



# ***Walking the Fine Line***

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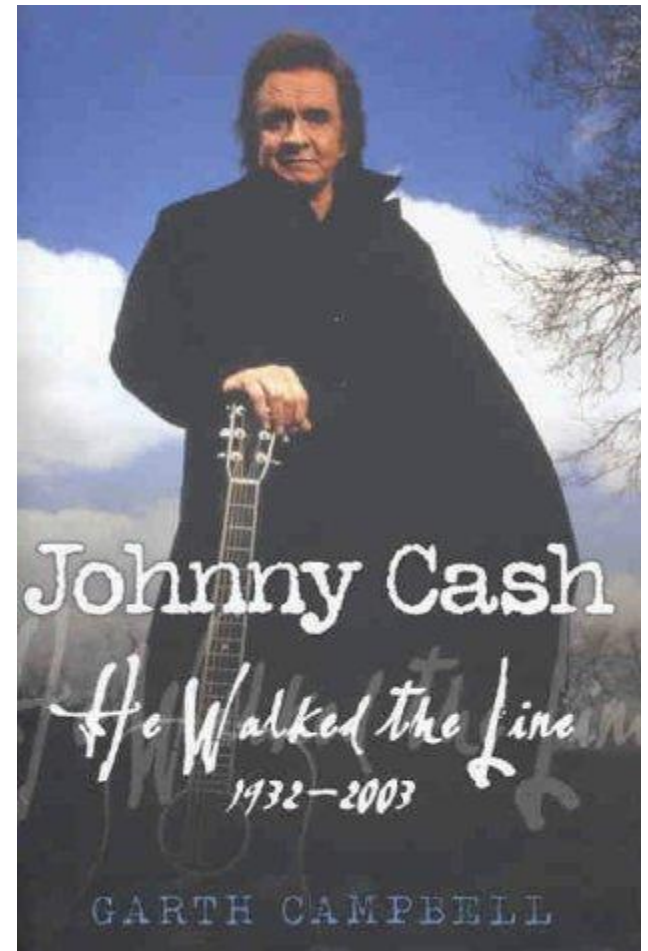
Staff Ombudsman, AAA of East Texas

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Texas State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

# “I Walk the Line.”

I keep a close watch  
on this heart of mine.  
I keep my eyes wide  
open all the time.  
I keep the ends out for  
the tie that binds  
Because you're mine, I  
walk the line.

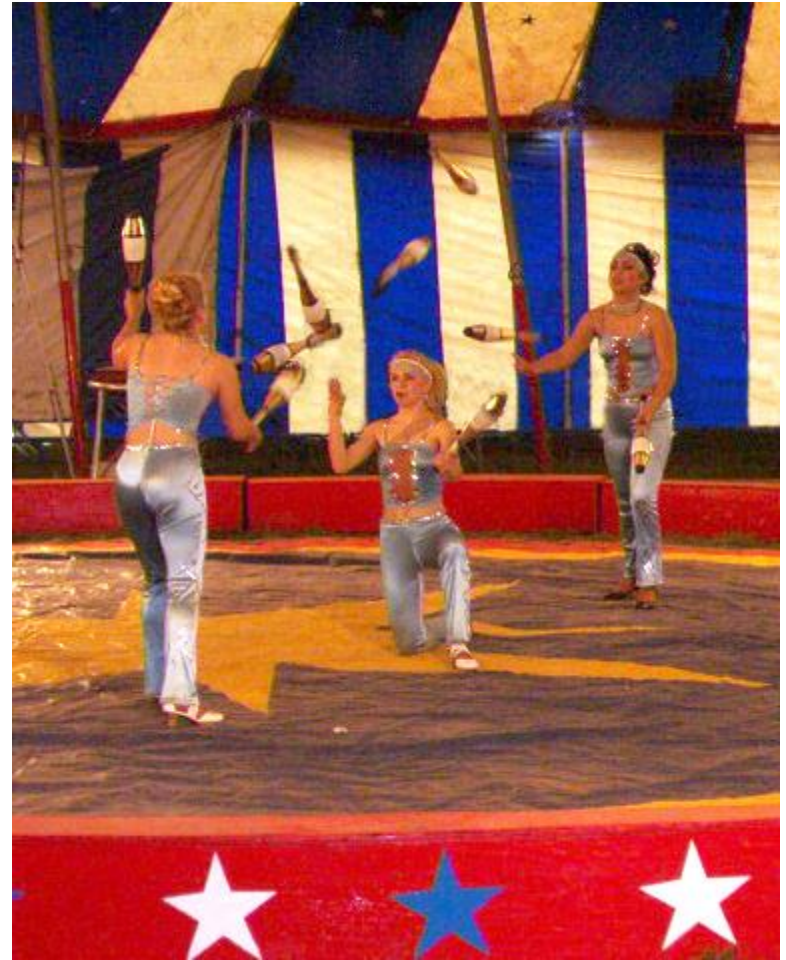


# Walking the Fine Line Between...

## Residents & Staff



**At times you  
must feel like...**



# THE QUESTION IS:

In my role as ombudsman,  
how do I stay resident-  
centered and try to create a  
win/win situation for all?



# How do I...

- Walk the fine line between residents and staff in a way that increases their trust in an ombudsman?
- Present myself, so residents understand I am here to advocate on their behalf?
- Develop relationships with staff that leads to improvement in the quality of life and care for residents without crossing a boundary.



It is our challenge not only to talk the talk,  
but to walk the walk...

**With *residents*, it is our charge to be:**

- Courteous and respectful
- A good listener
- Patient and understanding
- Trustworthy with confidential information
- Helpful

Not only with residents,  
***but with staff as well...***

**With *staff*, it is our charge to be:**

- Courteous and respectful
- A good listener
- Patient and understanding
- Trustworthy with confidential information
- Helpful





How do we do this?

# By Developing Appropriate Relationships with...

- The Administrator
- Staff: Department Heads and Direct Care Workers
- Residents & Family Members

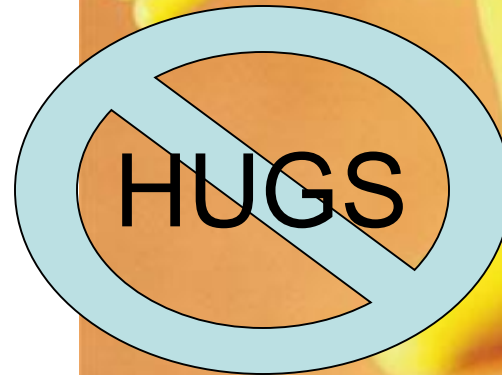
## The Bottom Line...

Good relationships help us succeed in promoting resident rights, quality of life and quality of care.

**BE CAREFUL Not  
To  
Become**

**PRO-FACILITY**

**Residents  
are  
watching**



***Your Actions  
speak louder than***

***Your Words.***

# If you become Pro-Facility it diminishes...

- Trust in relationships with residents and family members
- Objectivity in identifying problems
- Effectiveness
- Goals of the ombudsman program

On the other hand... be careful not to bulldoze your way in. It may:

- Limit your capacity to achieve results.
- Put others on the defensive.
- Create a power struggle and go nowhere.





# To find the right balance...

Leave the  
“I’m going to get you  
for something!”  
attitude at the door.

At the same time,  
**don’t**  
**get**  
**desensitized**  
to issues that are  
present.



# It's a Fine Line to Walk with...

- The Administrator
- Staff: Department Heads and Direct Care Workers
- Residents & Family Members



# Developing a Relationship with the Administrator



To develop an  
“ombudsman appropriate”  
relationship with the  
administrator...

**Maintain your appropriate position!**



# 1 – Establish--or Re-establish-- Your Role as Ombudsman

- Set a meeting if necessary  
*(your Regional Coordinator can assist)*
- Acknowledge the difficulty of their job
- Emphasize we have some common goals
- Let them know you can:
  - Help them settle many problems before they go to regulatory, which provides a faster response and a solution for resident concerns
  - Help promote a win / win situation for one resident and the whole community of residents
  - Be a third party voice to support resident needs and rights
  - Provide feedback to help improve residents' quality of life and care



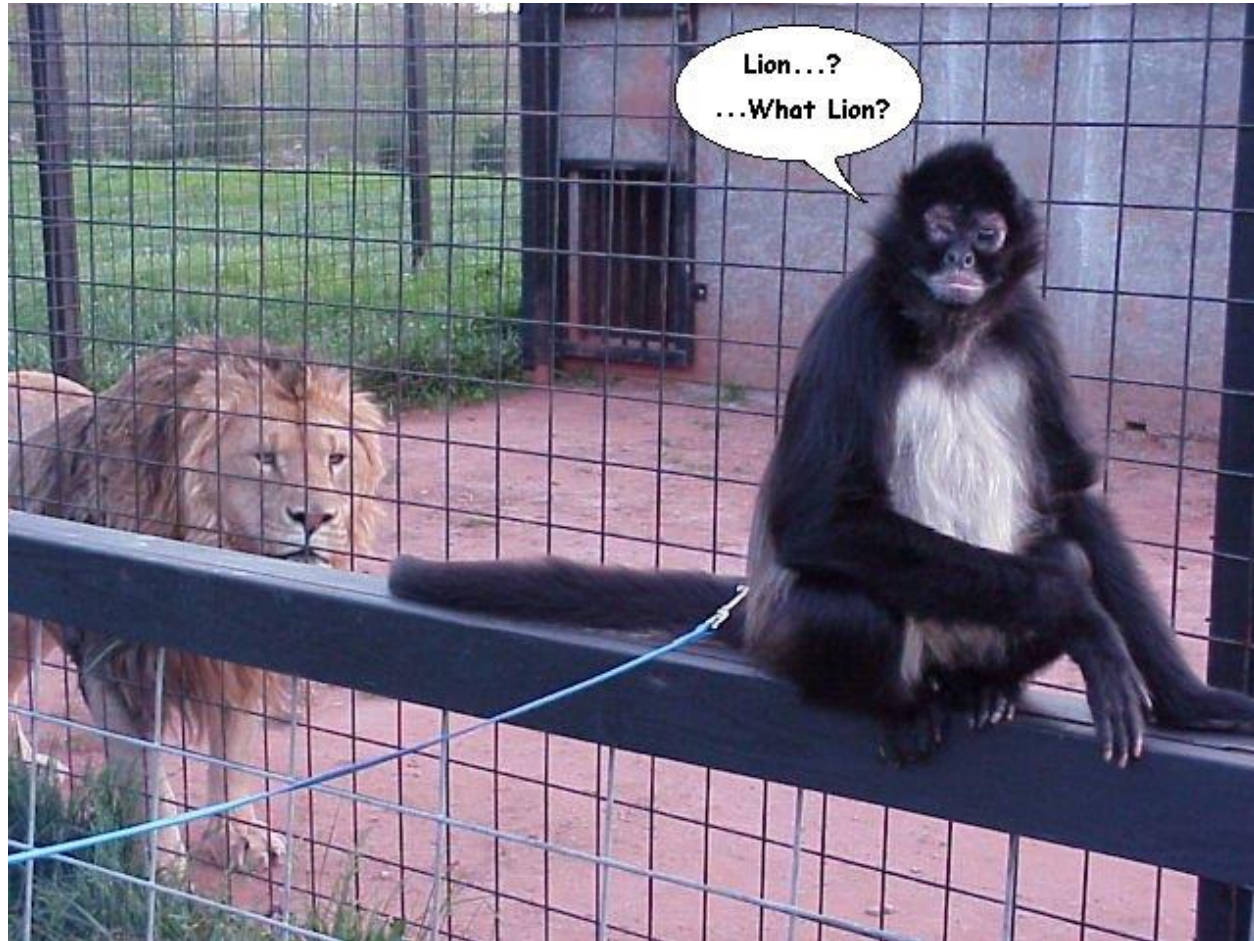
## 2 – Daily Protocol

- Establish—or reestablish—who your primary point of contact is in the facility
- Touch base when you arrive and before you leave — whether you have a concern or not
- **Praise their “positives!”**
- Remind you are available to attend care plans, resident councils, provide conflict resolution, etc., with resident permission.
- Never pass an opportunity to remind them that you are there **to help**.

### 3 - When Reporting a Problem or Concern ...

- Acknowledge the difficulty of the issue at hand (especially when the issue is particularly challenging)
- Be diplomatic, courteous and tactful
- Accountability: Ask the person to let you know when the issue is resolved so you can verify with the resident that the issue is receiving appropriate attention
- Follow up with the resident and the Administrator

You may have to remind them  
again, about a problem!



## 4 – Once an Issue is Settled...

### Acknowledge the success

- **Thank the administrator!**
  - ✓ ...for their quick or steadfast response
  - ✓ ...for their efforts
  - ✓ ...for allowing you to assist in the problem
  - ✓ ...for putting the resident first
- Let them know how happy the resident or family is with the outcome.
- Encourage them to call anytime they need your assistance.

# Developing a Relationship with Department Heads and Direct Care Workers



# 1 – Establish Your Role

- Ask the administrator if you may speak at their next staff in-service to explain your role as ombudsman...  
*(your Regional Coordinator can assist)*
- At the in-service, explain our approach to resolving concerns and identify the ombudsman's role

## 3 Ways to Bring Concerns

1. Report problem to the responsible staff or Admin
2. Contact the ombudsman at 1-800-252-2412 (Texas)
3. Report to Consumer Rights and Services Hotline at 1-800-458-9858 (Texas)



## 2 – Interaction with Staff

- Make time to explain the ombudsman role
- Call staff by their name
- Let them know it is your job to bring resident concerns to their attention
- Focus on resident needs
- Avoid correcting a direct care worker; speak to their supervisor or if a systemic issue, ask to provide in-service training
- Remain courteous, even if staff is rude

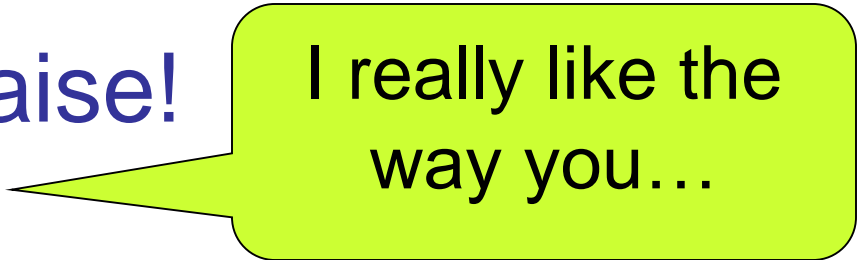
## 3 - Praise! Praise! Praise!

**MOST IMPORTANTLY: Take every opportunity to praise work well done -- directly to staff!**

Acknowledge how difficult their job is and praise them for their compassion, gentle care, passion, efforts or attentiveness!



# Praise! Praise! Praise!



I really like the way you...

- Let food service workers/director know when residents are pleased with a particular meal.
- Let housekeeping/maintenance workers know when you notice work well done—the floors shining nicely, or the beds neatly made.
- Let the activity director know when you hear that residents enjoyed a special activity.

# Report “Good Works” to Administrators



- Let the worker know you are reporting his/her superior work efforts; so... find out the worker's name
- Report to superiors when residents' praise the effort of particular staff. Ask the resident if she minds you sharing their praise
- Commend the administrator for successfully leading staff to strive for excellence in caring for residents

# Developing Relationships with Residents and Family



A yellow speech bubble with a black outline, containing the text "Hello. My name is..." and "I am your ombudsman".

Hello. My name is...

I am your ombudsman

# 1 - Introductions

- Introduce yourself to every resident and family member
- Explain your role as ombudsman – you are there to:
  - Help solve concerns or problems
  - Advocate for residents rights and promote quality care
  - Listen, provide information and speak on the resident's behalf, if needed
  - Specifically:
    - Bring resident and family member concerns/complaints (with permission) to the staff's attention, and to seek resolution; and
    - Attend care plan meetings and resident/family council meetings, when invited.



## 2 – Do's and Don'ts

- Do spend time with residents to establish a level of trust.
  - Do relay to residents their rights and available services.
  - Do report to residents, the status of their complaints.
  - Do validate resident's concerns.
  - Do support resident's decisions—even if they are “bad” decisions.
- Don't enter a room without knocking.
  - Don't engage in a power struggle or dispute.
  - Don't appear Pro-Facility.
  - Don't break confidentiality.
  - Don't forget that your professional role is not “friendship.”

**Remain Calm... even if it seems  
hopeless...**



**Call your Regional Coordinator for support or assistance in any situation**



### 3 - Remind Residents that...

- You will check on them often to see if they have any concerns that need attention
- You keep all conversations confidential
- They have the right to contact you, their ombudsman, and to ask staff for help to call
- They can contact you by calling the telephone number on the poster located in the facility, or give them a calling card



GOOD  
TIMES  
!!!







# Thank you for being an encourager!





# In Conclusion...

**Walking the fine line between residents and staff... takes patience, courage and understanding...**

**It involves the ability to balance and maintain relationships in a way that avoids power struggles while acknowledging the efforts of everyone involved**

**Thank you for  
serving as a resident  
advocate !!!**





