



Editorial

Mentoring: Are we living up to our professional role as an educational leader?



As educational nursing professionals, it is time to ask ourselves if we are living up to the role. Have you asked yourself lately if you are someone's mentor, and if so can you describe the characteristics that you display as a faculty mentor? Let us go one-step further and ask ourselves, "Were we once the mentee"? As you continue to reflect, can you speak to the qualities you admire in that person who mentored you. What did you expect from this relationship? Lastly, do you understand the benefits you will personally gain from being a mentor for new faculty?

My particular fascination with mentoring is in the relationship built and the direct link to leadership. As nurses, we exemplify leadership qualities in our relationships through our roles as patient advocates. However, in our faculty roles are we new faculty advocates? Patients rely on us to lead them to the path of health and wellness. In a peer relationship, nurses rely on one another as "information sharers", or at best someone we collaborate with to get the job done. In our faculty work environment, mentors are the natural leaders who lead new faculty to success in their new role. If you can take this vision one-step further, you can see how this benefits the entire faculty and students as they work towards NCLEX success. Let us take a moment and explore the roles of mentoring that lead to success for everyone.

A mentoring relationship assumes many qualities and roles. The question is, "Are we capable of recognizing these qualities and roles?" The role of a mentor is described on the US Department of Health and Human Services' website. Let us look at a few, and perhaps this exercise will spark a desire to influence your educational practice in a more respectable and caring way. Honestly, ask yourself if you really understand how mentors transform the profession of nursing and especially nursing education. Transformational leaders are born from great mentors...read on to see how many of these roles are characteristic of someone you know or perhaps you *possess*.

Do you know the "in's and out" of your position as faculty on your campus or as online faculty? Are you able to determine the needs of a newcomer? As a seasoned professional, have you shared your experiences with someone less experienced? Are you capable of assessing the needs of your mentee, and are you able to help facilitate the development of the necessary skills to be a competent nurse educator? If you answered yes, then you are assuming the role of *TEACHER*. Do not forget to answer your mentee's questions, and accept that you do not have to be an expert but rather a guide for the mentee on how to get the answers!

The next role would naturally follow because you will *GUIDE* the mentee on the inner workings as well as "showing the ropes" on how your institution operates. As a guide, you will show the new or novice nurse educator how to succeed and conform to the unspoken words that will make the institution a success. Showing the mentee policies and procedures is an excellent way to make information on how to function

in the learning environment as an educator an easier process. Inviting the new faculty person to sit with you at a faculty meeting is another example.

Are you enthusiastic and a cheerleader at heart? Perhaps you are a *MOTIVATOR*. The motivator is excellent at promoting enthusiasm at work. Who knows how far you can inspire a mentee to unleash their own individual potential? The fact is the motivator encourages individual growth and shares in the delight of the enthusiasm the mentee exhibits.

Are you the nurse educator who tends to offer counsel to others at your place of work? Are you able to keep the information confidential? Perhaps you are a good listener. Trust is important in the role of the *COUNSELOR*. Who is this nurse educator assuming the role of a *counselor*? Are you the one who helps new faculty with a problem or dilemma?

Good nursing leadership facilitates mentoring, and in fact, the nurse educator is the ultimate leader. Transformational nursing leaders open doors to a new world for nurse educators. A mentor recognizes the qualifications and needs of the mentee and is not threatened or afraid to refer a mentee to a committee or group where individual growth can occur. A mentor puts the ball in motion for the mentee to learn and grow so that all can share in their accomplishments. You may just be whom we call the *REFERRAL AGENT* or the *DOOR OPENER*. Transformational leaders take pride in the accomplishments of their mentees and the team! He/she does not fear or compete with their colleagues.

A personal experience quite memorable was the day my nurse educator mentor told me I should join the Research Committee at the local hospital. She said, "A nurse educator should be leading that committee". My mentor and *SPONSOR* not only stimulated my interest and referred me to the committee with full confidence, but assured me that I would make a difference on the committee, the school, and of course the hospital.

The most important role a mentor assumes is that of being a *ROLE MODEL*. It is tough to admit that many nurse educators leave the professional nurse educator role because they did not have someone to respect. It is safe to say that mentees look up to their mentors. You will know you are a role model and mentor when those around you listen to what you say and treat you with respect. One saying appears to be true: Imitation is the highest form of flattery. Look around you and ask yourself whom you would want to be like. Is there someone you want to be like? Mentors carry themselves with poise and confidence. Mentors have inspired us to be whom and where we are today.

I hope I have helped you identify the mentor inside of you. A little bit of introspection may just inspire you to admit that you have it in you to be a mentor where you work. As you have looked up to someone, somebody is either looking up to your OR needs someone to look up to.

Do not be afraid to reach out and let yourself lead. Be **INSPIRED** to **MENTOR**. You cannot take it with you so you might as well pass your knowledge on and leave a legacy for future nurse educators to follow. You might just find that tingling sensation of feeling proud because it was you who helped a fellow colleague be successful in the nurse educator role!

Funding Source

None declared.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Ethical Approval

None declared.

Alexis M. Koenig
Levittown, PA

E-mail addresses: alkoenig@herzing.edu, ronaldkoenig@comcast.net.