

What does it all mean?

A reflection for HOC Navigators Team Members

—From *Monnie Caine, M.Div, BCC, November, 2017*

One of my favorite authors is Anne Lamott, whose funny and perceptive writing about her own faith journey through decades of trial and error has such simple depth to it that I keep going back to it time and time again.

Lamott says,

“Here are the two best prayers I know: ‘Help me, help me, help me’ and ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you.’”

In this line of work that we do, we certainly know all about the prayers of “Help Me”, which are essential and necessary and comforting.

The “Thank You” prayer is what I want to focus on today. As Thanksgiving draws near, many of us are thinking about what we’re thankful for — taking time to consider how best to appreciate what we have in our lives. While family, our homes, food to put on the table, friendships are certainly worthy of our thanks, today I want us to consider being thankful for this work we do.

On any given day, almost 700 patients and families invite us into their homes, into their lives, into their journey, in the most intimate, honest, real ways. Do you ever stop and pause and consider how incredible this work is?

- **You the Nurse** who compassionately care for our patients while making sure families stay informed and are getting the support they need;
- **You the Social Worker** who listen and care and take the time to know your patients and families and help them make difficult, life changing decisions;
- **You the Personal Care Specialist** who somehow, someway, allow our patients to maintain their dignity and privacy as you care for them in incredibly intimate ways;
- **You the Marketing Department**, who make sure our message of providing this excellent care gets out to those who need it;
- **You the Chaplain**, who support people in non-judgmental, inclusive, perceptive ways;
- **You the Education Department**, who make sure we are truly providing the most up to date, best care we can and you aren’t afraid to tell us we have more to learn;
- **You the Pharmacist**, you make sure the meds are given in the right way to provide comfort and hopefully maintain enough alertness to have those last talks with family;
- **You the Maintenance Department** who make sure our buildings and facilities are safe and clean and working, for without them nothing would happen;
- **You the Unit and Office Coordinators** who handle all the day to day stuff to keep this large organization running efficiently;
- **You the Staffing Department** who figure out the puzzle of who needs to go where and when;
- **You the IT Department**, who keep our computer systems running efficiently and answer all our questions and trouble shoot and train and somehow stay calm and patient;
- **You the Referral and Support Team** who are often the first voice families hear when they need help or the first person to introduce and explain comfort care, you set the stage for everything that follows;
- **You the Volunteers and Volunteer Coordinators** who give, freely and openly and genuinely;
- **You the Holistic Department**, who use talents of music and art to bring comfort, joy and meaning;
- **You the Compliance Department** who ensure that we are doing things in the proper ways so that we can continue far into the future;
- **You the Administrative and Managing** staff who not only oversee this large mass of people but also look for creative ways to do what we do even better;
- You the **Bereavement Counselors** who listen and listen and listen more.

This work we do matters. It is hard work. It is emotional work. It is challenging work.

Sometimes you don’t think you can give another bath or crush another pill or comfort another grieving family member or read another chart or teach another class or answer another phone call. Sometimes you mess up and you’re human and the care isn’t what you wished it had been.

This is not perfect work. This is not easy work. But it is necessary work. You are making a difference. We, all of us, whether the front line people or the office people, are traveling with people in their last journey on this earth. We, one of us, are often the last person who will hold someone’s hand or the last voice someone will hear. We, all of us, often impact how a family grieves and remembers their last moments with their loved one.

The work that you do, that we do, matters. And what a gift to be able to spend your days doing something that matters.

As Ann Lamott says, ‘Help us, help us, help us’ do this work well. And ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you’ for the privilege to do it.

Ann Lamott added a third prayer to her essential prayers, which is Wow.

And when you play a small part in helping someone have the best possible and most meaningful end of life experience, about all you can say is Wow. **So today, take a moment and say thank you and wow.**