Places for Struggling Teens™

Published by
Woodbury Reports, Inc.™

"It is more important to get it right, than to get it first."

February 2009 - Issue #174

Bedside Manners

By: Lon Woodbury



"Bedside Manners" is a term that comes from the medical field from a long gone era. The term brings about images of the "good" old days when General Practice Medical Doctors made house calls, and from being in the home knew how their clients lived, knew the whole family by name and were familiar with most of the life history of everybody in the family. The Doctor would sit by the bedside in the home of a sick patient and mix diagnosis and treatment in with comforting and reassuring talk about personal matters important to the patient. When they had good "bedside manners," the Doctor would be trusted as a friend and confidant as well as a professional.

With the tremendous advances in the life sciences during the last half of the 20th century, the medical profession, along with the mental health profession, began to see themselves as scientists. As a result, many of them adopted an objective perspective toward their clients, that is, they saw people more as patients to be treated by scientific techniques, rather than as humans needing healing. The days of the house call virtually disappeared, and patients started seeing their doctor only in the hospital or in his/her office during a quick session by appointment set long before. The art of the "bedside manner" seemed to be disappearing.

This trend seems to be reversing in the last few years, and I think for two reasons. First, I've seen several reports of studies that indicate Doctors with good "bedside manners" are less likely to be sued by their clients or their client's family. We've all seen anecdotal stories indicating this and it intuitively rings true. When something goes wrong, people are more likely to be hostile to someone they think is arrogant—the cool, distant and objective approach being interpreted as arrogant and uncaring.

Second, the research is clear that a patient's emotional wellbeing has a powerful influence on their overall health and ability to heal. By showing they knew the family and cared about the whole person, those old Doctors with good "bedside manners" knew what they were doing.

Basically, the term "bedside manners" refers to developing good and appropriate personal relationships with clients. It is now clear that success as a General Practice Medical Doctor depends largely on developing good positive relationships or appropriate friendships with their clients. Fortunately, it seems this perspective is making a comeback in the Medical Profession.

This lesson on the importance of personal relationships is one that needs to be learned by all professionals in all

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Kristie Henley, Assistant Director of Woodbury Reports, Inc. (daughter of Lon and Denise Woodbury) and Ron Campbell, IT Specialist for Woodbury Reports, were married January 24, 2009.

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