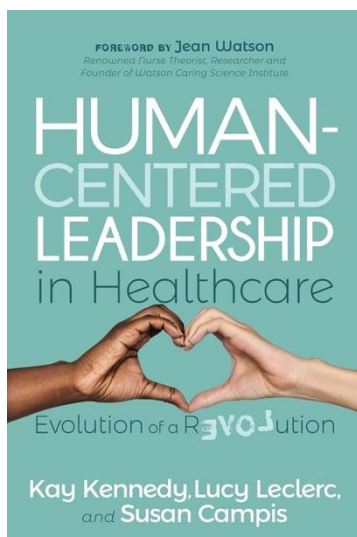




Book Review



Human Centered Leadership: Evolution of a Revolution

Kay Kennedy, Lucy Leclerc, and Susan Campis

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234 pages, Softcover, \$18.95

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In “Human-Centered Leadership in Healthcare: Evolution of a Revolution” by Kay Kennedy, Lucy Leclerc and Susan Campis, there is a huge emphasis on mindfulness and self-awareness while working in healthcare. This is especially true for nurses and nurse leaders. The book discusses how important it is to center your feelings and take a step back to analyze the situation before you react. Although this can’t always be accomplished in emergency situations, it still helps create a calmer environment and a more peaceful self. In the hospital, there is high stress and tension between workers. In most cases, there is also high turnover rate and some level of animosity between colleagues. These facts are known to come with the job. So how can healthcare workers make it easier for themselves? That is what this book explains.

In the book, the authors talk about how we must accept what we can’t change, and focus our energy on what we can. We must respond in a manner that benefits the patient, the hospital, and healthcare practices in general. What we do can set us up for success or failure in our employment. Although we should be mindful leaders, that doesn’t mean we have to meditate or do holistic treatment such as aromatherapy, we just have to be conscious of our thinking and how we feel. Kennedy et al. (2022) says, “Being mindful doesn’t require practicing meditation, even though meditation has been shown to strengthen it” (p. 55). Mindfulness also deals with

your breath and paying attention to it. Kennedy et al. (2022) says, “The breath can teach us a lot about rhythm, pace, and steadfastness” (p. 55).

This book helps prospective and current healthcare workers lead in a way that is human-centered, meaning that they try to see the humanity in people that they work alongside with. It teaches us how to be an effective leader that makes a difference in the system. It shows us how to practice compassion and empathy, changing our perspective on the type of job we are in. The book clearly outlines three attributes or characteristics of a human-centered leader and they are Awakener, Connector, and Upholder. Now these attributes should not be separated. They are intertwined and work in conjunction with each other. It is like how well-being involves mind, body and spirit (Kennedy et al., 2022, p. 65). According to Kennedy et al. (2022), the Awakener does their hardest to motivate and invigorate the desire of their subordinates to do the best that they can (p. 75). The Connector brings unity in reaching a common goal, collaborating people’s efforts (Kennedy et al., 2022, p. 98). And lastly, the Upholder maintains a standard for health and wellness by taking care of themselves first before taking care of others. They make sure that certain measures are kept and sustained (Kennedy et al., 2022, p. 115).

An important aspect of healthcare management involves communication. For example, with being a Connector, you are also acting as a Collaborator and Supporter. As a Collaborator, you meet with different departments of the hospital and gain perspective. You try to evaluate and re-evaluate situations without bias and with an open mind. Instead of working above your team, you work alongside your team. The Collaborator grounds their workers by bringing them back to the mission of the hospital system. They communicate in-depth with various members of their team to understand the premise of what’s going on and how to better support their workers. Kennedy et al. (2022) states that as a Supporter, the healthcare leader affirms their team’s positive attitude by providing encouragement, esteem, and confidence to their team members to let them know that they are valued and that they matter.

A main point made by the book involves the quote: “It starts with you but it is not about you” (Kennedy et al., 2022, p. 35). This means that even though we hold the keys to health, it isn’t about us or what’s easier for us. We have to consider the many other sides involved. Burnout occurs quite often in the hospital environment. Employees report health difficulties such as fatigue and overworking. Burnout is different from stress in that it is more extreme and involves exhaustion both physically and mentally (Kennedy et al., 2022, p. 42). This book talks about how to cope with this distress and still be an efficient healthcare employee. There are numerous tactics and stories used to target problems that pop up and cause confusion or frustration. The examples given provide the groundwork and foundation on what steps to take when deciding how to respond.

Self-care is an important topic that is touched upon in this book. The authors make a clear distinction between self-care and self-improvement. They say self-improvement is like setting high goals but when they’re not reached, we feel down and like we’ve failed. Kennedy et al. (2022) says, “Self-care, on the other hand, is all about being present in the moment, nurturing the body, mind and spirit in the here and now” (p. 43). Self-care is how you look after yourself and what you do to maintain sanity and health status in order to carry out daily functions. It is like safekeeping.

A portion of the book goes into detail about emotional intelligence and what it can do for healthcare workers and leaders. Being knowledgeable about one’s own feelings helps us to better interpret other’s feelings, whether expressed in the moment or not. It is seen as the missing component to some leaders’ success. Having high emotional intelligence aids in the productivity

of the relationships a healthcare worker forms with their coworkers. It is a useful tool to incorporate in the way we examine our flaws and other people's setbacks. It is the catalyst to change and improvement.

The authors also discuss the three C's which are competence, capability and complexity. Nurses are built to demonstrate competencies under a wide range of tasks. It is a mandatory prerequisite for nurses to undertake these requirements. They must showcase their competencies before they enter the workforce, by the time orientation finishes, and periodically, as they continue on with their career. Competency is how adept you are at something or your level of success. Capability is how much potential you have in performing certain skills. Complexity is how difficult a task is. Kennedy et al. (2021) says, "Competency and capability differ in that capability builds on competency and embraces complexity" (p. 156).

The authors mention reflective journaling to help process thoughts and emotions and prevent fast burnout. It serves as a foundation that provides insight. It allows us to take some time out of our busy day to recollect our thoughts and pause for a moment. It can also help us better understand what's going on or what the other side feels and thinks. This acts as another facet of self-care. We are focusing on ourselves for some time, acknowledging what is going on internally. Journaling and other realms of self-care can help foster innovative thinking. Innovative thinking is crucial to overcoming big problems. It involves thinking outside of the box and pushing boundaries.

When practicing human-centered leadership in healthcare, one will come across other leaders who don't practice human-centered leadership and that have different ways of leading. The way to deal with these situations is to take a step back, examine the circumstances, and act with a mindful and aware composure. Kennedy et al. (2022) says, "The Human-Centered Leader may choose to redirect to a time when the manager is calm and prepared to discuss in a professional manner" (p. 200). This book has taught me a lot about handling stress while under pressure and a time crunch. It is useful to incorporate not just in healthcare but in jobs in general. The lessons learned from this book are diverse and easy to follow. Who knew such simple steps could be so powerful?

Careers in healthcare can be hectic and full of growth. With change comes room for improvement. Kay Kennedy, Lucy Leclerc and Susan Campis are experienced nurse leaders who have overcome many obstacles. They use their wisdom and guidance to walk us through how to be a successful leader. Most of all, they have a passion for what they do and how to be better at it. They want to elevate healthcare and hospital workers. This book is full of candid discussion and real-life stories that help healthcare workers navigate the ups and downs of career in healthcare. It serves as a tremendous support and useful tool.