Tone of Voice

1) GOAL

In order to:

- Create basic consistency across YNHHS materials; and
- Begin moving YNHHS toward the Optimism Tone of Voice; and
- Convey YNHHS values to internal and external audiences; and
- Create a distinct Tone of Voice that differentiates/distinguishes Yale New Haven Health from all others (distinct point of view)

2) DEFINITION

…beyond good writing
…beyond specific grammar elements
…beyond punctuation

Tone of Voice isn't what we say but how we say it. It's the language we use, the way we construct sentences, the sound of our words and the personality we communicate. It is to writing what logo, color and typeface are to [design].

Additionally, Tone of Voice is the sound of our words and the emotions they evoke.

3) OPTIMISM IN COMMUNICATIONS

Meaning of Optimism within the context of Yale New Haven Health communications:

- A point of view that conveys, “Let’s get you back to your life.”

- A goal orientation that includes both YNHHS and our patient/family/community: “Our goal is to use our skills, knowledge, experience, talents, values, etc. to help you/partner with you/collaborate with you to reach the healthiest version of yourself.”

- Messaging that leads to feelings of empowerment.

- Messaging that creates confidence about YNHHS as a leader – whether one is talking about YNHHS as a healthcare provider, an employer, a community citizen, a member of the larger healthcare industry, etc.
4) GOOD WRITING GUIDELINES

Basic good-writing guidelines are the building blocks of the Yale New Haven Health Tone of Voice:

- Be clear about the single most important message you want to convey.
- Use short words, short sentences and short paragraphs. Write clearly, simply and succinctly. Shorter is better.
  - Example: “use” instead of “utilize”
- Keep your audience in mind. Who are you writing for -- patients, doctors, employees, the community?
- Avoid clichés, jargon and overused words (administrative or healthcare buzzwords, etc.).
  - Example: State-of-the-art, transparent, bottom line, multidisciplinary, literally, unique, basically, high-touch, high-tech, bottom line, touch base, outside the box, reach out
- Aim for an 8th or 9th grade reading level.
- Create a strong first sentence (the lead) and a strong last sentence.
  - Your first sentence should convey the main point of the article, blurb, ad, etc.
- Construct sentences in a positive form and avoid words with negative connotations.
  - Example: Cell phones should not be used in certain areas of the hospital. vs. Cell phones may be used in many areas of the hospital, but please look for posted signs
  - Example: Do not pass go. Do not collect $100. vs. Once you pass go, you can collect $100.
- Use strong nouns and verbs.
- Use verb in the active, not passive tense.
  - Example: Active: Productivity hit new highs after the editors consumed a delivery of high-octane morning coffee. Passive: New highs in productivity were hit after the editors consumed a delivery of high-octane morning coffee.
- Use personal pronouns, when appropriate.
- Commit to a tense - YNHHS generally uses past tense.
- Avoid overly emotional language
- Avoid overly-emphatic punctuation!!!