

The central purpose of a Culture of Gentleness (COG) is to nurture, teach, and sustain the experience of companionship, connectedness, and community for consumers, families, providers, caregivers and staff.

Northern Lakes Community Mental Health Authority (NLCMHA) has embraced the Culture of Gentleness since 2008.

COG is based on the principles of “Gentle Teaching” developed by Dr. John McGee. COG focuses on three stages of building relationships:

- Connectedness – it is good to do things with me.
- Companionship – it is good to do things together.
- Community – it is good to do things with friends.

A consumer’s home is the most critical for building relationships. They should feel safe, not judged, receive empathy, be able to “re-charge,” have fewer demands and more choices.

COG requires organizations and people to make a “cultural shift” in how they deliver services.

- COG serves as a foundation for all strategies used by Northern Lakes
- COG is our core value – our goal is to make people (all people in and outside NLCMHA) to feel valued, less fearful.
- COG defines who we are as leaders.
- COG builds a foundation of healthy and supportive relationships.
- COG is congruent; supports other therapies and strategies.

- COG by nature is PRO-active instead of reactive.
- COG changes focus from expecting and requiring the person to change to focusing on what providers need to change. If things don’t work out, what did WE miss or not do.

## COG Essentials

- We focus on consumers’ strengths instead of vulnerabilities.
- We focus on changing ourselves instead of expecting consumers to change (the better we understand the needs of people we serve, the more effective we will be in meeting them).
- We recognize that human/consumer needs are complex.
- We recognize the need for boundaries, structured activities and analysis of fears.
- We encourage caregivers to ask: “What I would do or need if I was X” in a given situation (is especially important if the person we are helping is non-verbal, has multiple and “complex” needs)?

*People change not by what they know, but by how they feel.*



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