

Voices

By Susan Hannah

How many voices do I hear in a day?

So many from the minute I awake until the minute I lay my head back down to rest.

There are the voices of my family—saying something sweet, or asking for something or reminding me of chores to be done.

There are the voices of the kids at the bus stop and the bus driver wishing me a good day.

The DJ's on the radio make me laugh and keep me updated on gossip and weather and world news.

I arrive at work and hear the voices of my colleagues and friends. There are laughs and idle conversation. There are also difficult conversations and problems to be solved.

There is the voice of my boss. This voice can be pleasant with a great message or good advice but it can also be difficult when there are issues or mistakes or difficult questions.

There are also voices from the people we support. They are asking questions, providing comments or thanking us for our help.

The voices come in many forms: teleconferences, emails, voice messages. They can be harsh or sweet, supportive or angry.

The voices we hear can make the day good or can make it bad.

The one voice I never thought about was the voice of the patient. I never forget the mission of our company and I always think about how what I do supports that mission.

But, I never stopped to think about the voice of the patient. The hope they have for us to help them. The thankfulness they have when we do help them. The voices of these patients can be hopeful, sad, angry, thankful, anxious or happy.

I will never forget to quiet my mind and hear those voices.

Those voices are the reason we do what we do.

I am proud to know that I can change those voices from sad to happy; from fearful to joyful.

I will never forget to quiet my mind and hear those voices.

Susan Hannah is an Associate Director at Bristol-Myers Squibb. She participated in a Narrative Medicine workshop that explored the theme of "hearing the voice of the patient in all that we do."

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