Personal Philosophy of Nursing and Leadership

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Do me a favor. Think of a nurse, any nurse. It can be a family member, friend, or a nurse that took care of you, or someone you love, in the past. Did you think of someone? Okay, perfect. Have you ever asked them why they became a nurse? Virtually everyone will have a unique, distinguishing feature to their response, but they will almost always have one thing in common. As nurses, we do not choose this profession to become millionaires. We all strive to make an impact on thousands of lives. Whether we choose to specialize in oncology, maternity, or critical care, we all have distinct attributions that deem us alike. It takes a special person to be a nurse. It is imperative that they are compassionate, hard working advocates that are dedicated to their occupation. As nurses, we are leaders, in charge of the well being of our patients.

To answer my own question, when I think about why I chose to pursue a career as a nurse, I remember my grandmother. When I was a young child, my grandmother was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s Disease at the age of sixty-four. I meticulously watched as she began forgetting who I was, forgetting her likes and dislikes, and eventually forgetting how to bathe or talk. Her personality began to deteriorate until she was merely a stranger occupying her body. It was then that I attentively watched someone who looked like my best friend, but really was not, struggling to breathe as she ultimately took her last breath. But through all of the hardships, I did not forget to recognize the exceptional care that the nurses gave to my grandmother. They showed tremendous compassion, strength, and dedication to her and my family. That was the time that I realized that, while some people aim to be millionaires, I aspired to be just like those nurses. As nurses, we have the responsibility to provide professional, personalized patient care. But in order to do this successfully, one must analyze and develop their personal philosophy. We all have a motivating factor, a personal story, which greatly influences our philosophy and drives our nursing practice.
The basic definition of a philosophy, as described by Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is “the study of ideas about knowledge, truth, the nature and meaning of life” (2015). It is important that I explore my own personal philosophy that will drive my nursing practice. There are many distinctive interpretations on what it is to be a nurse. According to Craven, R., Hirnle, C., & Jensen, S. (2013), “For some, these images are from traditional, and perhaps outdated sources, including white uniforms, nursing caps, needles, and bedpans. For others, images of nursing include kindness, skill, compassion, and intelligence” (p. 2). After four years in a challenging and inspiring Bachelor of Science nursing program, I have been able to develop a personal philosophy that will guide me to success in the future. My philosophy of nursing is to provide exceptional evidence-based patient-centered care with the use of compassion, devotion, and encouragement, because patients are not just medical conditions, room numbers, or someone you are obligated to indulge to earn a paycheck. As a soon-to-be registered nurse, I strive to make a difference in my patient’s lives. To do this, it is important to be attentive, supportive, efficient, educated, and organized. Amid nursing school, I have learned about the core nursing values, and have been doing everything in my power to uphold them. Throughout my second shift during my senior practicum, I was able to make them come to life. Being a labor and delivery nurse is rewarding because you are able to provide support to a family through an exhilarating, vulnerable, and intimidating time in their lives. For me, I find that I am adept to thrive in this situation because I can adhere to my personal philosophy to provide remarkable care. I was assigned to a family where both the mother and father had severe anxiety. Through the complicated delivery process, I continuously reassured the family, held the mother’s hand, and displayed compassion. I successfully implemented my values in practice. I was attentive, caring, and confident, and they noticed. In the end, the patients would not stop thanking me and
telling their family about how much I helped them. It was the first time that I felt like I made an impact on someone’s life. It was at that moment that I realized that I was doing what I was meant to do, and that I loved every second of it. Although many seasoned nurses lose this feeling through the years, I vow to stick to my nursing philosophy and will love what I do.

While it is important to have a vastly established personal philosophy to adhere to during practice, it is critical to explore your leadership values as well. As nurses, we are leaders of our patient’s care, leaders of a healthcare team, and often times leaders of an entire nursing unit. Though what we are frontrunners of depends on the specific job description, there is always something in need of leadership. When I think about a respectable leader, the word adaptation comes to mind. Not one situation is alike, so it is important to be able to adjust as needed. However, there are also many other attributions that I think an authority figure should have. To name a few, they must be organized, cooperative, relaxed, and approachable, among others.

There are many reputable leadership theories, but there is one in particular that fits my personal leadership philosophy of adaptation. The situational approach to management, established by Paul Hershey and Ken Blanchard in 1977, is a “developed model to predict which leadership style would be most effective in situations, based on followers’ maturity.” (Ellis & Hartley, 2009, p. 10). The situational leadership model comprises four core competencies that are utilized to provide the most success. These include: diagnose and understand the situation, adapt when necessary, communicate with the team, and advance the progress. With this model, the leaders are able to identify and exploit the team’s strengths, while adjusting to the given position. This closely relates to my personal leadership philosophy because, when completing tasks as a team, there is no universal method. Personal philosophies of nursing and leadership drive
individual practice. Since they are key aspects in the delivery of quality of care, it is crucial that they relate to the agency in which you are working.

When searching for a place of employment, it is important to conduct research of the agency. Specific areas to explore include: the environment, the benefits, employee recommendations, and most importantly, their philosophy of nursing and leadership. The nursing philosophy of Lowell General Hospital, which is the location of my senior practicum, is to provide a dynamic environment to ensure that committed, innovative, evidence-based care is provided to improve the health of every individual who walks through the doors. Both of my personal philosophy of nursing and leadership are congruent with their agency policy. In my personal philosophy of nursing, I said that I strongly believe in providing evidence-based holistic care by treating the individual as a whole. This is accomplished through commitment and innovation. The agency believes in being dynamic and seeking new knowledge, which pertains to my leadership philosophy of adaptation. Although I can prominently relate to the Lowell General Hospital nursing philosophy, there is one thing that I think is incongruent with my own. While they flawlessly capture the concept of delivering state-of-the-art care, I believe they could speak more about the use of compassion, empathy, and personalization. Fortunately for me, I find that my core values relate to the agency in which I am interning at. However, that is not always the case. When this happens, it is imperative to internally resolve the interpersonal issues should they arise. If left unresolved, this may result in moral distress. I think the first phase to undertake the matter is to acknowledge the problem. Once the issue is identified, determine if it is something that can easily be resolved with a change of attitude or outlook. If that is the case, stay positive and remain open-minded about the situation, and determine a solution. It is typical
to experience difficulties within the workplace, but the way one resolves them is the important thing.

Developing a personal philosophy of nursing and leadership is a fundamental characteristic of a successful career as a professional nurse. To cultivate a philosophy, one must examine why they chose this career path, the values they hold, and what they can do to sustain them. My personal philosophy of nursing is to use evidence-based practice to provide quality and compassionate patient centered care throughout my career. It is also imperative to develop a leadership philosophy to guide the way we manage patient care, and work as a team. To me, it is important that a leader is adaptive and cooperative, much like the situational leadership philosophy developed by Hershey and Blanchard. Since these philosophies drive individual practice, it is important that they are congruent with your place of employment. When incongruent, it is vital to resolve these issues. I vow to advocate for my patients, and to deliver compassionate and personal care until I retire. I will abide by my personal philosophies of nursing and leadership to help change the face of nursing. What the future has in store is up to me, and I hope to stay motivated and driven to provide the best care possible.
References


