

## Generosity Star



“And the Generosity Star goes to....” **you** for generously going beyond the call of duty.

You’ve probably noticed by now that Ward Stars is all about how the little things (and the not so little things) add up and create a ripple effect. A key ingredient is generosity. Working on a mental health ward requires extraordinary personal and professional generosity: it’s the whole ‘bringing yourself to work’ thing, with staff being willing to spend their time, access their feelings, share their leisure interests, bring in their lemon meringue pie or Labrador. Perhaps more than any other Star, HCAs’ generosity exemplifies how wholehearted they are.

Staff, including HCAs are incredible in their ability, day in, day out, to put their personal needs to one side and respond to (indeed successfully anticipate) what a patient is going through – which takes **imagination**. Again, you’ll notice that the foundation of Ward Stars IMAGINE (Imagination, Mindfulness etc) links together.

This Star reflects the times when HCAs inspire patients to feel positive about themselves, as staff establish powerfully genuine, human contact with them, melting the distancing effect of roles, titles, uniforms and everything else which can reinforce patients’ sense of difference, passivity and inadequacy. Being generous while maintaining necessary boundaries is an awesome skill! In particular, patients appreciate (even if this isn’t always apparent!) staff going the extra mile, whether by staying a few minutes after their shift ends to say goodbye properly to a patient who is about to leave or being willing to share, therapeutically for the patient, some of their own experiences and feelings.

The ripple effect your generosity creates is far-reaching. Generosity breeds kindness. Patients themselves can be remarkably generous in the midst of extreme trauma and manage to be attentive and supportive to other patients, and sometimes to staff.

**Imagine this...**

One HCA proposed some modest ideas for a new activity coordinator role on the ward. A few years on and following a successful pilot period, the 'Therapeutic Liaison Worker' role has gone from strength to strength and a dynamic team of TLWs has now been established throughout the Trust.

Being able to contribute to others is increasingly being recognised as a powerful way of feeling better about ourselves. (And clearly ward staff don't derive satisfaction from enormous pay cheques but from the knowledge that they are providing skilled care to people at the darkest periods of their lives.) Lots of wards generously take part in all sorts of charity fund-raising and awareness-raising activities and these can be some of the most fun, satisfying and bonding days of the year for patients and staff. Being involved with good causes is a powerful route to feeling good. 'Giving' is the first of ten keys to happier living according to Action For Happiness: 'Helping others is not only good for them and a good thing to do, it also makes us happier and healthier too.' Generosity is contagious. Seeing someone do something kind of thoughtful inspires us kinder ourselves.

The Generosity Star is about tapping into one's unique talents and interests and bringing these into the ward setting. This shows patients your flexibility, thoughtfulness and genuineness. 'Bringing yourself to work' and being wholehearted is incredibly rewarding on so many levels.

**Imagine this...**

One HCA (who is also a brilliant artist) has been doing stunning pencil drawings for years for staff and his friends and family. Now he's offering his services to patients (free of charge), who absolutely love his work. They bring in photos of their children and pets etc for him to sketch. The HCA has protected time to do this work.

Perhaps you go out of your way to help orientate new patients to the ward; introducing them to everyone and giving them a thorough and helpful guided tour. Our first moments in a new environment are disproportionately important in setting the tone for the rest of the experience. Another way to show thoughtfulness is by acknowledging and when appropriate, celebrating patients' birthdays. Simply acknowledging birthdays goes a long way, especially for patients who are feeling cut off from family and friends or traumatised about their age. Selfless acts of kindness go a long way.

One HCA explains: "It always surprises me how thankful patients are when I bring in their favourite magazine from home. I don't mind; it only takes seconds to pick up a used magazine from my coffee table on my way out of the house. There's also a lady on the ward who finds it hard to eat much on the ward but she loves a specific kind of Bombay mix. So I buy a bag whenever I do my shopping and she refunds me. I don't mind doing these things if it brightens up their day. The things that count often don't take much effort to do."

## Related Wardipedia features and examples

### 34. Appreciative culture

- The ward has a 'thank you tree' on the wall. Staff, patients and visitors are invited to stick post-its of thanks to the tree.

### 35. Bring yourself to work day

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### 36. Role flexibility

- One Housekeeper also has a nursing assistant role, which includes going to patients' homes to help them settle back in.

### 37. Arriving and leaving

- Small toiletries' bags are offered to patients on admission.

### 38. Patients birthdays

- One member of staff is 'Birthday Co-ordinator' and keeps up-to-date with dates and organises the celebration.

### 39. Café

- Part of the dining room has been turned into a friendly café to coincide with visiting times.

### 40. Senior managers

- The chief executive runs one of their hospital book clubs

### 41. Shopping options

- Fast food and takeaways are ordered online via websites like <http://www.just-eat.co.uk/>

### 42. Charities

- A Hairy Head day for Comic Relief, with staff and patients adding fake eyelashes, wigs, plaits, false moustaches, hairy chests for the cause.

### 43. Going Green

- Patients go to the local garden centre to choose plants; books about gardening have been resourcefully sought from local gardening clubs, there's a sheet on the noticeboard where patients have written their ideas for the garden

### 44. Gay patients

- Staff make it clear that gay patients can bring along their partner to appointments.

### **Some of the ways patients may benefit from the Generosity Star:**

- Patients are able to relate to and trust staff on a human level
- Patients are inspired to feel positive about themselves
- Patients appreciate staff going the extra mile
- A generous and kind ward environment is established
- Patients are supported to give something back to the ward community and to their wider community

### **Resources**

- Perhaps the best possible resources are the generous use of the two phrases "Well done" and "Thank you". See: <http://www.wardipedia.org/34-appreciative-culture/>
- Pound shops are full of brilliant, affordable, fun, arty crafty, handy resources.
- Sites like Free3Collect, FreeCycle, GumTree are brilliant ways to get hold of cheap and free resources. <http://www.free2collect.co.uk/> <http://www.gumtree.com/>  
<http://www.recycle.co.uk/>
- Welcome Bags! See: <http://www.wardipedia.org/37-arriving-and-leaving/>