

The Value of Perspective/ The Power of Partnership



Lynnlee Fullenwider,
OTR/L, CHT

*Eastside Hand Rehabilitation Clinic
Kirkland, WA*

For a touch of perspective as I look back over the past 25 years, who knew there would be or could have imagined:

The Gulf War
AIDS

Big hair and bell-bottoms would come back?

Life without a cell phone
CDs, the Internet, faxes

The eruption of Mt. St. Helens
Presidential elections would depend on hanging chads

Black and white TV would lead to flat screens, plasma screens, and 99 channels with nothing on

Telemedicine

Arthroscopic surgery

MRIs

Barbies and Botox parties

Creating ASHT would lead to HTCC

Cloning

Cryogenics

A question of freedom

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It is a pleasure to be here today to have this opportunity to share a bit of perspective and partnership with all of you. Being awarded this honor after Georgiann Laseter's Nathalie Barr last year, I thought, Wow, I have some big shoes to fill. This immediately made me laugh, as Georgiann so often does, when I thought of walking in her shoes, or anyone's for that matter. I thought of the stories those shoes could tell. Not to worry Georgiann, I have assured you that many of our tales are to the grave, my dear friend. One of my other colleagues warned me that I at least better be funny, so with all due respect, here's the joke:

Patient: "Doctor, I don't know what's wrong with me, but I hurt all over. If I touch my shoulder here, it hurts, and if I touch my leg here, it hurts, and if I touch my head here, it hurts, and if I touch my foot here, it hurts."

Doctor: "I believe you've broken your finger."

Joking aside, to present the Nathalie Barr is such a privilege and as the recipient it feels like winning the World Series before you've played the game. While it is such an honor, I think anyone who has received it would tell you that each of the recipients wants to leave their audience with something meaningful. It is one of those rare moments when you find yourself looking back on where you have been while looking forward to the future. It seems such a paradox to look backward and forward at once. But the significance of any achievement exists in that very contradiction.

Without our past, we would have nothing on which to build the future. Without the future, our past would have no opportunity to come into full bloom. For me, it is a culmination of a 30-year career that has been filled with opportunity, and excellent people, with no shortage of characters, challenging partnerships, and a lot of perspective.

This association [American Society of Hand Therapists] has been dedicated to promoting personal education, professional development, research, and continuous learning since 1977. It is something all of us who are affiliated with it can be proud of. It has been an invaluable partnership for myself that has provided no shortage of perspective regarding hand therapy and life. While researching previous Nathalie Barr topics since the lectureship's inception in 1987, a common thread appeared. Initially, in 1987, Evelyn Mackin shared with us "Building a Legacy through Mentorship," in which she shared Nathalie Barr's history and legacy as well as the start of the hand therapists' society.

"The Choice is Yours": In 1988, Maude Malick reflected on the evolution of professional women and the expanded opportunities for them and for hand therapists on the horizon.

"Hand Research and Success": Judith Bell-Krotoski told us of her early career, finding a mentor in Dr. Paul Brand, Irene Hollis, and the early years of hand therapy research.

“Hand, Changes, Quality, and Survival”: Elaine Ewing Fess reflected on the nature of our hands, changes in hand therapy, our accountability, quality, and working together.

“High Level Hand Therapy: A Matter of Art and Attitude”: Gloria Devore gave us perspective on the full spectrum of hand therapy, relating the technology and the artistic dimension.

“Beyond Certification—Meeting the Challenges of the 90s through Teamwork”: Mary C. Kasch took us beyond her daunting efforts with certification to the value of teamwork and its contribution to progress.

“Look How Far We Have Come”: Bonnie L. Olivett presented a 15-year overview of the profession of hand therapy with a touching and heartfelt video of interviews with several of her patients.

“Caring for the Patient”: Nancy M. Cannon created a “caring for the patient instruction book” rich with reflections from fellow colleagues.

“Life on the Road with My Heroes”: Kenneth R. Flowers relayed the art of our game and the ultimate importance of our science.

“Looking Back, Looking Forward: Thoughts along the Way”: Carolina S. deLeeuw spoke of controlling our own destinies and allowing experiences to provide opportunities for growth along the way.

“The Source of Our Strength”: Roslyn B. Evans dedicated her talk to her friend and mentor Dr. William E. Burkhalter (1928-1992) and spoke to us about the changing medical arena; about the importance of relating our basic science to the why of what we do as

much as the how; and about how our strong ethical, clinical, and scientific standards must prevail.

“The Power of the Written Word”: Anne D. Callahan’s speech was delivered by Judy C. Colditz, as a note from Anne who in her eloquent way relayed the importance of the written word, our critical analysis of it, and how it can change and alter everything.

“Clinical Reasoning: The Passion of Practice”: Mark T. Walsh spoke of his passion for clinical reasoning and how it allows us to use our minds to provide quality care and expand our knowledge.

“Passion of Practice: The Intuition of Treatment”: Judy C. Colditz took our passion a step further and discussed the importance of our intuition and how we are so much more than the sum of protocols and how our touch is such a powerful tool.

“Information Overload in Rehabilitation: How to Keep Up Without Getting Down”: Jean S. Casanova described information overload; how to evaluate it; how to manage it through a variety of solutions; and our need to be selective in what we know, how we learn, and making use of new ways to stay up to date.

“String of Pearls”: Georgiann Laseter shared clinical pearls she has learned over the years, showing us the infinite value of our observations and clinical reasoning skills.¹

What was so delightful in reviewing these 16 presentations this year was that they were so reflective of the individual who prepared them, while at the same time such a reflection of us as hand therapists. All of them revealed that the Nathalie Barr is

definitely an opportunity to go for a bit of philosophical enlightenment, if you will, about whatever moves the recipient. “It’s only when you embrace your past that you truly move forward.”² This value of perspective and the power of partnership seemed a perfect embarking point for this, the 2002 Nathalie Barr.

In a famous 1837 lecture at Harvard, Ralph Waldo Emerson asked his audience, “If there is any period one would desire to be born in, is it not the age of revolution, when the old and the new stand side by side, when the energies of all men are searched by fear and by hope, when the historic glories of the old can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new?”³ Similar to Emerson, we too live in an age of revolution: in politics with the new war on terrorism, in economics with the dramatic growth of global trade and the volatility of our stock markets, and in technology with the continuing explosion of information systems. Today we are living Emerson’s desire in a revolutionary era of rich possibilities.

Our medical arena is no exception and continues to operate under intense pressure. Medical errors in the United States as of February 2002 claim 98,000 lives each year. Two thirds of hand surgeons now use the “sign your site” method advocated by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons to avoid wrong-site surgery.⁴ The American Hospital Association estimates there are 126,000 vacant nursing positions at hospitals nationwide. This shortage is only going to get worse because most practicing nurses are 45 and will be expected to retire in the coming years, with not enough new nurses entering the field to replace them. Just last month there was an article in *USA Today* announcing the opening up of certification examination to recruit nurses from other countries to fill this need.⁵ The same is true for oth-

ers vital to health care such as radiologists. Will that be true of certified hand therapists as well? I see a lot of us branching out into other than direct patient care and reaching retirement ages. Are we mentoring and sharing our enthusiasm for this field enough?

The over-65 population, which generally has more need for health care, is expected to grow 93% in the next 2 decades. *US News and World Reports* in June 2002 reported on the graying of America; in 1999, there were 34.7 million over 65, with 69.4 million projected for 2030.⁶ The average life expectancy in 1900 was 47 years and in 1999 was extended to 77 years.

Now more people are living to 100 and beyond. For some, it means loneliness, yet for lucky others, celebration. My dad at 80 feels "grinners are winners"; another 90-year-old patient stated, "Maybe laughter has something to do with living so long." They both say they have done plenty of that! Personally, I'd like to stick to that thought. Statistically, as most of us have long suspected, humor and relaxation are revealing their true colors to show they do prolong life, as does that glass of red wine!

Health care costs are soaring, and physicians and therapists continue to get less money from insurance companies. Many clinics and private physicians are restricting Medicare patients, stating these restrictions will continue to occur with payers who pay less than costs. Will you personally be financially able to pay fee-for-health services in your future or perhaps have to settle for less than the best care because of costs?

On the bright side, the Bureau of Labor statistics reports that employment of occupational and physical therapists is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through 2010.⁷ The caveat is that federal legislation limits on reimbursement may adversely affect the job

market for occupational therapists and physical therapists. With stiffer competition for the medical dollar, we are seeing increased turf wars among therapists and physician groups.

We also have seen a resurgence of medical partnerships for profit and an increasing "mercantile environment." With reimbursements so low, everyone is trying to get a bigger piece of a smaller pie. How many of you have the increasing mobile units for MRIs, tomography, and the physician-owned surgery centers and clinics at your backdoor and deal with hospitals who are having problems getting on-call coverage? So much for the "Stark Bill"! Are these partnerships that can or will work to everyone's advantage? Time will tell. With the passage of the new HIPPA privacy acts with their volumes of restrictions, the open milieu environment of the hand clinic may become a thing of the past—just something to think about and perhaps a positive to being at the lower end of the medical chain.

Events in Canada also have indicated that your public health care system is in crisis and that if Canadians are going to be able to hold onto their publicly funded system, they are going to have to let go of other things. These include the ideas that physicians and nurses should be altruistic, that health care is cheap, and that everyone has a right to health care services.⁸

Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value.

—Albert Einstein

Success is peace of mind obtained only through self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to do the best of which you're capable.

—John Wooden⁹

The value of perspective here is that even in our competitive profession the best results still are from humility, teamwork, and achieving success by helping oth-

ers as a patient advocate. I would encourage each of you to stand strong for your values, ethics, and convictions in this regard. Clarification of the concept of caring reveals our potential within the health care arena.¹⁰ By specifying the components of caring, therapists acquire the knowledge that enables them to make logical choices regarding services and value with patients and value for our profession. For the principal point of life is to enjoy it!

This brings me to our first and most powerful partnership—the partnership we have with ourselves. For most of us, we are our own worst enemy. We push our bodies around when they are tired. We overschedule ourselves and treat ourselves like a maxed-out credit card. We get mad at ourselves and criticize ourselves at every opportunity. Our body images are always in the doghouse. When pressed, we will confess to having a few agreeable anatomic features, such as pretty eyes, nice shoulders, strong legs, or slender ankles, but most of us grossly underestimate our physical appeal. We are never fully aware of our real charms. In actuality, it is our faults, weaknesses, unlucky breaks, and quirks that work to our advantage by making us more resilient, more inventive, and ultimately more efficient.

The road to success is always under construction.

—Arnold Palmer

Even stones are in a state of becoming.

—Veronique Vienne

Many of us focus on our minds, on our intellectual achievements and ignore the wisdom of our hearts. Although we understand and promote the balance of health and happiness probably more than many professions we have difficulty partnering with ourselves to make it happen for us as individuals. Ultimately, partnership means balancing personal needs with the ability to give to

others. Similar to our patients, we need to learn to live in our bodies. Many of today's alternative medicines and techniques we all use, such as Feldenkrais, Pilates, yoga, and Hellerwork, allow us to learn ways of relaxing and changing body habits. They can and do make us feel good and giving us practical experiences and insight to relate to our patients. Ask yourself an important question: Am I enjoying a healthy, well-balanced lifestyle, doing work that I love and that gives me financial return with time off to pursue other interests? I would like to share the "B-Alert" system for optimum balance from the book *The Power of Focus* by Canfield, Hansen, and Hewitt, the authors of the famous "Chicken Soup" series.

B-ALERT OPTIMUM BALANCE SYSTEM

- Blueprint (making the plan for the day)
- Action (performing the most important activities)
- Learn (expand your knowledge daily through reading, videos, CDs, mentors; remember, life without challenges is an illusion, and most of our confidences grow as we actively take on new challenges)
- Exercise (reenergize for 30 minutes; walk, workout in the clinic at lunch, go to an outside gym for yoga, aerobics, or a spin class)
- Relax (nap, meditate, listen to music, read with a glass of fine wine; enjoy family time, value doing absolutely nothing, do something for yourself at least once a week if not every day)
- Think (take time to reflect on the day; review goals, visualize, and develop new ideas; take time every day to remind yourself that you did some things well; coach yourself, just like you would help one

of your patients in overcoming a challenge; this can be an excellent place to use a journal or tape your thoughts so that they are not lost for further use—let's face it, we all reach a point where forgetting is a "state of mind")

In putting the B-alert system of balance into practice for yourself, practice the "TA DA formula."

TA DA FORMULA

- Think (again, reflection is essential; consider your options. What benefits do you have from taking a certain course of action? Will your action help you accomplish your goal?)
- Ask (find out everything you need to know to make informed decisions; ask other people, including mentors or people you know who have more experience or expertise in an area than you do; remember this acronym: ASK—Always Seeking Knowledge)
- Decide (visualize the negative consequences for not making a decision and the positive benefits of moving forward, then go for it)
- Act (this is the most important part of the TA-DA formula because so many people live their lives in the ready-steady mode and never get to the ready-steady-go mode! Take that first step and the momentum will build; nothing can happen if you don't start)¹¹

Our partnership with ourselves is ultimately about the power of choice that lies within us as much as the courage to be yourself. Our ultimate goal is the integration of our spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical partnerships with ourselves.

Our next partnership is with humanity: including intimate relations, friends, business partners, and communities. With per-

spective I can honestly say the relationships you cultivate personally and professionally are the ones with the lasting memories and those that make our lives rich and unique. Stephen Covey, the motivational guru, has given us a good analogy. Treat your most important relationships like a bank account. The more deposits you make, the stronger your associations become.¹² It takes considerable time and effort to cultivate highly successful relationships. Statistically society has shown perhaps we are too quick to let go of relationships, to not go the extra mile to deepen them and experience the sheer joy of just giving, forgiving, and the meaning they give to our lives.

All these partnerships, including those with our patients, need to be based on the following:

- Mutual respect for one another (I can't speak enough to treating people fairly and equitably, supporting others regardless of our differences, and appreciating each person's qualities, capabilities, and contributions)
- Courtesy, politeness, consideration, and integrity
- Gentleness with yourself and others
- *Communication* (keep all doors open, be the best listener; as John Wooden said, "Others too have brains"; find them, tap them, enjoy them)
- Have a sense of humor and laugh with others (promise yourself to wear a cheerful appearance at all times and to give every person you meet a smile)
- Be flexible
- Teach and be willing to be taught
- Volunteer; seek meaningful community and professional service

- Seek opportunities to compliment frequently
- Be thankful daily

In conclusion, do what moves you! It is about the *love*, the friendships. Our professions from my perspective are just a tremendous bonus on this journey of life. What a wonderful and passionate thing our patients give us—when in life are we allowed to *touch* someone so closely, so trustingly? Think of the times someone has laid his or her hand in yours:

When a child is born
 When you walk with someone
 you hold dear
 When you are married
 When you comfort someone
 When you are in church
 When someone dies

It is the intimate times in life and usually only with those people for whom we have ultimate caring and trust. With a hand or upper extremity injury, this is

thrust on our patients, and what a tremendous gift they lay in our hands and they are whom we ultimately serve. We must never forget that!*

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Thank you all for your attention and the privilege to share my thoughts.

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