

My Philosophy of Nursing

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I recently completed my associate degree in nursing this past May and am in the process of earning my Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). As a new graduate medical-surgical nurse, frequent reprioritization, strict attention to detail, and a high level of competency are required of me to ensure patient safety isn't compromised. Throughout my shift, I analyze my peers as much as possible to observe their methods of time management and task completion. This is to see where I can improve and what bad habits I need to avoid. Seasoned nurses possess the ability to 'trim the fat' off their daily routine due to their extensive clinical tenure, which can become a 'double-edged sword,' as doing this may save them time but may lead to the oversight of critical safety measures such as verification and reassessment. Unknowingly, this process of thought, combined with several other learning mechanisms, assisted in the creation of my philosophy of nursing. My version embodies the personal and professional standards I've set for myself as a caregiver. These ideals are unique to me and were built from life experience, clinical hours, education, peers, mentors, achievements, and failures. Although not all these views share a linear connection, they uniformly express themselves through the vessel of myself and, most importantly, influence my daily decisions.

It's beneficial to be aware of your nursing philosophy because I believe every nurse utilizes one, whether they notice it or not. Once you acknowledge this, you can reflect on your values and ethical standards to see how they align with your professional performance. Additionally, having a unique nursing philosophy is essential because each is specific to the field it's used in. For example, you work as a circulating nurse in the operating room. Your priorities will be vastly different from an E.R. nurse's. Therefore, you must design your philosophy to match your workplace. Hypothetically, if you prioritize a patient's emotional well-being over the maintenance of a sterile environment, it can pose a threat to their safety in the OR. Most surgical patients are placed under sedation and don't have a need for emotional support, excluding their time pre-/post-operatively. Conversely, maintaining sterility is essential to preventing potential infections that can be introduced during an invasive procedure.

Alternatively, a patient may present with an acute panic attack. Their emotional state would inherently become of greater importance to stabilize this patient before sterility would. Your nursing

philosophy may be influenced by many other factors affecting your work setting, like the size of your facility. Lower patient ratios make it easier to spend more time with each of them, but it can seem impossible when you're given double the number of patients you're usually responsible for. There are infinite hypotheticals that reflect my opinion that your philosophy should cater to your setting.

I define nursing as delivering compassionate and proficient care that encompasses physical care and emotional and physiological support. It should promote health, patient safety, and the continued education of nurses and their patients. An overlooked aspect when delivering care is the amount of empathy a nurse has. They should have a high level of empathy for their patients, regardless of their history or condition. Patients need our meticulous care because they're unable to care for themselves. A common saying amongst many members of the healthcare community is that the moment you stop feeling empathy for your patients, you should step away from healthcare. This sentiment is echoed in a systematic review by Moya-Salazar et al. (2021). Empathy has been linked to improved patient outcomes, including markedly improved patient satisfaction, more vital adherence to treatment plans, and more favorable clinical outcomes. It was found that high levels of empathy among healthcare professionals led to better patient outcomes and increased satisfaction. The continual evolution of thought is just as important as forming the foundation of personal nursing values, possibly through research of other philosophy models. After understanding the subjectivity of nursing definitions and beliefs, you can compare the thoughts of other great nursing minds to your own.

Jean Watson's philosophy and science of caring are founded on multiple concepts strung into a cohesive definition of nursing. She introduces a set of ten 'caritive factors' that contribute to a 'transpersonal caring relationship' (Nursing Theory, n.d.). She wanted to show the importance of connecting with your patients spiritually and providing empathy for their situation to better learn about the patient's personality. The article discusses other expressions like 'caring moments' and how they improve the patient-nurse relationship and trust.

The American Nurses Association Code of Ethics sets its standard of patient care from several components (Berkeley College, 2023). Firstly, it respects human dignity. I used this when building my own philosophy of nursing because I hold its importance so highly. They also mention a myriad of other factors that directly influence patient outcomes and guide nurses' ethical practices.

When comparing these nursing theories/definitions and the TSC Nightingale Honor code to my philosophy, I noticed the shared value of holistic care. Holistic care addresses various aspects of a patient's care, including spirituality. A study from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Brigham and Women's Hospital concluded that integrating spirituality into care can impact the patient's quality of life and medical decisions. Howard Koh, the Harvey V. Fineberg Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership at Harvard Chan School, states, "Integrating spirituality into care can help each person have a better chance of reaching complete well-being and their highest attainable standard of health." Another common theme was the necessity of integrity throughout each model. Maintaining integrity is crucial, as nurses have a considerable level of independence with respect to the authority providers hold. Nurses are responsible for the delivery method and timing of interventions. There are many instances where nurses work independently under a set of orders, and the safety of a patient is 'in their hands.'

Recent studies have amplified the benefit of allowing patient families to engage in their care. When referring to holistic care, the concept of environment can mean a patient's family if they're present. According to Carman et al. (2013), involving patients and their families in healthcare decisions leads to better health outcomes and improved patient satisfaction. Patient families can personalize care for the patient, mainly when that patient cannot communicate. They can voice other considerations like religion, television preferences, and food likes (or dislikes). "A recent column in APA's journal *Psychiatric Services* recommends that patients and caregivers be involved in the decision making regarding the patients' care. Authors Johannes Harmann, M.D., and Stephan Heres, M.D., concluded that "caregiver involvement might improve clinical decision making and health outcomes for both patients and caregivers" (American Psychiatric Association, 2019).

It would be ignorant to say my philosophy of nursing is advanced, as I have very minimal experience in the field. Rather, I believe my model is basic and serves as an easy-to-follow framework when beginning. It's subject to change, which I think is necessary as I advance in my career and gain more experience and trust in my skills as a nurse.

My philosophy impacts healthcare by endorsing patient rights. My standard is to treat all patients with dignity and respect. I've noticed these are neglected by some undereducated nurses I've worked alongside. As human beings, it's easy to find humor in someone else's situation because it's not true for you, but this isolates patients and hurts their esteem. Various medical conditions are unorthodox and can appear disturbing to the public. The nurse is responsible for shielding that patient from the damaging thoughts and humiliation they may experience outside the facility. In our care, patients need to feel safe from judgment or prejudice so they can focus on their healing. Adhering to my philosophy enhances patient safety by emphasizing thorough assessments, vigilant monitoring, and adherence to safety protocols. For instance, checking a crash cart or medication fridge temperature, though seemingly trivial, is essential for preparedness and patient safety. Pain scale assessments, before and after medication intervention, are something that I firmly believe in as well. Without constant monitoring of a patient's pain and their description of it, signs of further complications are missed.

Observation of my work as a nurse so far would show my commitment to excellence, referenced in Trinidad State College's BSN Nightingale Honor Code. My desire for further education through a bachelor's degree resonates with the very first statement of the honor code, "We, the incoming Trinidad State Nursing class, come together, joined as a community of learners, to pledge our commitment to the highest standards of the nursing profession" (Trinidad State College, n.d.). The honor code mentions a commitment to 'ethical behavior, honesty, integrity, accountability, and professionalism.' I implement these into my practice every day through several different avenues. HIPAA is something I religiously follow to protect my patients from people who don't need to know about their treatment.

Taking an introspective view to understand the reasoning behind my decision-making was humbling and thought-provoking. Memories of clinical interactions during nursing school flooded me as I reflected on my attitude as a nurse then and now. I've seen improvement in my ability to view my patients as more than just a patient, but instead as a fellow human being. As I learned more about nursing philosophy, I realized I have a life-long journey ahead of me. A journey that challenges my beliefs and thought processes to evolve as a nurse and a student of nursing continuously.

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