

**HCCA**



**HEALTH CARE  
COMPLIANCE  
ASSOCIATION**

# COMPLIANCE TODAY

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Danna Teicheira,  
System Privacy Officer at  
St. Luke's Health System**

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# Letter from the CEO

*If you have any questions that you would like Roy to answer in future columns, please e-mail them to: [roy.snell@hcca-info.org](mailto:roy.snell@hcca-info.org).*

## **When I grow up, I want to be a compliance and ethics officer**

The main reason I want to be a compliance and ethics officer when I grow up is because it involves integrity and telling the truth. These were a big deal to my father. It also involves facing your problems head on, dealing with mistakes, and helping people. These were a big deal to my father. Compliance and ethics involves honor and justice. We are in a respected profession. I understand there are those who don't respect compliance and ethics, but that doesn't matter to me, because I only respect the opinions of people I respect and those who are well informed.

There are more glamorous jobs. There are those who think it's macho or cool to flirt with the edge. There are those who think it's OK to deny, defend, and rationalize. They seem to think life is a game. They are living in an imaginary world that causes them to believe that if they can intimidate or bully people into submission, then they are right or ethical. They are rudderless. They have no moral compass. They seem to think it isn't a matter of right and wrong—it's a matter of who can run over whom. I have worked with and observed these people all my life. It turns out, they are all wrong.

Some seem to think that if you get away with it, it's OK. Some think that if you can fool people into

thinking that their unethical behavior is OK, then they are OK. Some think that if they pretend their unethical behavior is not happening or didn't happen, then they are OK.

Some have been pretending for so long, they are lost forever. They have been "full of it" for so long, they can never have integrity. I am embarrassed for them. Even the very people who cracked under pressure and told the bullies what they wanted to hear, know the bullies have no integrity. They know they are wrong. They know the Emperor has no clothes.

My children's relationship with their father is like my relationship with my father. Every year I understood more and more about what he stood for. Every year after his death (years ago) I appreciate more and more what he stood for. It wasn't easy to understand when I was younger. I had little appreciation for what he was teaching me. He was demanding. If he saw BS, he would call you on it and make your day difficult. He would not tolerate lies. He would not tolerate rationalization. He would not tolerate the deny-and-defend approach. Not too different from an effective compliance and ethics officer.

There is a sense of inner peace when you do the right thing. It is easier on the soul. I am proud to be the father of my children, because they respect what I do. To be perfectly honest, they have little idea what I do. Maybe I should say they will respect what I do, hopefully. My first child just entered the workforce. After a year, her employer stumbled onto something about me on the Internet. He asked her if I was related. It was kind of like, "Do you know who your father is?" It's not her fault. When I get home, I am

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**There is a sense of inner peace when you do the right thing.**

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done talking about work. I didn't figure out how great my father was until after his death. I appreciated him, but I didn't yet know how few people had the degree of integrity he had. If I do deserve some respect from my children, I hope they aren't as slow as I was.

The children of the deny-and-defend crowd won't see what's going on when they are younger, but every year of their lives, they will be putting the pieces together. Every year of their lives, their respect for their parents will change, just like my appreciation of my parents changed. Just because you can win a battle, just because you can force people into submission, just because you can get away with it, just because you can rationalize your actions doesn't mean people, including your family, will respect you in the long run. Some bad guys may win many battles during the course of their lives, but in the end, they are losers.

Good guys may be frustrated. Good guys may lose battles. Good guys may not always be respected when they are forcing us to face our problems. Good guys may not look as cool as the hard charging, "Slick Willie," deny-and-defend crowd. But in the end, good guys will feel good to the bone. In the end, good guys are respected by their families, friends, and most of their colleagues. It is not a superficial feeling. What compliance and ethics officers achieve through their careers feels good deep down. It feels good forever. It feels good all over. That's why, when I grow up, I want to be a compliance and ethics officer. ■