

Personal Philosophy of Nursing

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In order to write a philosophy of nursing, I believe that first one must decide what philosophy means to them. I think Shrock stated it best when she said, “philosophy is an attitude toward life and reality that evolves from each nurses beliefs ...”(Edwards, 1997, 1089). This definition gives me the freedom to use my own beliefs. I do not have to accept what someone else has decided. Scholars have been debating for years, is nursing an art or is it a science. Why can it not be both? I believe that to be a successful nurse one must be able to provide the “art” of caring, and have the drive to continue to attain and apply the knowledge “science” throughout your career. First I would like to address why nursing is an art. Written in text as far back as Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) and U.E. Nissen (1834-1892), nursing was being compared to art in a metaphorical sense. These pioneers were not referring to art as in the sense of fine art. They were alluding to nursing quality. Nissen asks the question in her book what is the most excellent level of practice? (Austgard, 2006, 16) Nissen was referring to caring. This thought echoes today by Benner. In her book *Novice to Expert* Benner states, “One way to separate the instrumental and expressive aspects of nursing is to regulate caring as the art of nursing (Benner, 1984, 170) Without caring the nurse cannot connect with the patient. If the nurse cannot connect, trust will not develop. Without this trusting relationship, therapeutic nursing will not take place. Therefore caring is at the center of all-successful nursing encounters. This is not to downplay the value of science. A competent nurse must be able to use the technical resources available. The nurse should have knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the human body, pathology and current guidelines for pharmacological therapy. This is an ever-changing body of knowledge. Science also encompasses the skill required to perform technical tasks. Benner’s Novice to Expert model explains the science behind skill acquisition. As nurses we are all on a continuum to achieve “expert” in each of the seven domains of competencies.

My philosophy of nursing addresses four things: society, environment, the recipient of nursing care, and the interaction between society, person and the environment. My definitions are as follows.

The simplest definition of society is a group of people with common interests. Societies for nursing would by this definition, evolve for each given circumstance. For example, a hospital ward could be a society where the nurses are held together by the common interest of providing care to their patients. The environment is the platform for the society to live in. This can be described as a physical environment such as the area the person lives in, the home structure, or any tangible area the person encounters. Environment also encompasses the person’s mental awareness. This includes the person’s spiritual awareness, emotions and thoughts about their current situation. The recipient of nursing care is not limited to just the patient. The family, friends, clergy, and other members of the health care team are all recipients of the care being given by the nurse. Everyone that comes in contact with the nursing process is affected either positively or negatively. All interactions between the society, the environment, and the recipient of care are dynamic and synergistic.

Health and Illness also needs to be addressed. While researching the idea of health, I came across a definition that put together all of my thoughts.” Health is the process of becoming, the accumulation of man’s life experiences. A non linear entity that cannot be interrupted or qualified by the terms such as good, bad, more or less”. (Parse, 1981, 39) Illness therefore is any state that interrupts or hinders the process.

As a small child, I dreamt of being a nurse. I remember longing to grow up so I could wear the white uniforms and caps that I saw on television. Over the years, my idea of what a nurse was changed I began to understand that a nurse was not just a person in a uniform, but an individual that could make a difference in another person’s life. Nursing defined to me is caring and compassion delivered with the technology needed to provide an environment that supports healing. This can be provided at any location and delivered by any person with the ability to show love and support to another human being. The definition changes slightly when speaking of the professional nurse. This person must provide competent care along the guidelines set forth by the American Nurses Society and personal state regulations.

Personally, nursing is my way of giving back to society. I enjoy helping others. Giving of my self gives me peace of mind and spirit. This is a much different view than when I started in my associated degree program. Then it was all about obtaining my new skill and learning the ability to provide medical care. I have found there is far more to healing than medicine. The ability to truly show a person that you care involves interacting with that person on a spiritual level. I have found that this level of interaction provides a therapeutic basis to promote trust thereby aiding in the healing process. Without this therapeutic environment, complete healing is inhibited.

My philosophy is easily carried into my professional life. My current position is at Frankfort Regional Medical Center Frankfort, Kentucky. One of our mission statements is “ to compassionately deliver quality health care in an innovative and efficient manner”. (Frankfort Regional Medical Center, 2007 home page)

We carry a team attitude of treating others, as you would like to be treated. Competent caring is highlighted in our team approach.

In conclusion, one could say, I live my philosophy of nursing on a daily basis. I do not have to be at work to provide nursing care. I exemplify my beliefs in every situation of my life. Nursing is my life.

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