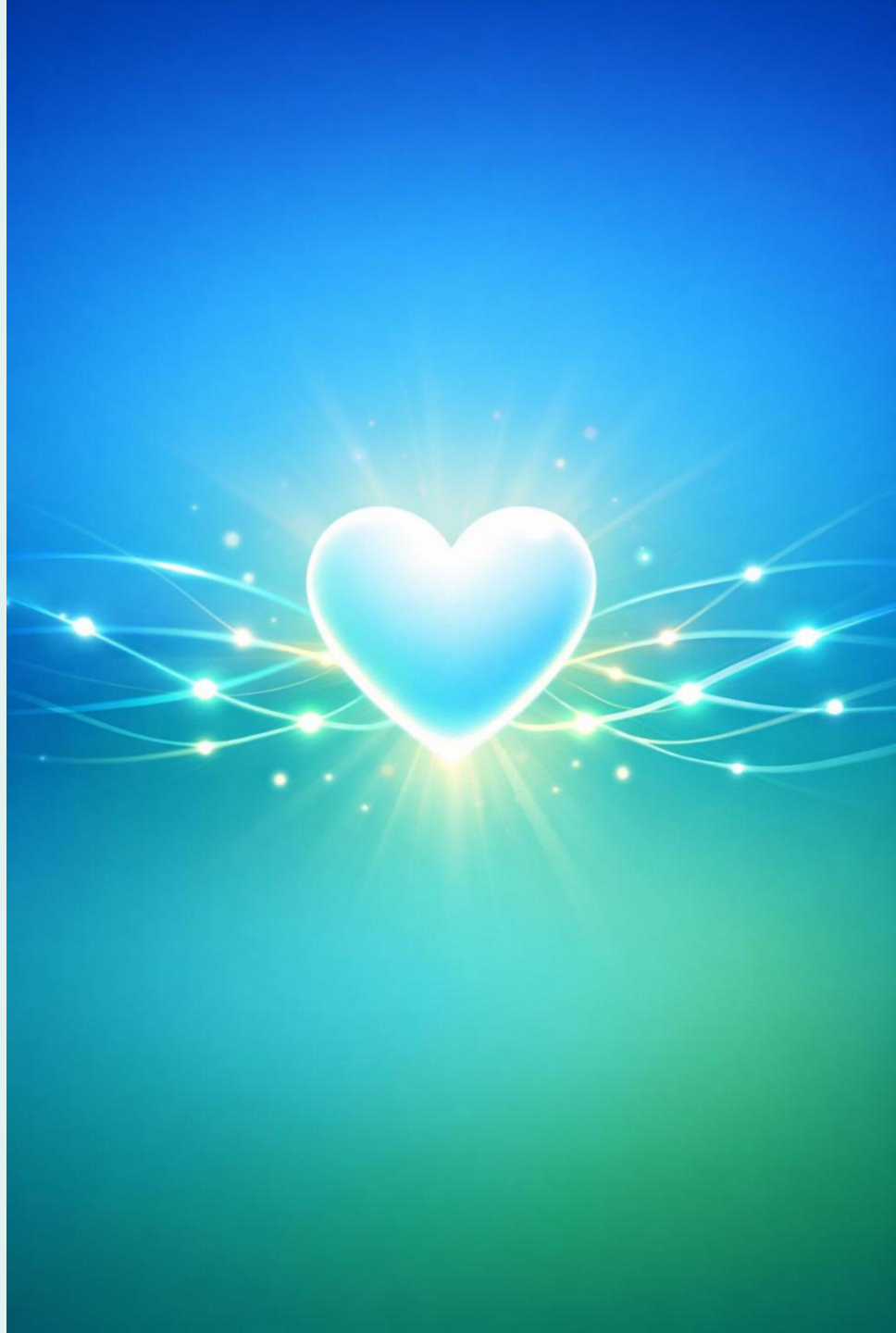
Connection First

People commit to leaders who genuinely care about them as individuals

Loyalty Driver

Emotional connection builds the loyalty that keeps people coming back [1]

- The law of connection means establishing trust before influencing behavior
- When leaders prioritize connection, teams feel valued and create a ripple effect
- Connection is the universal currency of leadership influence across all relationships



Purpose as an Operating System

- Purpose serves as your campus's operating system—it guides decisions, shapes culture, and sustains motivation when challenges arise
- Campus leaders who **articulate purpose clearly and connect daily work to that larger mission** see higher engagement and lower turnover across teams
- Without purpose, work becomes transactional and staff burnout accelerates; with purpose, even difficult tasks feel meaningful and energizing

Make a Difference

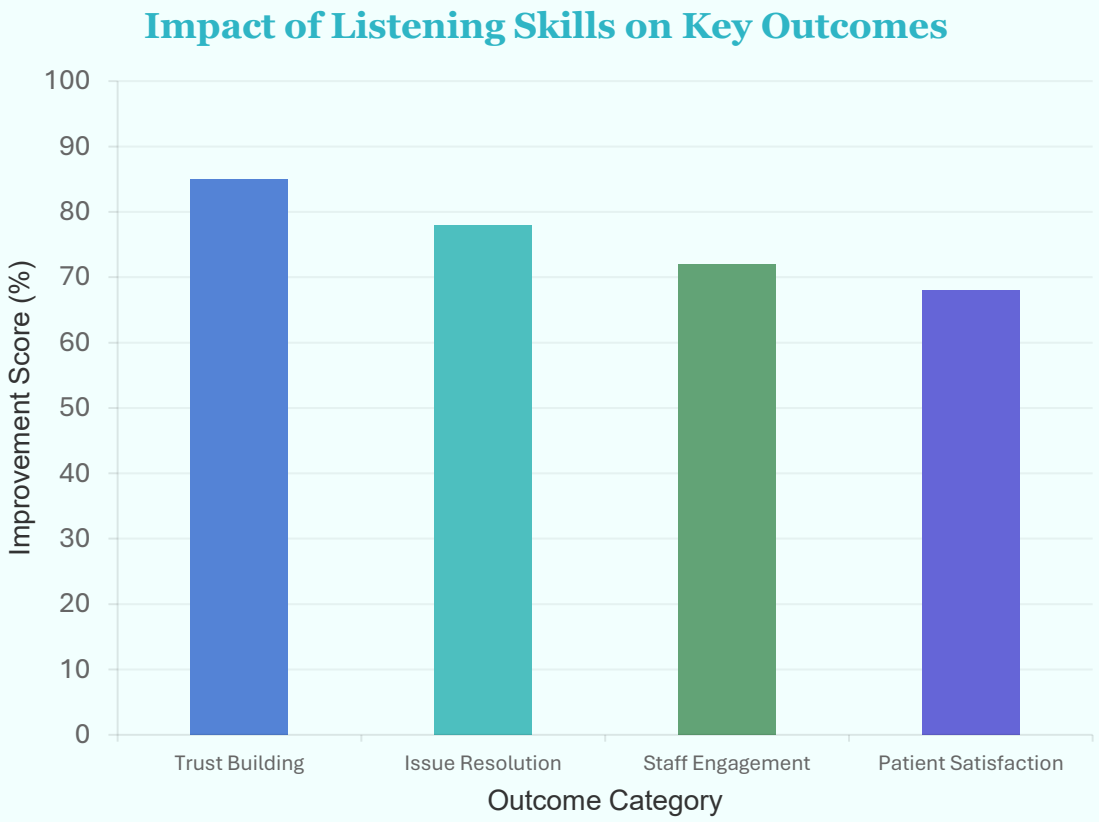
Create visible impact in residents' lives daily

Worthwhile Work

Contribute to meaningful outcomes beyond tasks

Clear Purpose

Understand why their work matters deeply



Listening is the Linchpin

- **Effective listening requires replacing judgment with curiosity, validating rather than fixing immediately**
- **Leaders who model empathetic listening create cultures where staff feel heard and pass that to residents**
- **Teach listening intentionally: speak respectfully, be helpful, listen intently with empathy as guiding principles**


IT'S NOT
ABOUT
THE
NAIL



Presence – The Campus Leader Superpower

Presence Definition

Full attention and engagement in the current moment without distraction

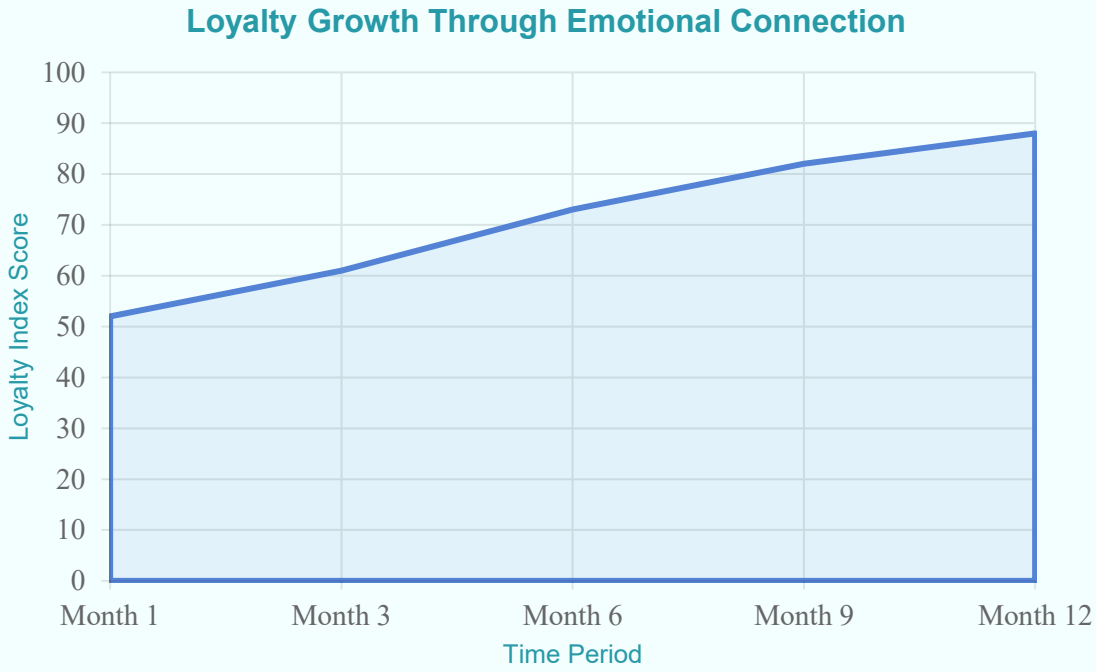
The Multiplier

Presence amplifies every leadership interaction's impact

- Being present means *putting away devices, maintaining eye contact, and giving full attention to the person in front of you*
- Campus leaders set the tone—when you model presence, staff learn to be present with residents, creating moments where people feel truly seen and valued
- *Presence cannot be faked; people intuitively sense when you're distracted or going through motions versus when genuinely engaged*

Emotional Connection Builds Loyalty

- *People want to feel cared for, acknowledged, respected, and valued—when these emotional needs are met**, loyalty** follows naturally*
- *Emotional connection turns service from a transaction into a relationship, fundamentally changing how residents and families experience your campus*
- *When employees feel valued by leadership, they pass that feeling down to residents and families, creating a positive cycle of connection and loyalty*



The Scariest Possibility - *Empowerment*

The Fear

What if staff make wrong decisions without my approval?

The Truth

Empowered people don't wait for permission—they respond using their own judgment

- *Leaders intellectually support empowerment but struggle to release control due to fear of mistakes*
- Empowerment operates along a continuum—leaders choose guidance levels while building capability
- *Empowered staff use critical thinking to deliver authentic connection beyond task completion*



1

Information

Share data and context openly

2

Knowledge

Build understanding of why and how

3

Training

Develop skills systematically

4

Resources

Provide tools needed for success

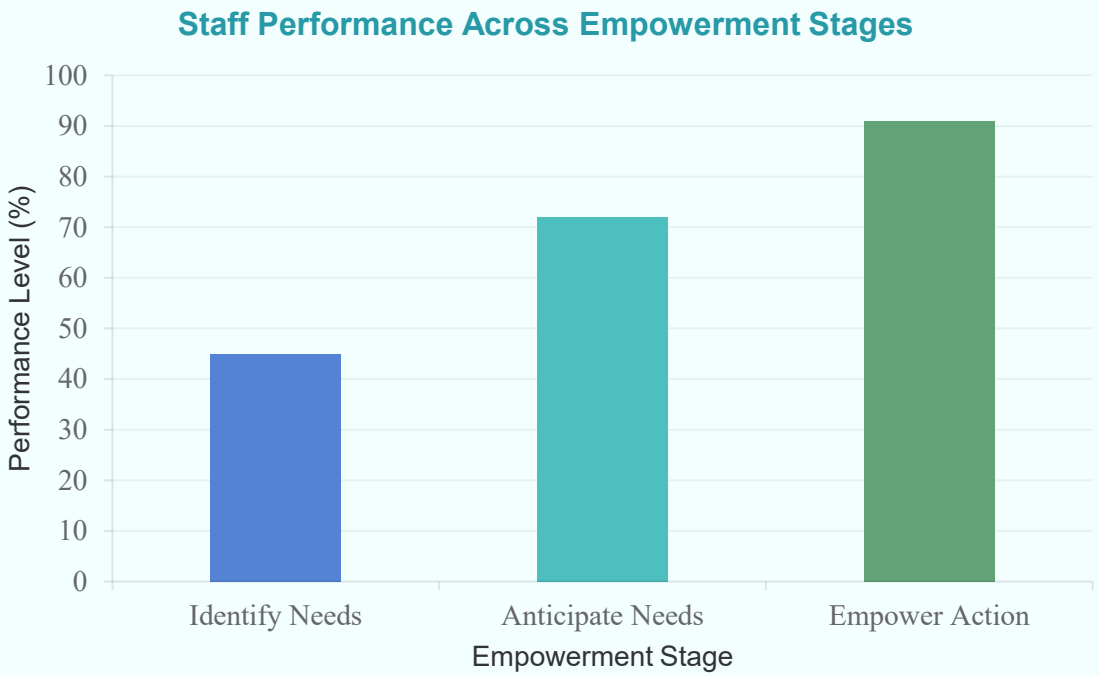
5

Environment

Create psychological safety to act

Organizational Design That Supports Empowerment

- Empowerment without these five elements sets staff up for failure and reinforces leaders' fears about releasing control
- *Move decision-making as close to the resident and direct caregiver as possible to enable quick personalized responses*
- *Transparency in communication builds trust and helps staff make aligned decisions even when leaders are not present*



Empowerment Ladder: Identify → Anticipate → Empower

- **Identify:** Staff learn to recognize resident needs and preferences in the moment, building awareness as foundation for growth
- **Anticipate:** Staff begin predicting needs before expressed, demonstrating deeper understanding of individuals they serve [1]
- **Empower:** Staff take initiative to meet anticipated needs without waiting for permission, delivering personalized care confidently [1]
- Campus leaders accelerate progression by celebrating examples at each level and coaching staff to next development stage

Vowels of Excellence (AEIOU Framework)

AEIOU

Advanced framework for service excellence

Graduate Level

Moving beyond compliance to connection-driven care

- **A: Acknowledge** every person by name, making eye contact and welcoming them warmly to create immediate positive connection
- **E: Empathy** guides all interactions, putting yourself in the other person's position to understand their perspective and feelings authentically
- **I: Individualize** care by knowing each person deeply, tailoring approaches to their unique preferences, history, and needs
- **O: Ownership** means taking responsibility for resolving issues and following through completely, regardless of whose job it technically is
- **U: Understand** that service excellence is a mindset and culture, not a checklist—it builds employee trust and creates lasting connections

Keywords at Key Times

- ***These phrases communicate care, competence, and commitment more effectively than generic responses during critical interaction moments***
- Campus leaders should model these keywords in every interaction to establish linguistic culture across teams and departments
- ***Train staff to use keywords naturally, not robotically—authenticity of delivery matters as much as the words themselves***

How can I help you?

Conveys service orientation and genuine interest

[1]

I'll ca1n take care of that for you

Demonstrates ownership and reliability

Let me find out for you

Shows commitment to follow-through

Thank you for telling me

Validates concerns and builds trust



Managing Up

Managing Up Impact

Reduces anxiety and increases trust before interactions

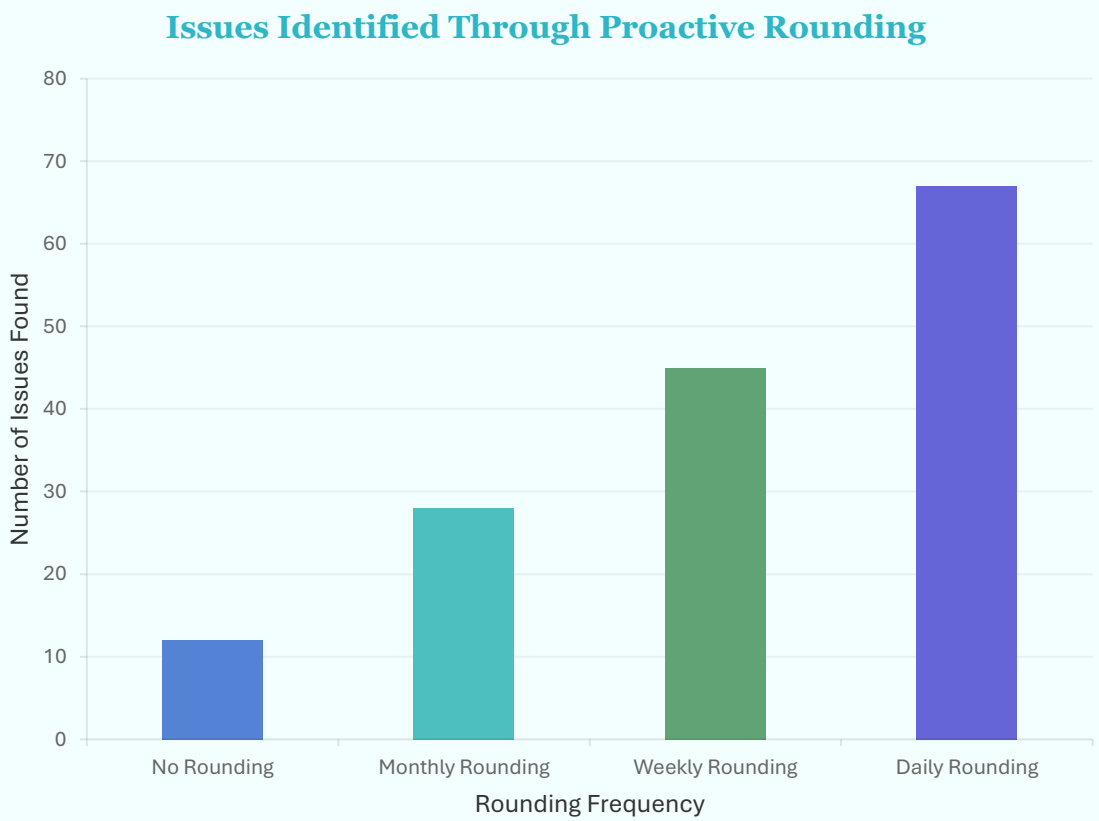
Example

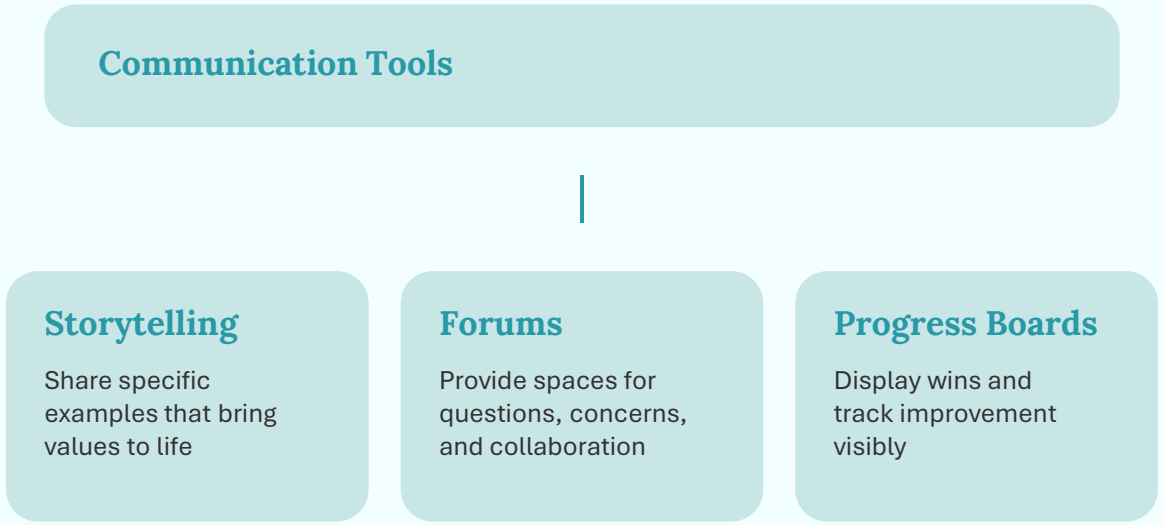
"You'll be seeing Dr. Williams—he's excellent at listening and answering questions. You're fortunate."

- Managing up reduces patient and family anxiety by establishing credibility for team members before they enter the room
- Campus leaders manage up their entire team constantly, highlighting specific strengths and expertise to build organization-wide confidence
- *This practice creates a culture of mutual support where staff feel valued and patients feel assured they're receiving excellent care*

Rounding for Positives and Outcomes

- Ask targeted questions: What's working well? Who merits recognition? What resources would boost effectiveness?
- Leaders who round consistently solve small issues before they escalate into major complaints
- Demonstrates accessibility and commitment to continuous improvement based on front-line input
- Document conversations and follow through visibly—this builds trust and shows voice creates change





Storytelling + Forums + Boards

- Stories make abstract concepts concrete and memorable—share specific examples of staff living your values to reinforce desired behaviors
- Forums create psychological safety for concerns and questions, allowing leaders to address issues transparently
- Visible progress boards celebrate small wins, track key metrics, and maintain focus during long transformation journeys
- These three tools work together to create transparency, build trust, and accelerate culture change across your campus

Story - Rita Part 2: How we Responded

Create a connection between the Staff and Resident

- Staff learned what the needs were when spelled out
- Leaders empowered staff to personalize Rita's routine and respond flexibly to her individual preferences
- It requires leaders to teach staff how to make the connections and communicate through feeling
- Transformation required intentional connection, listening, and empowerment—not more resources or time



Campus Leadership Challenge: Your 7-Day Action Plan

The Challenge

Implement one tool daily for seven days

The Ripple

Your leadership actions affect how everyone on campus lives and works

- Day 1-2: Practice being fully present in three interactions daily—put away devices and listen without planning response
- Day 3-4: Use keywords at key times—notice how intentional language shifts emotional tone of conversations
- Day 5-6: Round on five staff or residents asking what's working, who deserves recognition, and what would help
- Day 7: Empower one staff member to make a decision they'd normally ask about—provide context, then trust judgment
- Share your experience with peer leaders to build accountability and sustain momentum beyond this session
- ***Don't train to comply, train to connect—satisfaction comes from relationships, not protocol***

Lets Do Good together!

- Troy Culbertson
  Tculbertson@BHHM.org
  573-406-2903

  MC5
  www.momc5.com
  Missourimc5@gmail.com

