National Association of Community Health Centers®

April 16, 2021
Leading with Optimism During Challenging Times
Webinar

Q&A

Shawn Achor

1. To what extent do you think the individual's 'self-worth' (or feelings of poor image) may be influenced by your perspective?

   SA: This is a fascinating question, one in which I spent an entire book exploring. It's my least known book, but in Before Happiness I look at why some people choose to make choices toward happiness and why others don't. It came down to the belief that their behavior mattered which was predicated on previous experience and self-worth. Ultimately, an individual must believe that they are worthy of good things happening to them and that it is possible for good things to happen. A negative self-worth cycle can be interrupted by even a single piece of praise, or a positive habit confirming that they have positive untapped potential which drives the next step and the next step.

2. How do you convince some of your more cynical staff to "embrace" positivity?

   SA: I think the best approach is research and experience. We usually use the TED talk to start the conversation, but the books or the HBR articles are designed to get past the mental barriers to change. Our greatest champions were cynical converts. But more important than changing the cynics is changing the middle tier, the group of people who are easily influenced positive or negatively by the other ends of the spectrum. By empowering the middle group, you increase the number of positive sources and thus the positive social impact on the team, including the cynics.

3. Is there a recommended order to read/purchase Shawn's books, or does the sequence not matter?

   SA: Most people do The Happiness Advantage and then Big Potential and then if you're really interested Before Happiness. But my favorite book is Big Potential, and I think it's really helpful for leaders. If you are interested in bring happiness to life in your organization then perhaps read The Orange Frog second as it is the story of implementing the Happiness Advantage.

Jordan Voight

1. You had great internal reminders for your staff, was there any outward facing information to patients or visitors to better understand why people were in orange or the bulletin board materials or did you only see that measured in patient satisfaction surveys?

   JV: Our main focus were our employees, which in turn helped improve patient experience. In 2019 we were the nation's most improved for Patient Experience, which I credit to the focus on positivity and overcoming adversity. We provide pediatric patients little orange frogs, capes, etc. We purposely didn't have a welcome sign explaining, but in a majority of instances patients/visitors ask staff members, which naturally generate a conversation on our positivity journey.

2. You said your doctors were the hardest to convince or engage – what worked?

   JV: I could spend an hour on this topic - as engaging and earning the support of medical staff is critical in a cultural change. I think a few important aspects helped:
   - *We hosted an off-campus event (food and cocktails) in which we had a presentation on the evidence behind positive psychology and the rationale for improving positivity at the medical center.*
   - *We paid the salary for physicians to attend the full training course.*
   - *Physicians, in which some can feel uncomfortable socially or can feel disconnected with front line staff, were hungry for better connections to front line staff (social connections, common language, etc.).*
   - *Have written expectations in medical directorship contracts, "Active proponents and supporter of the Orange Frog initiative."*
   - *Encouraged individual staff/department managers to engage their respective physicians (i.e. - endo department started potlucks every Friday - GI and General Surgeons joined and would bring food each Friday).*
   - *Utilize common language - physicians now will respectfully call each other out in meetings, "Dr. Phelps, that wasn't a very orange comment." It is just becoming our culture....*

   I could talk a while about physician engagement, but it is critical!