Take a breath with Conference speaker Juliet Funt

Keeping the OR trains running on time, keeping a lid on costs, and keeping team members’ behavior in check are a few of the hurdles in the path of every perioperative nurse leader each day.

Another stressor that is probably not even on the radar but should be is lack of time for strategic thinking. It’s a concept that will be explored during the closing general session at this year’s OR Manager Annual Conference in Long Beach, California, September 17-19.

Juliet Funt, owner and founder of WhiteSpace® at Work, a custom training and consulting firm based in Los Angeles, will share techniques in her talk, “Calling all OR Leaders! It’s Time to Reclaim your WhiteSpace®.”

What is WhiteSpace? It is open, unscheduled time for fluid, free-form thinking that can lead to creative solutions to problems, Funt told OR Manager.

“Without time to think and pause and reflect and recuperate, all sorts of problematic things are happening in healthcare,” she says. A pilot program tentatively slated for 2016 would attempt to correlate increasing WhiteSpace for nurses and physicians to a reduction in errors and an increase in patient satisfaction.

Time for strategic thinking is a trend that Funt anticipates will grow. “Everyone is being treated like a computer, as if they have unlimited storage capacity. We’re humans, and there’s a breaking point of effectiveness and focus,” she says. “I think people are becoming mindful of the price their businesses are paying for mindless business,” she says.

Moving rapidly throughout the day from one task to the next robs people of creativity, productivity, and engagement. “One of the things that’s lost is the ability to emotionally stabilize and recuperate,” she says. “Medical professionals are working in an environment where literally life and death are on the line, so there’s an enormous amount of emotion.”

Learning to take tiny micropauses in the day can help you recalibrate how you feel. For example, she says, nurse leaders often interact with difficult people, and typically they just push ahead without acknowledging how those interactions make them feel. An “emotional rehearsal” is a technique that can be used to prepare for those conversations, she says.

“When you’re about to walk in the door and work with Dr X, and you know that you will be treated like an errant child, you pause and rehearse what will happen; you imagine what Dr X will say and how you would like to see yourself responding. That tiny slip of WhiteSpace for rehearsal of your own emotions can be very powerful,” she explains.

Funt will share other WhiteSpace tips and techniques during the conference. Plan to attend and get a fresh perspective on how to get through the day. For more information, visit www.ormanagerconference.com.

—Elizabeth Wood