

Chapter 14

Turning PAGES With Health Coaching and Family Involvement

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ABSTRACT

This narrative provides a foundation for the PAGES family coaching program. PAGES is an acronym for practice patience, accept the present, gather information, encourage, and self-care. Each part of the acronym represents advice that family members of patients in hospitals can implement into their lives. When patients attend group physical therapy classes in a hospital after surgery, it helps to have family members present to offer support during the healing process. However, sometimes when coaching loved ones, family members can get emotionally involved and lose their objectivity. A health coach can provide the missing link of “teaching the teachers” by demonstrating effective coaching practices. The goal of the chapter is to introduce you as the reader to the PAGES program so you will simultaneously learn about a new initiative as well as reflect on ways to apply the information to your own life.

DESIGNING PAGES

PAGES, the program described in this writing, happened because of a large foundation of writing. Rarely does any single piece of writing happen in isolation. Program development and new learning opportunities occur because of the outcomes of previous writing and research. Often different pieces of writing fit together like puzzle pieces to form a larger picture. Heard (1995) confirms, “the obstacles I face – lack of time, too many projects at once – as well as the obstacles all writers face – rejection, criticism, doubts and insecurities, unfinished poems and stories – are impossible to avoid and can be valuable teachers” (pp. 38-39). Writers consistently overcome obstacles to develop new ideas. Jennifer, a health coach, has completed extensive writing and research with Eric, a physical therapist and research consultant, which

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provided a foundation upon which to scaffold this new idea. In this digital age of technology, it becomes important to remember that sometimes it is okay to put down the smart phone, turn off the television, and encourage families to have a conversation with each other. Family involvement becomes the heart and soul of PAGES. While physical therapists, health coaches, and other medical professionals can offer support to a hospital patient, when the patient goes home from the hospital, the relay baton of care gets passed to the family member caregiver.

Health coaching focuses on vision and values to help people build bridges and make connections between where they are now and where they want to be. Health coaches work with people who are mostly healthy but want to make lifestyle changes such as getting more sleep or eating healthier. Health coaches also work with patients by helping them align their vision and values with the treatment plan prescribed to them by a medical practitioner such as a physical therapist. Like pages being turned in a book, health coaches encourage patients to write the next chapters in their health stories. Cameron (1998) believes, “we need to decide that we will, one, write no matter what and, two, share that writing no matter what” (p. 135). Health coaches frequently ask people questions to guide them to their goals, ask them to write their goals, and then share the goals to achieve ownership of the accomplishments. However, once a patient finishes a session with a health coach, it becomes his or her responsibility to take the necessary steps to achieve the goals. Family members who are willing to act as cheerleaders for their loved ones during the process serve as an additional source of support during the healing journey.

This narrative provides a foundation for the PAGES family coaching program. While the program is designed for the families of hospital patients, you as the reader of this chapter may discover you can apply the information to your life in some way even if you do not have a loved one who is a hospital patient. PAGES is an acronym that serves as a reminder for families of hospital patients to reflect on what they need to do to help their loved ones who are hospital patients recover after surgery. The designers used expertise in health coaching, curriculum design, teaching, writing, and research in a physical therapy clinic to create the PAGES program with the hope it will make a difference in the lives of hospital patients and their families.

THE PAGES FAMILY COACHING PROGRAM

Helping Patients Turn New Pages and Write New Chapters in Their Healing Journeys

To help your loved one who is a patient:

- **Practice Patience:** Healing is a journey. No one can wave a magic wand and provide an immediate cure. Celebrate progress, no matter how small.
- **Accept the Present:** Feelings of guilt, anger, and frustration are normal, but are not helpful when coaching. No matter what happened in the past, this is where you are now. Worrying about the future only causes additional stress. Try your best to remain in the present moment. Consider writing in a journal to sort through your feelings.

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