

Why “Now” is Not the Best Time to Quit!

For anyone working in long term care, the pandemic has become the primary talking point and focus of attention in almost every conversation. The pressures and demands on staff have resulted in unprecedented levels of absenteeism, turnover and staffing shortages. If people were considering retirement or a career change, for many this has been seen as the ideal time to move on.

While such decisions may seem prudent in the heat of the moment, pausing to reflect may prove to be the wiser choice. In the face of many challenging realities, there are compelling reasons to step back and reconsider a decision to quit working in long term care. This period of change and uncertainty is providing “golden opportunities” to grow and excel, for those who embrace the challenges.

Golden Opportunities

When there is a shortage of magic wands to deal with major disruptions, with insight, some people are able to embrace golden opportunities, and make their own “magic.” We want to share some examples of these golden opportunities.

While not everyone may be able to incorporate every opportunity listed here to make magic in their personal workplace experience, there are enough opportunities to ensure that every employee can find a way to embrace the challenge, and realize more positive realities for themselves.

Opportunities Abound. The bad news is, many people are quitting. The good news for you – many people are quitting! With this much turnover, your chances of advancing are dramatically improved – where you are working now. You have automatically moved up the ladder, whether it is in terms of seniority, experience or workplace knowledge. Your skills are probably more in demand now than they have ever been. A golden opportunity to move to a new position or role you have been wanting.

Which leads to...

Leverage to Negotiate. You are now in a better position to discuss these personal “upgrades,” whether it is a change of role, responsibilities, an increase pay, or perhaps requesting more coaching, training or education to upgrade your skills. Don’t be shy about talking to your manager about what you want – it not only reflects your personal motivation, but reinforces your commitment to your work.

From The Pot Into the Fire? Yes, you are dealing with significant challenges in your long term care role today. But, you do know what you are up against. Do you really know what another place is going to be like? When you talk to other employers, are you really getting the full picture? Over the years we have witnessed people who have left for the “greener pastures” (such as increased compensation), only to return because the picture looked much different, once they were on the inside. Step back, look around at what you have, and consider the positives of your current workplace.

Such as...

Friends and Acquaintances. Never minimize the importance of the relationships you have in your current workplace. It has taken time to develop your workplace relationships, those connections built on mutual trust and respect. Do you really want to start over somewhere new? Think about it – when you enter a new workplace, you have to seek out and work on developing new and strong relationships, among people who don't need you for that – they already have their own relationships in place before you arrived!

And while we are talking about relationships...

Your Mentor or Advocate. If there is someone in your workplace that values you and supports you in your role, then you already have a built-in relationship that works in your favour. Leave now, and go somewhere else? Maybe for a while the person who hired you will be in your corner, but the pressure will be on you to prove yourself quickly. You have had an extended period of time to foster the relationship with your current mentor or supervisor. These troubled times are a great time to cement that relationship even further, by letting them know how committed you are to your work, and to your Home.

Your Reputation. If you are known as someone who works hard, gets things done, works well with others, is an effective leader...whatever...remember that you are known for those qualities where you work now. If you decide to leave to work elsewhere, you might tell people you have these qualities, but without the benefit of time and experience, they won't have a reason to believe you. You have earned your reputation – don't waste it.

Self-Reflection and Insight. So, you are considering leaving your job because (fill in the blank). Before making such a decision, take a long, hard, and honest look at why you are considering such a move. Make a list of all the reasons. Then, when you are done, beside every item on your list, write down what you have done to address each of these reasons for leaving. Have you shared your concern with your peers, your supervisor or someone who might be able to support you? Have you honestly dealt with the person who is the reason you want to leave? In other words, by reflecting on what you have done, and what you haven't done, it might provide you with some insight as to what you should do before making the decision to leave. Remember the earlier Pot and the Fire example. Maybe there are some things you can do now, and avoid a bigger “scorching” somewhere else!

Now That I'm Hired – I Quit! How many times have we seen the newly hired employee who maybe completes their orientation, and then quits within a matter of days? So frustrating for the Home, and so disrespectful of the residents. We know, you didn't know it was going to be this hard! But before you jump ship, think about this: 1) Why did you start down this long term care path, and if was to make a difference in the lives of residents, then that IS what the job is all about. So don't give up on your dream; and (2) if it was easy, everybody could do it! It's not easy work, but the joy and sense of accomplishment you will feel as you gain experience and confidence, and realize the impact you are having on your residents, will make it all so worthwhile.

If you took this job because you needed a job, and are not passionate about making a difference in the lives of residents, then please quit – now! You are getting in the way of people who care.

Because You Are You. The thought of people leaving the long term care sector reminds us of one of the many stories about Steve Jobs. As the young founder of Apple, Jobs was trying to lure the top-level Pepsi CEO, John Scully, to manage the company. When Scully turned Steve's offer down, Jobs leaned in close to Scully and said, "You want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to come with me and change the world?"

Jobs challenged Scully to reflect on how he wanted to be seen and remembered. These are challenging times for everyone working in long term care. What you do every day, is about changing the world – the world of the residents you serve.

As a human being, your beliefs about who you are as a person are measured not by what you say you stand for, but by how you respond in the face of such challenges.

We all need to ask ourselves, "When I reflect back on my life, what do I want to see in my rear-view mirror?"

Final Reflections

We believe that because of where you are today, having gone through what you have experienced over the past two years, that who you are as a person is not in question. The question now is, are you up to what we hope and anticipate is the final stage of this most horrific challenge of our collective lives?

Hopefully we have shared some insights that will inspire you to seize one or more of these golden opportunities, to help you make it over the top, and realize new successes in your career, and in your personal life.

**You deserve it.
Your residents are worth it.
You can do it!**

About the Co-Authors

Darlene Legree has over 35 years of diverse experience in long term care, from direct care provider, registered nurse, to management and staff education positions. With additional education in Nursing Informatics, MDS and Adult Education, and receiving her Gerontology Certification from the CNA, Darlene provides training and consulting in clinical, documentation, leadership and organizational practices. Darlene sits on the executive of Gerontological Nursing Association of Ontario – Central East Chapter and is the co-owner of Silver Meridian.

Ron Martyn (BSc Recreation, MSc Gerontology) has served as a Recreation Director and Administrator in long term care, and as a Retirement Home Owner. For over 20 years as the Co-Owner of Silver Meridian, Ron and the team have helped LTC managers hone their leadership skills, by empowering and energizing people, and becoming recognized as Inspired Leaders in the provision of care (English only). Go to Silver Meridian (<https://silvermeridian.com>) for more details.