

Earning an A-Plus

People who work in long-term care quickly learn there is an attitude and practice needing to be highly developed. It's called flexibility. The work that we do, the circumstances that confront us, the creativity that is often thrust upon us by situations we encounter all demand our commitment to this art form. Our capability of responding or conforming to changing or new situations is, indeed, an art that is honed by years of experience.

One good performance measure of an associate, to be sure, is his or her skill of being flexible – along with the spirit that accompanies such. Does the need to change or adapt produce cheerfulness, grouchiness, a can-do response or a half-hearted approach? Those are good signs to read.

One great example of this subject occurred over the past weekend. As most of you know by now, a winter storm alert was issued Friday night for Atlanta, Georgia, beset by sleet and freezing rain, turning interstate highways into skating rinks. Delta Air Lines alone canceled upwards of 1,000 flights. And Delta was the primary carrier for 22 associates scheduled to arrive for week one of the Life Care Journey. The possibility that all of them could make a safe and incident-free arrival was remote, indeed.

About 7 a.m. Saturday, Chairman Forrest Preston, Chief Operating Officer Cathy Murray and I chose the prudent path: Cancel the event for the week, and reschedule the participants to join about 40 more associates for week two of the Journey. That meant a lot of telephone calls to make, including some that were early, early on the West Coast. Miraculously, we were able to reach all of them in time, except Raymond Marks of Life Care Center of Kona, who was already sitting in a Chicago airport. He had discovered that there was no flight into Atlanta. He very happily boarded a flight back to the beautiful Hawaiian Islands, where temperatures hover in the 80s year-around.

So, we give all of the associates with whom we spoke an A-plus in flexibility. They all were ready to go with the flow; in fact, most of them expressed relief at the weather-mandated decision that had been made.

Changing as conditions or events may warrant, it is obvious, is nothing new to them.

--Beecher Hunter