

Moments with Marcus

By Marcus Engel

“Lead by Filling Others Up”

Last month while keynoting in Nashville, I met a chief nursing officer of a hospital, Cindy.

Now, I get to meet a lot of nurse leaders and hospital administration folks. This makes me really lucky because, well, if you're drawn to the work of healthcare, you're probably the compassionate, caring type who feels called to help ease the suffering of humanity. Cindy is no different, though her nurturing personality is just off the chart. And, while she doesn't do direct patient care, she knows her job is to care for the nurses who take care of the ill and injured.

We sat down in Cindy's office and, there on her desk, sat a big honking bowl of candy. Do you have one of these on your desk? I don't because, well, I have zero self-control and the bowl would always need refilling.

Cindy said, “When I moved into this position, I always wanted to have candy here and available for my nurses. I needed to get to know each nurse and, well, nurses love chocolate.” (I didn't point out to her that EVERYONE loves chocolate!)

Cindy continued, “Every nurse in our hospital knows this is here and they can come get some candy any time they want. It's kind of funny; there's a direct correlation to the amount of stress around here with the amount of candy in the bowl. Sometimes, it's almost like there's a hole in the bowl.

The nurses under Cindy's administration are lucky. Not because of the chocolate, but because they have someone who always wants to “fill them up”. When Cindy sits down with any nurse from her facility, she is reminding each how much they matter. She's encouraging them to always remember those moments they make a positive impact in the lives of their patients.

Why? Because Cindy knows that this sacred profession is tough. It's physically, emotionally and spiritually demanding. She knows that being on one's feet for 12 hours per day is hard. She knows that dealing with co-workers can sometimes be a challenge. She knows that when dealing with tough patients and families, the levels of anger, frustration and sadness can leave many nurses wondering, “Why do I do this work?”

In reality, it's horribly difficult to be to be a pediatric nurse treating a child who is the victim of abuse... or dealing with a patient's family member who shows up to the hospital drunk and causing altercations. Those problems are the “holes” where the spirit can drain out. Those are the times it's vital to remember the “Why?”

Friends, I hope you have a Cindy in your life. It may not be your boss. Maybe yours is a friend or family member. And, if you don't have a Cindy in your life? The best way to get one is to become one. Can

you look around to people near you who need encouragement? Or a reminder they are valuable? Or those who might just need a hug?

Today, I hope you'll be like Cindy and make it your mission to support someone who needs it – in the process I truly believe you'll find your own path much more fulfilling.

Marcus Engel really likes healthcare professionals!

He's also the author of "The Other End of the Stethoscope" and "I'm Here: Compassionate Communication in Patient Care."

Marcus speaks, writes and lives to provide insight and strategies for excellent patient care.

MarcusEngel.com and ImHereMovement.org is where you can find him.