

PROCEEDINGS

**Public Health Executive & Administrative Assistants Conference
February 22, 2018
Champagne West, Novotel Toronto Centre, 45 The Esplanade, Toronto**

Welcome, Introductions & Opening Remarks



Rachel Quesnel, Executive Assistant to the Medical Officer of Health & Secretary to the Board of Health, Public Health Sudbury & Districts, opened the conference with a territorial acknowledgement. New alPHA Executive Director Loretta Ryan was introduced and welcomed attendees to call or email her.



Attendees introduced themselves and indicated their length of service at the health unit. An icebreaker at the tables helped attendees get to know each other.

*(Click on the presentation **titles in bold** to view the slide deck for each speaker)*

Leading Outside the Lines - Dr. Valerie Jaeger

Former Niagara Region medical officer of health Dr. Valerie Jaeger spoke about “leading outside the lines,” the balancing of the informal and formal mechanisms within an organization that result in higher performance as defined in the [book of the same name](#). Every organization is made up of two organizations—the formal and the informal. The formal organization is focused on corporate rules,



policies, hierarchy, etc. whereas the informal organization is characterized by values, culture, and networks, etc. The role of the Executive Assistant (EA) and Administrative Assistant figures prominently in the informal organization as making connections is fundamental to these positions.

Valerie highlighted five informal mechanisms that can lead to greater performance: teamwork (We not Me), trust (not to be confused with loyalty), network (Golden Web), alternate pathways (less clear cut, but quicker than formal channels), and culture. Culture is often made up of the formal and informal rules within an organization, and it is what “holds you up when policy doesn’t.” She also noted that on the trust issue, it is vital that the employer-EA/AA relationship is built on two-way trust. A good EA/AA can improve a boss, and vice versa. She further suggested that attendees think about their performance objectives with respect to their health units’ strategic plans and recommended that public health EAs and AAs share their objectives with each other or develop a joint performance objective as a collective.

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Better Organizational Change - Glen Paskiw

Consultant Glen Paskiw opened by sharing his background as a former administrative assistant before presenting on the concept of organizational change management. Change management are the formal supports to ensure that an organization and its people are successful with change. Barriers to success include those at the personal level (e.g. human nature's tendency to judge/be negative, defense mechanisms) and at the organizational level (e.g. lack of resources for implementation). He then led an exercise in which participants were asked to identify the changes experienced at their health units in the last six months—both positive (drivers) and negative (barriers). A summary of these drivers and barriers can be found [here](#).



Following the exercise, Glen noted that many drivers needed to be leveraged to create successful change. Understanding the barriers is essential and allows the organization to consider a structured approach to change. This structured approach is centred on people (leaders who can lead well, manage expectations), a framework (i.e. list of elements the organization needs to pay attention to), planning (for content, players, analysis, activities, milestones), a set of principles, and delivery (i.e. operationalizing the change).

Small Shifts Ripple Outward – A Strength-Based Approach to Change - Stacey Gilbeau



Stacey Gilbeau, Program Manager, Health Promotion Division, Public Health Sudbury & Districts, presented on managing change at the personal level. Using a skipping stone analogy, she stated that the way we respond to change causes ripples outward. To navigate change (from bouncing back from change to thriving from change), resiliency can be found in the following equation: I am + I can = thrive. A growth mindset, as opposed to one that is fixed, helps individuals thrive. It says mistakes can be learned from; it can also lead to progress.

Handouts were provided on a [Resiliency Framework](#) and [strengths-based principles](#). In a short exercise, participants were asked to list personal internal and external strengths that will help them navigate change. These are the strengths that a person taps into to thrive in life. Examples include perspective (internal) and family ties (external). With change, Stacey noted, people tend to focus on only certain things such as the negative. This is a case of a fixed/problems mindset that needs to be shifted to a growth/strengths mindset. Attendees were challenged to add one strength a week to their list.

Other approaches to navigating change at the personal level included being innovative, adopting a different perspective to change, and drawing on our passions (“spark”) to build up new or existing relationships. Stacey ended by handing out skipping stones and encouraging participants to take on a thriving, growth mindset the next time when making ripples.

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Practicing Cultural Humility in Public Health - Samiya Abdi

Samiya Abdi, Senior Program Specialist in Health Promotion, Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention, Public Health Ontario, began by acknowledging the treaty lands and welcomed many diverse groups of people in the meeting room. Through a quick table exercise where everyone talked about the origins of their names, it was shown that assumptions are often made about people based on their names.



Attendees were next asked to define culture and to think about how it is different from race, nationality, ethnicity, and to share information about their own cultural background. They learned that cultural humility is a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique. Its principles include: commitment to self-reflection, reflection and self-critique; developing mutually beneficial partnerships; redressing power imbalances; and advocating for/maintaining community/workplace consistency.

Samiya also spoke about intersectionality, which is the belief that oppressions are interlinked and cannot be solved alone. In the final exercise using three scenarios, participants discussed the cultural-based assumptions made in each scenario. The exercise raised awareness of not only people's inherent biases when it comes to culture, but also the need to practice cultural humility to help overcome these biases. The presentation ended with participants in a group circle expressing their thoughts and feelings about how the day unfolded for them.

Many thanks to the following conference planning committee members for their help in organizing this event:

[Jenn Barrett](#), EA to the MOH, Hastings Prince Edward Public Health

[Jane Bonaldo](#), EA to the MOH, Niagara Region Public Health

[Lindsay Koch](#), EA, Northwestern Health Unit

[Rachel Quesnel](#), EA to the MOH & Secretary to the Board, Public Health Sudbury & Districts

[Karen Reece](#), AA, alPha

[Susan Lee](#), Manager, Administrative & Association Services, alPha

All presentations and (most) handouts can be found in the Presentations Library on alPha's website at: <https://alphaweb.site-ym.com/?Presentations> (login and password required)

PHOTO GALLERY (including next two pages)





Thanks to everyone who attended!