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Are You Demonstrating the Value of Caring?

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Are you making a difference? Christian values and caring are at the heart of nursing practice. However, it seems there is little talk about caring values with nursing students, even though nurse educators *can* share these important messages with their students. Demonstrating compassion and caring in an environment of mutual respect can truly make a difference to future nurses.

Although nurses must keep current with the rapid advances of technology, we have an important history of incorporating care and empathy into knowledge and expertise. Caring is central to nursing and can be essential to the actions a nurse takes (Wilkinson & Treas, 2011). Caring allows an individual to connect with others, respecting human dignity and responding with compassion. Actively listening and being emotionally present, as well as providing support, are important aspects of a caring relationship. Nurse educators can make a powerful impression on students by teaching and demonstrating the value of caring.

I have been inspired by colleagues and a graduate nursing advisor. They are educators who demonstrate compassion, caring, and respect for others. This in turn has encouraged me to strive to be a positive role model to students. As a nurse educator, I believe I hold a position that can make a difference to future nurses.

Caring involves a personal and genuine concern for others. I share the importance of this caring aspect of nursing with students and offer caring to and for them. I've received feedback from students on how meaningful and inspiring my caring comments are. One student said she would take these important words of wisdom with her as she works in the healthcare field.

I feel that caring is the basis for therapeutic relationships and is an essential component of the practice of nursing. After a recent presentation, a student told me that if she wasn't already a nursing student, she would want to be one because she felt how I cared for others and how genuine my passion is for nursing; she wanted to be a part of such a profession. It touched me that I can instill this passion in our students. Students' comments reaffirm that what I practice as an educator makes a difference.

Sadly, there is not a cure for every disease or traumatic event. A story I share with students is about being with a young man when he was informed by the Emergency Department physician that his mom had just died. I tried to be as sensitive as possible, and he thanked me for taking the time to be with him. I could not change the outcome; however, I was able to be there with him, listen, and provide comfort at a devastating time. Through this story I demonstrate to students how nurses help patients and their families at their most troubled times. Often it is the willingness to care and listen that makes a difference. Sometimes feelings can be conveyed without spoken word.

An important part of the Christian life is caring for others. The Bible guides us with direction to reach out to **others with love and kindness. In Galatians we read, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23, NIV).** As Christian educators, it should be a natural extension of our faith to care for our students and role model caring for patients and families.

Human caring is as valuable a resource as the most advanced technology. Students forget many aspects of nursing school, but they never forget the educator who demonstrated care and compassion. Educating nursing students in an environment of compassion and caring promotes the importance of learning to care for others. Being a positive role model by supporting students, encouraging questions, listening, and promoting an environment of respect can inspire future caring nurses. Nursing is a profession that reaches out to others in a personal way. We are teaching a profession of caring. Shouldn't we be doing that in a caring manner?

Wilkinson, J., & Treas, L. (2011). Fundamentals of nursing (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: F.A. Davis.