

Monthly Newsletter

HEALTHY BY CHOICE
POWERED BY PROCARE RX
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The words we choose become the culture we build.

September is Core Values Month at Healthy By Choice — and we're making the case that words are one of them. Not just what we say in a values statement, but what we say to each other, out loud, on an ordinary Tuesday.

The research is clear: self-talk shapes stress response, verbal affirmation measurably lowers cortisol, and teams that hear encouragement out loud — not just implied — show higher trust and lower burnout. Words aren't the soft part of culture. They're the mechanism.

This month, we're pairing that science with something you can see: a "Wall of Encouragement" going up in every location, filling in with real words from real people. We're also turning language into action with our company-wide Food Drive and the Empty Bowl Luncheon — because the words we choose don't mean much if they never turn into something.

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- **Pillar #4: Core Values** — why the words we use are a health strategy
- **The "Wall of Encouragement"** — what a wall of colored words does for a team
- **Words From an Expert** — the research on self-talk and verbal affirmation
- **Community News** — Food Drive across all locations + Empty Bowl Luncheon
- **September Challenge** — GoPivot Challenge (Sep 14–18)
- **Workshop Invitation** — Sep 17 (PR) | Sep 18 (Mainland)
- **Recipe of the Month** — Alphabet Soup

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The Words We Choose Become the Culture We Build

Why language is where values stop being ideas and start being real

Core values live in two places: in what we believe, and in what we say out loud. Most organizations spend a lot of energy on the first and very little on the second — but research suggests the second is where values actually take effect.

Words Are a Physiological Event

A well-known Stanford study put this to the test directly: researchers had participants complete either a values-affirmation exercise or a control task before a stress challenge, and found that people who affirmed their personal values in words had significantly lower cortisol responses to the stressors than those who didn't. Naming what matters, out loud or on paper, isn't just reflection — it changes how the body responds to pressure.

The same logic scales up. When a teammate says "I noticed the work you put into that" or "that mattered to me," it's not a courtesy. It's a small, repeatable version of the same mechanism — language turning a value into something the nervous system can register.

What Happens on Teams That Say It Out Loud

Harvard's Amy Edmondson has spent decades studying what separates high-performing teams from struggling ones, and her research shows that psychological safety depends on open communication — team members feeling free to ask questions, raise concerns, and voice dissenting opinions without fear. That safety isn't built through policy. It's built through language, repeated: how people are talked to when they make a mistake, whether effort gets named, whether disagreement is met with curiosity or a cold shoulder.

Google's own internal research on team effectiveness — the well-known Project Aristotle study — identified psychological safety as the single strongest factor behind high-performing teams, with safer teams showing lower turnover and being rated as

effective by leadership at twice the rate. The words exchanged inside a team, it turns out, are doing real organizational work.



Values Aren't a Poster. They're a Sentence.

It's easy to write "respect" or "integrity" on a wall and call it culture. But a value only becomes real the moment it shows up in a sentence someone actually says — in a 1:1, in a Chat thread, in the thirty seconds before a meeting starts.

That's the idea behind this month's Wall of Encouragement (more on page 3): not another values poster, but a place where the actual words people use to encourage each other get to exist somewhere everyone can see them.

A Small Practice for September

You don't need a program to put this into action. Try naming one specific thing you appreciate about a colleague's work this week — out loud, not just in your head. Research suggests it costs you very little and does more for both of you than it seems like it should.

The Voice You Use With Yourself Counts Too

We've talked all month about the words we say to each other. But there's one conversation that happens more than any other — the one you have with yourself, silently, all day long.

Psychologist Dr. Ethan Kross, director of the Emotion & Self Control Laboratory at the University of Michigan, has spent his career studying that inner voice. His research looks at how the conversations people have with themselves shape their health, performance, decisions, and relationships — and it turns out that voice is louder, and more consequential, than most of us realize. One estimate puts our internal monologue at roughly 4,000 words a minute — the equivalent of delivering a full speech every 40 seconds, just inside your own head.

When Self-Talk Turns Into "Chatter"

Kross calls the unhelpful version of that voice "chatter" — cyclical negative thoughts that turn ordinary self-reflection into something closer to a curse, quietly eroding both performance and mental health. This isn't just a mood problem. Research has linked rumination to prolonged autonomic nervous system reactivity — when people ruminate about something upsetting, their blood pressure rises and stays elevated for as long as the rumination continues — which is part of why researchers suspect chronic rumination is one mechanism connecting stress to physical illness over time.

Brain imaging backs this up at the neural level: when people reflect on painful experiences using self-distancing techniques rather than replaying them in immersive first-person detail, scans show reduced activity in the brain regions tied to self-referential processing and emotional reactivity — a measurable, physical difference depending on how you talk to yourself about the same event.

The Fix Isn't Silence. It's a Different Voice.

Kross's central finding is that the fix isn't to stop talking to yourself — it's to change how you do it. Two tools from his research stand out as genuinely usable in an ordinary workday:

1. Distanced self-talk. Coach yourself through a hard moment using your own name or the word "you" instead of "I." Instead of I'm going to blow this presentation, try: [Your name], you've prepped for this. You've got this. Kross's research shows this creates just enough psychological distance to help people manage difficult emotions more effectively — the same way a good coach or a trusted friend would talk you through it — and Kross uses it

himself before high-stakes moments.

2. Ask "what," not "why." Kross's research distinguishes rumination from reflection largely by which question you're asking. "Why do I feel this way?" tends to loop back on itself and deepen distress, while "what" questions — what's actually happening here, what can I do next — move you toward resolution instead of circling it.



Does It Actually Work?

In a controlled study, Kross's team taught a brief, one-hour self-distancing technique to a group of people vulnerable to rumination and depression. Ten days later, that group showed rumination and negative-affect levels on par with much less vulnerable participants — and the benefit was still measurable in follow-ups three and six months later. This wasn't a personality trait. It was a skill, taught in an hour, that held up over time.

Try It This Week

Next time you catch yourself mid-spiral before a hard conversation, a big deadline, or a Monday that's already gone sideways — try coaching yourself the way you'd coach a teammate. Use your name. Say it like you mean it. And if you notice yourself asking "why is this happening to me," try swapping in "what can I actually do right now."

It's the same principle behind the Wall of Encouragement, just aimed inward: the words we choose, even the ones no one else hears, become the culture we build with ourselves.

The Weight of a Leader's Words

This month's theme asked one question of our leaders: what do the words we choose actually do?

Sylvia Flores Pabón, who leads Group Operations across MC-Rx and our Puerto Rico team, shared a reflection that's as much a leadership philosophy as it is an answer.

On intention vs. instinct:

"I tend to be a naturally spontaneous person, but I've learned that as a leader, my words carry significant weight," Sylvia shares. "They represent not only who I am as a person and professional, but also the values of our company and our commitments to our clients." She's found the balance isn't about choosing between authenticity and intention — it's holding both. "While I always bring my authentic self to my work, I do so intentionally. I believe effective leadership is about finding the right balance between fulfilling our operational duties and maintaining a human connection."



On walking the talk:

For Sylvia, the real test of language isn't the moment it's spoken — it's whether it's backed up afterward. "Words are more than just communication; they're an expression of what we actually believe," she explains. "I think the ultimate standard for any leader is simply 'walking the talk.' I hold myself to that standard constantly because I know that being aligned is the only way to build real

credibility." The stakes, in her view, are immediate: "A leader who says one thing but does another loses their team's trust instantly."



On building trust across Puerto Rico and MC-Rx:

Leading a team that spans locations has shaped how Sylvia thinks about language as a trust-building tool.

"I believe in being transparent — painting a clear, honest picture of the situation helps everyone get on the same page quickly," she says. She also points to something easy to skip under pressure: explaining the reasoning behind a decision, not just the decision itself.

"I make it a point to explain the 'why' behind my decisions, as providing that context is key to building trust and demonstrating my commitment." And trust, for Sylvia, runs both directions — it starts with listening.

"I'm a firm believer in asking questions to truly understand the challenges others are facing. When you take the time to both listen and explain, it sets the right tone for the team and creates a higher level of confidence and ease."

Her one sentence for the whole company: "Back up your words with action, keep your intentions clear, and always communicate with empathy and kindness."

Sylvia Flores Pabón
Senior VP of Group Operations, MC-Rx



Company-Wide Food Drive | Sep 8–23

This month, "the words we choose" show up as more than sentiment — they show up as sandwiches, canned goods, and a hand-painted bowl.

We're kicking off a Food Drive across our locations — because encouragement means more when it's backed by action.

Partner Organizations

- Gainesville, GA | Georgia Mountain Food Bank
- Miramar, FL | Feeding South Florida
- Southfield, MI | Hospitality House
- Caguas, PR | Albergue Los Peregrinos

Drop-off bins will be available at each site starting September 8th — look for details from your site lead on exact locations.

GoPivot Points: For each qualified food item donated, 50 GoPivot points is awarded up to 500 GoPivot points (maximum)



Perk of the Month

BetterHelp — 30% Off

This month's theme is about the words we use — including the ones we say to ourselves. If you've been meaning to talk to someone, ProCare Rx employees can save 30% on BetterHelp through TicketsAtWork. Log in with your work email at ticketsatwork.com to view current pricing and availability.

Reflection Prompt

Think of a specific sentence someone said to you that changed your day, your confidence, or your outlook — for better or worse. What made it land the way it did? Is there someone in your life who could use that same sentence from you this week?

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS



All Locations & Remote

- Food Drive — All Locations, Sep 8 to 23
- Run the Zoo — Southfield, Sep 13
- Heart Walk — Gainesville, Sep 24
- Empty Bowl Luncheon — Gainesville, Sep 25

TEAM COACHING GROUPS



Pillar #4 Core Values:

Join FRI Sep 18 - 1:15 PM Session

Words Build Culture

An anchor session on the physiological and cultural weight of words — how the language leaders and teammates use shapes stress, safety, and belonging, and how small shifts in phrasing change outcomes.

Focus Areas:

- The research: self-talk, verbal affirmation, and nervous system regulation
- The difference between words that diminish and words that build — even when intent is good
- Small, repeatable language habits that build culture (the Wall of Encouragement as one example)
- Why "it's just words" undersells one of the most powerful tools we have

Open to all employees — no registration required.



WELLNESS CHALLENGES

Company Challenge: WALL OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Duration: Sep 8 - 18

Points Available: Adding a word/note to the wall logs 100 GoPivot points (once per employee, any day during the window)

A Blank Wall, Filling In With What We Actually Say

Research is one thing. Seeing it happen is another. This month, we're not just talking about how words shape culture — we're building something you can walk up to and watch fill in, one note at a time.

What It Is

Starting September 8th, a blank wall goes up at every location. It stays blank exactly as long as it takes for the first person to walk up and change that. Grab a colored sticky note, write something kind — for a teammate, for yourself, or just for whoever needs it that day — and stick it up. No assigned words, no pressure to be profound. "You've got this" counts as much as anything longer.

Why a Wall, Specifically

There's something different about a value you can see versus a value you're told about. A poster that says "we value kindness" is easy to walk past. A wall that's visibly, physically filling up with real, handwritten encouragement from real coworkers is harder to ignore — and harder to forget. It's the Feature Article's research made literal: words, spoken and posted where others can see them, are part of what makes psychological safety and trust real instead of aspirational.

How to Participate

- 📍 Look for your site's wall going up the week of September 8th
- ✍️ Write a note anytime between September 8-18
- ☀️ Every note earns 100 GoPivot points
- 📸 On September 18th, we reveal all four site walls together in a company-wide celebration

SHARE YOUR WINS!



We want to celebrate YOU! Whether you've achieved a fitness goal, started a new healthy habit, or accomplished something personal, we'd love to hear about it. Submit it [Here](#) or Email us at wellness@procarerx.com to have your story featured in our next newsletter.



A FEW NOTES TO REMEMBER

Participation in wellness activities, including fitness classes, coaching sessions, 5k and wellness walks, helps us continue to grow and improve our offerings.

You can find the PDF version of the Newsletter for printing at hbc.procarerx.com under resources or [Here](#)

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

We couldn't be more excited to celebrate our September anniversaries! Your special shout-out is [right here](#). Cheers to another fantastic year ahead!

LIFE INTEGRATION

WORDSEARCH

E	L	U	D	Z	K	K	I	N	D	N	E	S	S	K
E	I	C	G	A	K	K	H	T	P	B	Q	G	U	U
R	S	N	R	X	F	O	V	C	D	J	J	J	Q	Q
U	T	T	M	M	N	S	T	E	W	P	E	P	W	H
T	E	N	O	E	U	Z	O	P	X	J	U	N	E	X
L	N	A	S	G	E	L	Q	S	X	W	F	L	J	G
U	C	T	Q	A	G	Z	F	E	W	R	Z	D	X	E
C	Y	G	C	R	E	G	T	R	E	U	A	U	J	T
C	B	M	X	U	I	N	T	E	G	R	I	T	Y	A
C	Q	H	N	O	M	I	P	F	G	W	R	O	L	A
R	F	Y	T	C	R	P	E	M	P	A	T	H	Y	M
Q	W	C	S	N	I	V	O	F	Z	F	L	P	O	K
I	X	L	U	E	F	R	U	I	P	E	M	E	S	B
K	E	T	R	C	F	G	R	A	T	I	T	U	D	E
Q	Y	V	T	X	A	S	E	U	L	A	V	O	M	V

ENCOURAGE • EMPATHY • LISTEN • KINDNESS • TRUST •
AFFIRM • RESPECT • GRATITUDE • CULTURE • INTEGRITY •
HONESTY • VALUES •

Soup for the Soul — One Letter at a Time

Ingredients: (Serves 4)

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 3 carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 8 cups chicken broth (or vegetable broth)
- 1 cups diced tomatoes (canned, with juices)
- 2 cups cooked shredded chicken (optional)
- 1 cups alphabet pasta
- 1 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoons salt
- 0.5 teaspoons black pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped, for garnish

Why we love this for your health:

This isn't just a nostalgic bowl of letters — it's genuinely good for you. Bone-based broths are rich in hydration and electrolytes, which is part of why chicken soup has been a go-to comfort food for generations, especially heading into cold-and-flu season. The vegetable trio of onion, carrot, and celery brings fiber, vitamin A, and vitamin C to the bowl, while the shredded chicken adds lean protein to help you stay full and fueled.

There's a mental-wellness angle too: warm, slow-cooked meals like this one are naturally calming to prepare and eat, and cooking something from scratch — even something as simple as soup — has been linked to lower stress and a greater sense of care for yourself. Fitting, for a month all about the words (and the care) we put into things.

Bonus: before you eat, try spelling out a word of encouragement with your spoon — a small, silly callback to this month's Wall of Encouragement.



Instructions:

1. Sauté the aromatics:

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add 1 medium yellow onion, diced, 3 carrots, peeled and diced, and 2 celery stalks, diced, and cook until softened, about 6 minutes

2. Add garlic

Stir in 3 garlic cloves, minced and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds

3. Build the broth:

Pour in 8 cups chicken broth (or vegetable broth) and 1 cups diced tomatoes (canned, with juices). Add 1 teaspoons dried thyme, 1 bay leaf, 1 teaspoons salt, and 0.5 teaspoons black pepper. Bring to a boil.

4. Simmer:

Reduce heat and let the soup simmer uncovered for 15 minutes to let the flavors come together.

5. Add the letters (and chicken):

Stir in 1 cups alphabet pasta and 2 cups cooked shredded chicken (optional), if using. Cook until the pasta is tender, about 10 minutes

6. Finish and serve:

Remove the bay leaf, taste and adjust seasoning, and ladle into bowls. Top with 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped, for garnish. Bonus: spell out a word of encouragement in your bowl before you dig in.



Thank you for reading!