Personal Philosophy of Nursing Education

Nursing is the healing energy of caring, embodied in knowledge and skills. Each person is a unique combination of cognitive and physical energy blended together and permeated by spiritual energy. Spiritual energy provides each person with a creative, connecting purpose that is individual and intended for self-transcendence toward a collective whole. Health is the process of creating, connecting, and becoming (purpose) and can therefore exist in the presence and the absence of disease. The goal of nursing is to interact with others in a way that nurtures the process of becoming. This requires knowledge that is empirical, ethical, esthetic, personal, and spiritual. In every situation, no matter how hopeless the circumstances seem to be, nurses value the sacred potential in each person with a respect that seeks to transcend human weaknesses and connect with the strengths, the gifts, and the purpose of each person in order to nurture the process of health. Nursing is emancipatory, transformational, and steeped in the ethics of caring. In the process of creating individualized caring through such connecting interactions, we, too, are transformed.

Nursing is a true vocation ---not in the sense of an occupation or trade, but in the sense of a calling. Nursing is a way of looking at the world. It is a passion that doesn’t check out when one’s shift is over. True nursing care at the bedside goes beyond the technical skills that are necessary for the management of a health “variance”. True nursing care at the bedside considers the family that supports a patient; the home environment in which this patient lives; the community resources available to help this patient; the local, state, and national politics that affect these resources; and the global community from which these resources are taken. There is no room in nursing for simply taking care of “the gallbladder in room 233”.

Therefore, nursing education requires a curriculum that raises fundamental questions about the meaning of human experience. As educators we need to nurture the nursing student’s ability to think critically and creatively. In an age when people are categorized to fit into cost-efficient managed care boxes according to their labeled conditions, nurses with critical thinking skills are essential. Thinking outside the box requires nursing excellence, resourcefulness, creativity and advocacy. We need to empower our students to see human needs manifested in diverse beliefs, values, resources, and conditions that impact the effectiveness of highly sophisticated technical skills advocated by the medical model and regulated for efficiency by the institutional model. We need to commission students to synthesize this sensitivity with medical protocols in order to humanize health care on an individual, community, national, and international level. Thus, nursing education requires a curriculum that encourages the student to participate actively in the creation of knowledge by engaging in research and grappling with human issues.