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It's Not How, It's Why that Makes It Work for Me!

by Teepa Snow, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA

"I don't know how you do it," is probably one of the most common comments I get when I am on the road – when people are reviewing my schedule, or if someone is wondering when I could meet with them and I pull out my phone calendar to try to find a spot.

Here's the thing. It's not the **how** of it. Yeah, that's hard, sometimes grueling, sometimes frustrating, and sometimes requiring incredible flexibility and in-the-moment problem solving beyond what is reasonable. The way I manage to do all this stuff, is that I get a huge return on investment. No, not financially. We do okay. However, to be honest, all we have done with any extra, is put it back into the growth and development of the organization and people who make up the organization. Instead, what makes all of this doable, is the amazing and remarkable gifts I receive in return. The hugs and tears, the comments, and excitement, the stories, and the faces of people who are changed. The reports on how they have used that new found awareness, knowledge, or skill to change the relationships they are in, the work they are doing, or the life they are living. It turns out that in every offering I provide, there is at least one person who is impacted - changed in some way that opens a door or window into another space, another view, another perspective that alters what is happening for them and those around them. How remarkable is that? That is fuel for my spirit and feeds my soul. To know that I help others, and through their work, help beyond my physical reach or visual regard. That is the thing that makes it all possible to do.

As to the how do I do it. Well that is a good bit more complicated. The fact of the matter is that ***I can't and don't do it on my own, anymore***. Actually, I never did. Dick, my husband of over 40 years, has always been a part of this activity in some fashion. Although, he rarely accompanies me on my crazy journeys he has managed the banking side of life since the start. There was a time when Dick was still running his business full-time, that I was pretty much operating solo. I did manage all my travel, booking, billing, services, PPTs, communications, and the other sundry details of being all over the US and Canada, consulting with a senior living company in Georgia, and working for the Eastern NC Chapter of the Alzheimers Association. But times have changed. Even then, the back-up was bigger than that. JoAnn and then Valerie, finally adding in Emilio. This group was critical in getting DVDs of workshops I did at the Pines of Sarasota in Florida out to people all around the globe. There was Senior Helpers who were using my programs and GEMS classification to provide a core training for all employees. There was the Cedar Village Foundation who helped me produce the first book, *Dementia Caregiver Guide*, as a resource for families and providers. Many of the pictures feature some of our current staff.

Once I couldn't really handle everything on my own, I changed things a bit. The first major change I made was to get a booking and travel assistant! Enter, Corrie! She became my phone voice and schedule manager. Corrie handled and fielded many

inquiries, questions, PPT requests, travel details, and arrangements with hosts while I focused more on being where I was supposed to be, doing what I supposed to do, and getting to the next location on schedule... depending on the whim of the weather and airlines!

After that things got a good bit more complicated. Kelly took on my bookings, Corrie took on Social Media and the web presence management, and I had a couple of accomplices, Peg and Beth, working on helping to do stuff in some communities. As part of that effort, we tried out a model where there were three leaders working toward a common goal of expanding this Positive Approach message and effort around the world. That was when we started to offer Certification Courses. One day for Trainer skill development! ... What was I thinking??? It turns out that it is a lot harder to absorb all the information and then get your body and your brain to do what you want it to, than I thought it was. After all, I had been doing it for years and it flowed so easily and well. We also tried bringing people together for a three-day intensive on developing all PAC knowledge and skills in Atlanta. It turned out to be an exhausting three days for most people with limited ability to get the value of day three. It's called living and learning and making changes to improve how it goes. Additionally, we got a great firm to help us with a real web presence, with a plan to convert almost all I was doing to an on-line version, so that it could continue and I could step back a bit. Like almost all construction projects, it turned out that it took a lot longer, was more costly, had failures in function, and was more complicated than originally planned.

The whole time all this was going on, it was important to keep my usual speaking offerings going, as that was what was funding the other pilot projects and website development.

As the complexities of trying to keep everything moving forward, while still going out over 250 days a year added up, it became very obvious we would need a stronger and more centralized and available leadership for the administrative side of the programs. Enter, Amanda! Good thing she had a background in education and experiential learning design. Within her first month, she helped to mentor three courses on the west coast of North America while trying to get a handle on how the administrative side of the company worked.

Time passed, we added more staff and independent contractors from across the US, into Canada, and then in the UK. At this point, we have over 30 Certification Courses each year. We have a new and robust website, that is still a work in progress. We have over 30,000 people noticing us on Facebook and 20,000 YouTube viewers since we started counting. We have over 1,700 PAC Certified Community members in at least ten countries. We have over 30 DVDs and many more on-line streamed content areas and products to help individuals and communities. We offer free monthly *Ask Teepa Anything on-line sessions*, with people joining us from around the globe. All of this has happened, not by magic, but by a combination of incredibly hard work, innovation, creativity, detail-focus, and error-correction, added to outstanding teamwork. Each member of our PAC group has participated in personal growth and enhancement training. We practice skill building as part of our weekly and monthly routines. We live what we share.

In late November, we celebrated our first *Annual PAC Conference* in NC with over 420 people in attendance. We did many, many things well and met a lot of needs. We also saw areas for improvement and growth for next time! And, although the Conference was a really huge event requiring all-hands on deck and state-of-the-art coordination, it was only part of my work week. Earlier in the week before that production, I was in St. Paul, Minnesota, Detroit, Michigan, and Grantville, Pennsylvania. When I flew back into town on Friday evening, I got ready to be part of our PAC Players team that practiced for two full days and delivered the play the evening before the Conference as a kick-off for the Positive Approach to Care gathering! Then, I ran five VIP Sessions for Certified people to build even more skills in selected areas, helped with the opening and closing sessions, and worked with the people living with dementia we had as part of our Core Team at the event. Add to that, I took off Tuesday evening on Delta, and offered two sessions in Louisville for the Kentucky Association for Health Care Facilities on Wednesday, with Laura at an info table. Then I flew up to Madison, Wisconsin and drove to the Wisconsin Dells on Thursday for their FOCUS Conference with over 1,100 attendees, sponsored by the Wisconsin Health Services Department! I was supported by my old faithful travel-table companion, Corrie, for role play and information table management, as well as navigator for the trip to Milwaukee to fly out to ATL and then to RDU for an evening webinar before calling it a week. Well, except for a program on Sunday at Sid Jacobsen in NY! And by the way, **yes**, I was whipped by the end of Thursday! I was even a half hour late for a 7 am meeting the next morning! I don't usually do that.

So back to the original question: How do I do it? Well, it's a mission. To help to change what is currently happening to too many people living with dementia or other forms of brain change and their care providers, into something I would want to have happen for me, if I was ever in need of it. To keep my eyes on the prize and my head on track, I often consider these quotes from some of the people I admire most.

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

Mahatma Gandhi

"It is better to light a candle, than curse the darkness."

"It is not fair to ask of others what you are not willing to do yourself."

"You must do the things you think you cannot do."

"I think at a child's birth, if a mother could ask a fairy godmother to endow it with the most useful gift, it would be curiosity."

All by Eleanor Roosevelt

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

St Francis of Assisi

I am doing my best to demonstrate through what I do, change for the better.

I try to create and offer new possibilities rather than get frustrated with what is not happening or even worse at times, what is.

I try hard not to ask for what I am not willing to tackle myself.

I apparently had a super fairy godmother, because, I am forever curious about what is possible and what comes next.

I am still working on the last piece. Serenity-courage-wisdom... still sorting these out 😊! Here's to more and different in 2020!



PAC's Mission Statement

Using our talents and abilities to develop awareness, knowledge, and skill *with* all people, that will transform what exists into a more positive dementia care culture. ***Changing Dementia Care One Mind At A Time.***