

Philosophy of Nursing

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Before I began my journey to become a nurse, I had not considered the importance of an individual's nursing philosophy and how it might impact how they approach the nursing profession. As I near graduation, I have come to understand that nursing philosophies are varied and influenced by a multitude of varying things unique to the individual. My initial philosophy, formed at the outset of my journey, was primarily based on enabling patients to live on their own terms. This served as a foundational stone, yet it was only a small component of what would ultimately become the comprehensive worldview I have developed.

Definition of Nursing

In my own practice of nursing, I have developed a definition of nursing that synthesizes key elements from Martha Rogers' Science of Unitary Human Beings, Rosemarie Rizzo Parse's Human Becoming Theory, and principles of patient-centered care. Martha Rogers' theory emphasizes that patients are dynamic energy fields that continually interact with their environment (Johnson & Pamela Bayliss Webber, 2015). In essence, a person must be looked at holistically rather than discreetly. Rosemarie Rizzo Parse's theory also focuses on seeing that person as a whole and that a patient's unique experiences influence a person's decisions and goals. (Johnson & Pamela Bayliss Webber, 2015)

I define nursing as an empathetic and dynamic patient-centered care process that recognizes and respects each individual's unique, holistic nature. It is an art and science where care is tailored to honor the freedoms, choices, and independence of the patient. Nurses facilitate this process by engaging with patients as whole beings, continuously interacting with their environments, and actively participating in their health journey. This approach is founded on a

commitment to professional excellence, evidence-based practice, and ethical care, ensuring that the patient's values, needs, and preferences are at the core of all healthcare decisions.

Purpose of Nursing

As delineated by my definition of nursing, the purpose of nursing is anchored to the concept of patient-centered care. This underscores the pivotal role of nurses in understanding their patients and tailoring care to meet each patient's unique values, goals, and preferences. We engage in a holistic approach to address not only their physical ailments but also their emotional, spiritual, and social well-being. In a word, nurses are enablers. We enable a patient to meet their health needs on their terms, irrespective of the healthcare team's values. Nurses are patient advocates and engage in difficult conversations with doctors and families on the patient's behalf to ensure that care is aligned with the patient's unique goals.

Assumptions

My beliefs and values heavily influence my nursing philosophy regarding a nurse's responsibility to the patient. The concepts of patient autonomy and self-reliance are at the core of my nursing practice. When interacting with patients or providing patient care, my goal is to act toward the fulfillment of the patient's goals within the framework of the patient's belief system.

Nurses and the Client in a Culturally Diverse Setting

Each patient is unique, yet they cannot be seen as separate from their cultural environments. Understanding and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds is crucial for effective patient care. Madeleine Leininger's Transcultural Nursing theory emphasizes the need for nurses to be culturally competent to provide culturally appropriate and meaningful care to patients.

(Leininger, 2002). This underscored the necessity of tailoring nursing practices to accommodate

different cultural values, beliefs, and practices to ensure that each patient feels valued and understood.

Nurses and the Community

I firmly believe in the idea that nurses play a pivotal role in shaping community health. Nurses have a responsibility to address broader health issues within the community. In accordance with provision 8 of the American Nurses Association *Code of Ethics* (2015), nurses posit that health is a human right and that nurses play a vital role in reducing healthcare disparities within the community. The role of public health nurses has evolved to encompass advocacy, community organizing, policy development, and health education. This evolution shows the dynamic nature of nursing, where the nurses' role extends beyond direct patient care and places nurses at the forefront of community health initiatives.

Nurses and Other Health Care Professionals

Collaborative practice is a cornerstone of nursing care. Provision 6 of the ANA *Code of Ethics* (2015) indicates that nurses are responsible for promoting a respectful and ethical work culture that fosters collaboration across the healthcare team. Patients interact with nurses more than any other member of the healthcare team. It is the nurse's responsibility to ensure that the patient's needs are being met and that each member of the team remains abreast of the patient's unique situation. In many ways, the nurse is like a conductor, ensuring that each healthcare team member is engaged and moving in the same direction in relation to the patient's healthcare goals.

Principles

I hold two underlying sets of beliefs and values that influence my view on the nurse role. Those beliefs and values are autonomy and self-reliance. These beliefs are not unique to my

views on nursing but are my core beliefs and values as a person and are the primary influences on how I approach and live my life. My beliefs are heavily influenced by my background as the eldest child of a farming family in rural America and further forged by a lengthy Military career in which I learned invaluable lessons about leadership, teamwork, and the importance of clear and effective communication.

During my clinical experiences, I have observed many instances of patient autonomy being violated. Sometimes, health care team members attempt to influence a patient's decision-making without respect for the patient's preferences. Other times, members of the patient's family disagree with the patient's decision. These situations sometimes have the potential to create volatile situations that require delicate nursing intervention. In one notable instance, I had a patient who was in advanced heart failure and had signed a DNR. The rest of the patient's family was understandably upset with and disagreed with this decision and felt the patient was giving up. The charge nurse and I discussed the patient's condition with the family and helped them understand the importance of patient autonomy and letting the patient make decisions in accordance with his own goals.

Self-reliance is another value I place in high importance. Self-reliance can be termed self-care and is an important empowerment tool for patients. Self-reliance means guiding patients toward taking an active role in their own health management and giving them the necessary tools for independence. This begins with patient education. Educating patients on their conditions, self-care routines, and modifiable risk factors equips them with the knowledge, confidence, and skills necessary to reach their healthcare goals. Self-reliance not only helps patients in their current health challenges but also builds resilience and the capacity to handle future health challenges. I fondly remember a patient I had that was over 90 years old. He had a colon cancer

diagnosis and was in the hospital after having had a bowel resection and colostomy. He had expressed to me that he was concerned about being able to care for himself because he lived alone and had no family that could assist him. His concerns were focused solely on the colostomy. A consultation with the wound care nurse was placed, and he was given education on how to care for his colostomy. From that point forward, I encouraged the patient to perform his own colostomy care with me in the room to help if needed. By the end of the shift, this patient's mood was noticeably improved, and he was feeling much more optimistic about his ability to care for himself after he was discharged.

Conclusion

When I began my journey, my philosophy on nursing was centered around the concept of the nurse as an enabler who assists the patient on their health journey on the patient's terms. As I have gained experience and engaged in reflective exercises, my philosophy hasn't changed but has instead evolved. It has grown to encompass aspects of how a nurse can help patients achieve their goals. Nurses must see the patient holistically, not from the nurse's eyes, but from the patient's perspective, and understand how the patient is influenced by and interacts with their environment. As I graduate and begin practicing as a nurse, I have come to understand that my journey has deepened my understanding of the nurse's role as more than an enabler; it has become a comprehensive view that encompasses patient advocacy, cultural sensitivity, community engagement, and interprofessional collaboration. The values of autonomy and self-reliance will continue to guide my practice, ensuring that each patient's individual needs and perspectives are respected and incorporated into their care. As I step into the profession of nursing, I take with me not only the knowledge and skills that I have acquired but also a

philosophy that sees each patient as a unique individual within a broader social and cultural context.

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