

Philosophy of Nursing

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Nursing Philosophy

Each nurse comes to the profession for different reasons. The intentions and motivations that inspire a person to enter the nursing field are as unique as the people themselves. To describe one's own purpose and philosophy is to recognize the influences that brought you to the profession and to take the responsibility for implementing that philosophy in the nursing practice. My own philosophy will be further described as it relates to two primary values, humanity, and altruism.

Definition of Nursing

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has put forth a definition of nursing that resonates with me, it describes nursing as both an autonomous and collaborative endeavor to care for individuals and families as well as groups and communities (2002). The broadness of the definition of people nurses care for is both daunting and empowering. Nurses can help anyone in virtually any circumstance that they may be found, this includes not only people who are ill, but people who may be disabled or dying (International Council of Nurses, 2002). The ICN continues to expand the definition of nursing by detailing some nursing roles such as health promotion, advocacy, education, research, and very importantly, the nurse's role in influencing health care policies and systems (International Council of Nurses, 2002). I would add to this definition of nursing an emphasis of the role of the nurse in health promotion and prevention. I think health promotion and disease prevention can go a long way in avoiding the need for treatment-based health care in the future and nurses can be a big part of that.

Purpose of Nursing

The primary themes of my purpose and philosophy of nursing revolve around humanity and altruism. The recognition that all people, regardless of past or current circumstance are

human, and for that singular fact deserve to be treated with the upmost dignity and respect. Additionally, altruism is a great motivation to me, I have a desire to serve those around me to my greatest capacity, with no condition of reward or recompense. Altruism is recognized as a common motivation for nurses and linked to an increased level of efficacy from nurses (Alavi et al., 2017). As a future nurse I want these themes to underpin my clinical practice and enhance the other purposes of nursing including promoting health, perform health screenings, implementing interventions, and facilitating a comfortable death. There are two passages that influence my actions as a nursing student and future nurse. The first is the lament of the late Jacob Marley from the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol*, which reads, “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!” (1920, pp. 48-49). Here, Jacob Marley grieves his life-time preoccupation with his trade rather than the “business” he should have been attending to, that of serving others. This passage informs the way I want to spend my life, and I think nursing is a meaningful way to make mankind my business.

Secondly, I am a religious person and a verse of scripture particular to my religion found in *Doctrine and Covenants* describes my duty as a person of faith, namely, to “...succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1981, p. 150). This section of scripture enhances my desire to succor, meaning ‘run to’ the aid of the weak and to literally and figuratively uplift downcast hands and fortify feeble knees.

Relationships in Nursing

I find Jean Watson's theory of caring especially poignant and consistent with my own theories and philosophies of relationships within nursing. In caring for people from diverse backgrounds I believe the nurse should treat each one with dignity, respect, and humanity in a manner consistent with the values, culture, and health of the patient. For example, I would not offer a practicing Muslim patient a meal with pork. I would ensure that patient had a meal that was consistent with the dietary guidelines of the physician and the patient's religion. This is an example of cultivating sensitivity as described by Watson in support of the spiritual practices of oneself and others (Blais & Hayes, 2016).

In caring for others in the community setting the nurse should cultivate values that can be described as "humanistic-altruistic" (Blais & Hayes, 2016, p. 111). This portion of Watson's theory calls upon nurses to practice caring with loving-kindness equally among all members of the community (Blais & Hayes, 2016). It is a particular passion of mine to serve in the community. I want to serve in such a way that any member of the community in need can obtain the care they require in a safe and respectful environment. I was able to participate in a free flu vaccine clinic as part of my clinical education experience and I was able to care for people across a wide spectrum of society. It was a singular experience for me where I could really embrace the humanistic-altruistic values I hold.

I highly value relationships between nurses and other health care professionals. I think it is important to collaborate with health care professionals to create an environment that is healing, supportive, and protective (Blais & Hayes, 2016). Watson describes such an environment as one where people can heal in a holistic manner both physical and nonphysical (Blais & Hayes, 2016). The environment created by health care professionals has a great influence over the comfort and

healing of the patient, and can be highly beneficial when “wholeness, beauty, comfort, dignity, and peace are potentiated” (Blais & Hayes, 2016, p. 111).

Ethical Principles in Nursing

Each person is a human and deserves to be treated with equanimity and respect regardless of past actions or omissions that may bring them under my care. As a nursing care partner for a local hospital system, I have had the opportunity to care for patients who are incarcerated and receiving treatment at the hospital. It was disheartening for me to observe some judgmental attitudes among some members of the care team. As I cared for these individuals, I tried to keep my level of care and compassion the same as it would be for any other patient. I spoke with my patients and interacted with them in a non-judgmental manner.

My best care is not dependent upon compensation or reward. Although I will be practicing nursing as a career and collecting payment, I hope to be able to serve with organizations such as Doctors Without Borders, or free clinics in rural areas of the United States where I can volunteer my time, nursing skills, and knowledge. I will be pleased to give my best nursing care to people in my community and around the world with no compensation. Even in the hospital setting I endeavor to avoid the attitude, “I’m not getting paid enough for this” when facing a difficult patient or situation. In difficult situations I want to remember that my primary motivation for entering nursing was not the financial compensation but rather, to be an agent of help and healing to people in need, especially people without ready access to healthcare.

Conclusion

As a nurse I will incorporate my philosophy of recognizing the innate value of people, and care for them in a manner that honors their unique humanity. My nursing practice will also

highlight the value of altruism, that is, to care for people because I care, and not for reward or recognition.

Reflection

I found this assignment personally enlightening. I knew that I wanted to be a nurse but over the course of this assignment I was able to really think about why I want to be a nurse, how I want to practice, and how I want my patients to feel when I care for them. I think having a firm understanding of one's own nursing philosophy will influence patient care and by extension patient perception of care. I hope my future patients will be able to perceive that I hold them in high regard.

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"I pledge to support the Honor System of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community it is my responsibility to turn in all suspected violators of the Honor Code. I will report to a hearing if summoned." Angela Wood 3/19/2022

References

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