Measurement of the 2009 NDNQI Nurse Satisfaction Survey presented an opportunity to promote a healthier work environment within the Cardiac Surgery Intensive Care and Step Down Units.

AACN reports that there is a direct link between a healthy work environment and patient safety and that if change is expected, a formal program is required to address the issues.

On the Step Down unit, only 5% of the nurses reported a meal break free of patient care; 95% would eat but immediately respond to call lights, cell calls, and alarms. 9% reported no meal break and 50% reported a meal break less than 30 minutes. The ICU results were similar. These results are only slightly worse than the national results, but his data indicates that most nursing units share common work environment challenges.

The culture of these two high acuity, high flow units is to eat when there is time, but avoid handing off patient assignments because colleagues are too busy to take on extra responsibilities. Nurses do not complain. Most have never practiced in a different culture.

Anecdotally, the nursing staff are somewhat aware of signs of stress and burnout, but not ‘bullying.’

Knowledge gaps exist of the scope, identification, and management of same.

Methodologies include:

- Literature review
- Education: stress, lateral violence, holistic skills
- Presentations
- A dedicated ‘healing space’ on the unit for moments of relaxation, holistic skill development, and
- Healing
SOLUTION:

The solutions are directed at (2) domains to support a healing environment:
1. To promote self-care knowledge and behaviors
2. To promote healing communication among colleagues

Self-care behaviors.
Several nurses have been advancing their holistic nursing education and skills, to include Healing Touch and Reiki, and are leading the initiatives to help both patients and colleagues.
- Formal holistic education and modalities; staff may use continuing education funds
- Unit-based education for stress management, guided imagery, music therapy, mindfulness, etc.
- A unit-based healing space with music, lighting, art, massage table, etc.
- Implementation of a Quiet Time for patients, with side benefit of bundling care to permit more time for staff meals, education, and healing space respite

Healing communication.
The medical center has been actively engaged in a successful ‘commitment to excellence’ customer service program. More recently there are encouragements to afford our colleagues with the same caring behaviors. The cardiac surgery units are initiating:
- Dissemination of national guidelines to improve communication for a HWE, eg the American Association for Critical Care Nurses’ Healthy Work Environments Initiative
- Education to increase awareness of lateral violence or ‘bullying’
- Education of interventions to manage lateral violence and improve communication

The staff will be surveyed for feedback related to the healing space, education, and personal and workplace outcomes.

OUTCOMES:
The project is in the developmental stage, with full roll-out Winter-Spring 2010.

Feedback from staff range from ‘waiting to see’ to highly enthusiastic as the initiatives are developed:
1) enhancing the healing space with music, lighting, art, massage table/screen, etc.
2) education of self-care behaviors to promote health and to manage stress
3) education of lateral violence harm, identification, and interventions
4) implementation of a Quiet Time for patients which may also support meal or break times for staff
5) staff meetings and surveys to measure feedback
6) NDNQI 2010 and 2011 surveys to measure improvement