

Relationship, not Rules- What Should Matter Most in Long Term Care

Have you ever noticed there are a lot of rules in a nursing home and many assisted livings? "Oh no, we don't allow pets here, your dog cannot live with you." "Breakfast is at 8:00." "Oh there is no regular caffeinated coffee here, it's only decaf."

Can you imagine? Leaving your beloved pet of many years? My friend Michele lost her dog recently. On a picture of him she showed me she titled it and had actually named him Eddie *Zoloff* Franzen. Because, as she said, he was her antidepressant! But no, no pets here. Can you imagine if you are an early bird and are used to getting up at 5:00 am and eating at least by 6:00 that you have to wait til 8:00? And what about the rest of us who like to sleep in and eat later? Nope, 8:00. And what if, even worse, you don't even eat breakfast? Usually doesn't matter, "breakfast is at 8:00 and we get everyone up for it." And how do you like that last one? All are served decaf coffee, period, no matter what? I have a feeling most reading this would be in an uproar. I know I would be.

Rules are a mark of an institution. Relationship is the hallmark of a changed culture that puts the person first. We are changing nursing homes to be relationship-rich instead of all about rules. There is a video in our culture change movement called *A Way Back Home* (produced by Action Pact, culturechangenow.com) in which a resident of a transformed household nursing home states, "I asked what the rules were when I moved here. They told me there were no rules and to live my life like I always have." Yes. That's what we are all about. So if you find yourself or someone you love "up against rules" you know that home has not changed its culture...yet. And you can be instrumental in asking, no demanding it. We need the market to also call for, otherwise known as demand, what we all want, our choices and preferences honored, not having to follow someone else's rules or schedule.

The Pioneer Network is our national organization leading the culture change movement and has identified thirteen values of a self-directed culture. One is this very point we're thinking about: Relationship is the fundamental building block of a transformed culture (pioneernetwork.net). A relationship-rich culture is one that focuses on the people who live there, treats the place as their home in which they should be able to live their lives like they always have making choices about preferences and wishes just like they always have. Staff members no longer wake residents up, they honor their sleep and help them get ready for the day when they naturally awaken. Staff members no longer decide what



someone will eat, they offer choices instead. Schedules no longer conform to the convenience of staff but rather to the people's lives who live there.

It's very exciting and we want everyone to know that the days of rules should be over, help us make it that way, and the days of being well-known are here or should be.

By Carmen Bowman, Edu-Catering, Regulator turned Educator and Firestone resident

Carmen is available to speak to your group about how nursing homes are changing or about how your group can reach out to people who live in a local nursing home, assisted living or in your neighborhood, church or family.

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