

NHS Change Day – The School of Health and Care Radicals

2014 Graduation Ceremony Valedictorian Speech

We have chosen the harder path. We could have made easier choices. But we haven't. Some feel the world is quite acceptable the way it is. But we don't. We're here together, attending this graduation ceremony, because we chose to be change agents. We want to change things for the better.

The small difference with *not* being a change agent, but it's actually a huge one, is that *we* take action. Not necessarily revolutions. *Action*. Many of us have been involved in change initiatives for a while already (some started as early as in primary school – I was still very disciplined at this stage). Then, earlier this year, we've attended the School for Health and Care Radicals. We've dedicated time and brainpower to this. We've made pledges. We've implemented our pledges. And today, we're graduated. Yooahoo!!! Feels great!!!

But, graduation is certainly not what drives change agents. We're not seeking honors or rewards. We are thriving for impact. We want to see results. Being graduated is a concrete indication that our change agency has an impact.

It also bonds us together, and *this*, this connection is what will push us to continue, to move forward with bringing change, relentlessly. Because we're not alone, anymore. And since we're connected, and since we're numerous, we are going to be more efficient.

This is of paramount importance. Why? Because we're not dealing with trivialities. Most of us who attended the course are linked to healthcare. As professionals, or future professionals; as healthcare providers, consultants, employees, whatever. Our "raw material" is people's health. Our fellow human beings' health, meaning their life, the confidence they can have in the future, their well-being, the well-being of their families, their communities, our nations.

We know – everybody knows – that some things have to change. There's a lot of frustration with the way healthcare systems and companies are run today and it's very difficult to change such complex organizations. Inefficient and costly structures, bureaucracy and complacency, outdated management practices etc.... are none the lesser of evils.

But I believe – no, I'm absolutely convinced – that we can "viralize" good change. We can spread innovation, efficiency and humanity in our sick systems. We're doing this, among else, through our pledges.

“I pledge to motivate people for taking an individual responsibility into driving change”. That was my pledge. Shortly after the School for Health and Care Radicals sessions ended, I was to deliver a keynote speech to 50 top leaders of French university hospitals, who’d gathered for their annual meeting. “Innovation” was the overarching theme of the meeting. I decided to focus my speech on “Innovating oneself”, and to leverage the School’s resources for my speech. My aim was to inspire the audience and turn *them* into agents of change.

The speech tried to explain how and why the world is changing, what it means and how it makes structural changes mandatory; then it focused on “Change starts with me”. Changing oneself, challenging our own perceptions AND changing the way we drive change build the foundation for our transformation efforts. I spoke about communities, networks, social collaboration, inclusion and open approaches.

As a result, some of them declared they had been convinced and had changed their mind regarding those topics. Some asked me for contacts, to implement initiatives in their hospitals. Some opened a Twitter account. Many acknowledged a different perspective on inclusive collaboration for engagement. I would have loved to convince the entire audience at once, but we know change is hard, and it takes many more conversations to change behaviours.

Conversations? In fact, conversations are far from sufficient. What the reluctant must see is concrete applications of modern thinking. Successful, tangible initiatives.

And this is where I believe lies the main value of the NHS Change Day, and the School for Health and Care Radicals. This is change in action, not just in words. Change that bonds us together for a better world, in practice. In the name of all change agents, and of what we’re fighting for, I would just like to say thank you *very* much.

Celine Schillinger

July 4th, 2014