

MEETING THE LEADERSHIP
CHALLENGE IN LONG-TERM CARE

What You Do Matters

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND STRESS REDUCING ROUNDS
Rounds to Check in on People, not to Check up on People

What are “Relationship Building Rounds?”

Slow lingering, relationship building rounds are a way to identify stressors, build relationships, pitch in, note good work, and ensure that staff have what they need to do their job; not to catch people doing or wearing something wrong. These rounds differ from safety rounds or other checking up rounds in that they are intentional relationship building and supporting rounds.

Use these lingering rounds to strengthen relationships, provide support, and be a positive presence, throughout the day and throughout the organization. This kind of rounding allows you to see people at their best and to spot opportunities for people development potential. Take note of people’s good work and good interpersonal skills. Stop and compliment people, very specifically noting what you saw and appreciated.

This rounding is an opportunity to build positive momentum. Intentionally ask what is going well, who has been going above the expected. Spread the good by letting other departments and people know when something good has been shared.

Why do rounds this way?

Nothing is more important to creating a culture of excellence than rounds - talking to people and taking action on what you hear. Leadership presence and visibility on the units and in resident rooms modeling excellent customer relations is key.

Staff stress is detrimental to the well-being of staff, residents, and organizations. By rounding regularly for the purpose of reducing stress administrators make it easier for staff to do their jobs.

Rounding to facilitate strong relationships with and among staff builds trust and teamwork; working well together makes the day better for everyone who lives and works together.

Quint Studer, in *Hardwiring Excellence*, writes: “The problem is not motivation. It is the ways in which we unintentionally de-motivate employees.” Many leaders unknowingly ignore their staff. Their staff are, or feel, invisible to them. The most common forms of feedback are silence or negative feedback. Rounding is an opportunity to provide positive feedback and let staff know you see them, person to person. Communication during rounds allows you to catch your staff doing something right and let them know they have been caught. Every hour, employees are committing acts of compassion. Let them know you saw them and appreciate it. Boost their self-esteem by noticing and commenting on their good work. Have and express high standards and expectations.

When to do it

Round early in each shift to make sure staff have what they need to do their jobs. Round at other high stress times of the day, to provide hands-on support and facilitate people’s work together.

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By David Farrell, Cathie Brady, and Barbara Frank

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The key is to do rounds religiously because visibility must stay a priority. It is not the first priority to eliminate when other demands arise.

Rounds are not a race – slow down. The quality of the walkthrough is more important than the number of walkthroughs.

How to do it

During rounds, ask staff how their work is going, what's working well, what isn't, and what they need. This is a time to reduce stress by being totally in tune with what people need to do their job. Pitch in to help out and also to model teamwork. Save steps by picking up a tray, cleaning a spill on the floor, answering a call light, as you move through. Keep track of what people ask for and follow-up to ensure that their needs are met. Check in on whether the equipment was fixed, people have the supplies they need, how a new resident or staff person is settling in. Follow-up in a personal way, as well, on a staff person who was out ill or had an ill family member, or how the children are doing. Focus on being accessible, tuning in, and building relationships.

It is important to be a positive force, whenever you are walking through the building. The single most noticeable and important behavior is to establish eye contact, smile, and say "hello" to employees, residents, physicians, visitors as you walk along instead of being absorbed in your own thoughts with a concerned look on your face.

Use rounds to:

- Meet and greet, linger
- Observe – processes of care, handoffs
- Praise, build self-esteem
- Build trust
- Foster teamwork

Notice any stressors that you can address:

- How far are people walking to fax something
- Who answers the phone after 5 PM and on weekends
- How far do staff walk for linen
- What kind of chairs are they sitting on

Rounding for Outcomes:

Quint Studer, in *Hardwiring Excellence*, says to start with a personal relationship building question and then get more specific with the questions in order to drill down to the needs that you can ask about and deliver on. Studer identifies five areas in your rounding:

- **Relationship building:** Start by asking the staff personal questions in order to build the relationship, such as "How are your beautiful kids doing?"

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- **Focus on the positive:** Ask: “What is working well today?” This question switches staff focus from the negative to the positive. As clinicians, we are trained to look at what is wrong. By drawing out the positive, you are also able to acknowledge and thank people for their good work.
- **Positive feedback loop:** Ask: “Is there anybody who has gone above and beyond the call of duty today?” This allows the leader to get names and specific behaviors in order to compliment individuals. *Harvest* the win by sharing the feedback, creating positive feedback loops between the staff and the departments. For example if a nurse says, “the meals went smoothly and the residents really liked the lasagna,” the leader can harvest that compliment by stopping by food services and saying, “I was just on Unit two and Sue the nurse said the meal service was great today and the residents loved the lasagne.” That spreads through food services like wild fire. How do you think the food service for Unit two will be the next day? This builds goodwill, relationships, trust, relational coordination.
- **QI - systems focus:** Ask: “Is there anything we can do better?” Keep your finger on the pulse of what systems are breaking down so that you can put your attention to addressing them.
- **Needs:** Ask: “Do you have the tools and equipment to do your job?” Find out what’s causing stress. Look for “quick wins” that can reduce stress and help people do their jobs.