

Imagination Star



If you're a Health Care Assistant, you may have heard or been given the unhelpful 'unqualified' label on at least one occasion, when in fact you're far from 'unqualified'. HCAs are amazingly talented, and use creative thinking and approaches continuously, and we don't just mean in arty, crafty ways. If there's a job that consistently requires heaps of resourcefulness, focus, inventiveness and positivity it's the HCA role.

HCAs are the 'Jugaad' innovators of the health care world, a Hindi word meaning an innovative fix; an improvised solution born from ingenuity and resourcefulness. Frugal innovation embraces keeping things simple while making sure people get what they need. Kicking off a spontaneous game of charades; instinctively working out ways to manage the juggling act of everyday ward life; or adapting communication styles accordingly to meet each patient's needs. HCAs truly are an imaginative crew who have the ability to think on their feet and create important and meaningful relationships with patients. This Star is all about that special innovative spark: the talented skill of making instant improvements on the go.

Imagination creates empathy through being able to consider the situation and feelings of another person, which leads to compassion. Imagination demonstrates understanding; it demonstrates that we are looking beyond the unquestioned ways of doing things to innovative possibilities. 'Mentalising' is an important skill that allows us to be aware of our own and others' thoughts and feelings; it is featured in the Mindfulness Star section.

Imagine this...

An impromptu game of paper plate Frisbee, improvised space-hopper races using giant gym balls... It's amazing what low-cost, fun-filled activities can be effortlessly executed with a little bit of imagination!

The Imagination Star is about interest, curiosity, trying out new things and having fun! Being creative is one of the best ways to tap into imagination (and imagination is one of the best ways of being creative!). Again, when we use the word 'creativity' here we are not just referring to artistic talents (although being artistic is one way of being creative).

HCA's continuously use their imagination and creativity to see things from each patient's unique perspective and to expertly produce personalised responses to help them. The hundreds of examples of fantastic patient experiences in our web site [Wardipedia](#) are testimony to the ability of ward staff to put themselves in the patient's shoes.

Some innovative improvements that can be made are seemingly small (but have big impact) and others are noticeably big (and take some time to come into fruition). Taking the initiative to reword the text of a poster so it's easier to understand can make patients feel engaged and motivated. Providing a patient's family with a leaflet about their loved one's condition can ease their fear and confusion and help them feel more in the picture. Sending an email to the Site Manager about introducing a recycling bin on the ward can lead on to helping the service do their bit for the environment.

As Disney say, "If you can dream it, you can do it." One HCA explains that for her the catalyst for imagination is having an inquisitive mind: "One of the first things that became clear to me about working on a ward is how much you learn every day. I found myself asking questions all of the time because I was fascinated. You get to meet so many interesting people; both staff and patients. I love the buzz of all of that. It's really inspiring and gets my mind working and coming up with all sorts of creative and sometimes zany ideas! Then the next step is having the guts and motivation to step out and step up and put those ideas into practice."

Related Wardipedia features and examples

01. Consultant appointments

- Staff run groups at same time as reviews are open so patients can come and go

02. Mono-consultants

- The HCAs make a special effort to introduce new patients to consultants. They help start real conversations and connections, creating a “relational bridge” between them.

03. Therapeutic liaison worker

- A good range of self-help handouts and leaflets have now been put together which patients are able to take away with them when they leave hospital. The TLW role provides a member of staff with the capacity to research, create and source these resources.

04. Ladder of priorities

- Getting together as a ward (including MDT members and patients representatives) to establish a ladder is both a cathartic and therapeutic activity. It also gets everyone on the same track, helps with organisation and could possibly decrease conflict amongst staff and patients.

05. Relational security

- Changed from control and restraint to SCIP (Strategy for Crisis Intervention and Prevention) and service users teach on the course. They’ve had 3 incidents in 5 years!

06. Animals

- A hugely popular animals’ day was held, with visitors ranging from reptiles to rodents. Patients bravely and enjoyably cuddled even the slithery snake.

07. Mentalising

- One person on multi-disciplinary team has done 3 day introductory mentalising course and introduced techniques to ward.

08. Community meetings

- Regular patient meetings take place. A group called ‘Your voice’ has been established which provides a framework for feedback on the services provided that go on to inform the organisation at Board level.

09. Engagement is the thing

- Regular patient meetings take place. A group called ‘Your voice’ has been established which provides a framework for feedback on the services provided that go on to inform the organisation at Board level.

10. Creative communicating

- Posters have been produced to offer staff advice on how to best communicate with different people.

11. Peer supporters

- The patient rep for the ward is encouraged to provide a brief ‘induction’ to the ward and offer advice.

Some of the ways patients may benefit from the Imagination Star:

- Wider range of helpful and constructive experiences
- More opportunity for empathic engagement
- Compassionate care
- More opportunity for having fun
- Patients feel taken seriously and that staff are interested in them

Resources

- <http://www.wardipedia.org/imagination-2>
- <http://www.wikihow.com/Be-Imaginative>
- *Lateral Thinking: A Textbook of Creativity* by Edward de Bono
- *Nurturing Innovation Pocketbook* by Douglas Miller
- *A crash course in creativity*: Tina Seelig at TEDx Stanford
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyM6rx69iqg>