

Strategy: Kindness is Free

None. None is a very small number. None, zero, zip, nada, very small number, right? Well, there's an organization called Press Ganey, and they study patient satisfaction in hospitals. One big study they did, 225,000 hospitals, 139,000 patients, and they asked people what was important, whether they had a good experience in the hospital. And so, they got a thousand ideas and then they put together a list of the top 15 things that determine patients' satisfaction with a hospital.

Here's where the *none* comes in, okay? The top 15 factors associated with whether or not you are happy with the hospital experience that you had—guess what, none, zero, none of the 15 had *anything* to do with whether you got well or got better. Every single one of the 15 had to do with the quality of the interaction with the staff, whether people treated you kindly, whether they hadn't treated you kindly, the morale of the staff. But I just love that. I mean, not to say it doesn't matter whether you get well or not in a hospital, but relative to people running restaurants or anything else, what people remember is the quality of the human interaction much more, frankly, than the way the shrimp were cooked.

Now this was stuff that came out of probably one of the best hospitals in America called Griffin Hospital. It's up in Derby, Connecticut. And the lesson that Griffin people took out in a book was what they said, and, again, this is so important to your life and mine: Kindness is free. And here are the words that they used. They said, "There is a misconception that supportive interactions require more staff or more time and are therefore more costly. Although labor costs are a substantial part of any hospital budget, the interactions themselves add nothing to the budget. *Kindness is free*. Listening to patients or answering their questions costs nothing. It can be argued that negative interactions, alienating patients, being non-responsive to their needs, limiting their sense of self-control, can be very costly." They become angry, frustrated, frightened, they may become combative, they may sue you.

But what I love about this, you know, years and years ago in the quality movement we learned quality is free and it wasn't only free but if you do quality right you save money. And what these guys are saying, and the world of hospitals is an incredibly difficult world, is, number one, the thing that patients remember—and I'm not arguing against helping get them well—they remember the quality of the staff interactions, number one; the staff can understand, hopefully understands, is motivated to understand, that kindness really is the key. And then this wonderful one: Kindness is the key to happy patients and kindness saves money. Doesn't get a hell of a lot better than that.