

Celebrate Strengths: Elevate Practice

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IT IS WITH GREAT HONOR and privilege that I have been chosen to serve this amazing organization—the American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses (ASPAN). For a long time, I have appreciated how vital ASPAN is to my perianesthesia practice and have aspired to lead this group of professionals. Having the support and backing of our premier organization that seeks and uses evidence to support practice gives me the strength to advocate for safe patient care and fuels my passion for this wonderful specialty.

The motivational speaker and author, Jon Gordon, advocates for choosing one word every year that becomes your driving force.¹ This word embraces all aspects of your life and brings clarity to decisions. That one word for ASPAN is *strength*.

The strength of ASPAN begins with the members. Consider this: sitting in this audience, participating in your national conference to better yourselves and your practice—these actions demonstrate your commitment to learning and patient care. Being here, sharing your expertise and knowledge, makes ASPAN strong. The strength of members is visible as you volunteer at a fantastic rate to create standards, answer questions, provide education, search for clinical evidence, act as liaisons, and lead practice groups. Those of you who volunteer make up the workforce of ASPAN—you have helped establish the basis of success. As a successful organization, we can provide you the support and tools you need to do your job. Those tools include the evidenced-based standards and guidelines along with the competency-based orientation

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resources and the many clinical practice questions. As I have gained insight this past year into the myriad activities and undertakings that ASPAN is involved in, I am humbled by the breadth of accomplishments.

I have spoken about ASPAN strengths; do you know your strengths? Are you curious about your strengths? You might have an inkling about what you are good at. You know what projects you like to do, and you might even have been told what you are good at. However, I suggest that you delve deeper into yourself and identify your strengths. There are several ways to discern them. You can use an online tool, of which there are many, that gives you a synopsis of your strengths. You can meet with your manager and get their input. There is also the option to query your colleagues and friends to discern what they see as your strengths. It is useful to identify your strengths because when you are put in a position with options, choosing the one that uses your strengths will make you more successful. Incorporating personal strengths into your job, according to Clifton Strengths,² makes people 7.8% more productive in their role and six times as likely to do what they do best every day. You will be happier and feel fulfilled when your strengths benefit others. An essential aspect of knowing your strengths is that you can identify your blindspots. Asking a colleague with different strengths to join you on a committee, project, or board will make it more successful.

Knowing and using your strengths as well as ASPAN's strengths can elevate and support your practice. Bedside nurses can be confident in using best practices with standards and guidelines. Adopting best practices signifies a commitment to patients. Our patients deserve the very best.

Perianesthesia nurses are strong. We know how to work hard and be the voice for the patients. We care for the families too. We explain why patients have to come in for their preoperative visit, and we make sure they are safe to go home. We come to work regardless of the weather, nights, weekends, and holidays. Here we are in Nashville—some of you who are country music fans are familiar with Blake Shelton. His song “Country Strong” speaks to those people who have boots on the ground; head to work every day; and work morning, noon, and night.³ Clearly, he was speaking about nurses, not cowboys. We are Country Strong!

I want to suggest that each of you here and all the members of ASPAN make *strength* your one word this year. Identify your strengths, use those strengths at your workplace, use those strengths at home, and bring them to ASPAN. Use your strengths to fortify your practice. Volunteer for what you are good at and follow your passion. It will not be “work,” and you will be terrifically successful! All of the many activities, obligations, and tasks of this past year for me have been exciting because they have been consistent with my strengths! *This* is where I want to be.

One of my strengths, as reported by Gallup Strength Center, is called Maximizer. People in this category focus on group excellence, and they seek to transform something strong into something superb.² My vision is to transform ASPAN from strong to superb and to be the organization that *all* perianesthesia nurses are clamoring to join. We can accomplish this by sharing, engaging, and connecting with our colleagues, families, and even acquaintances. Speak up and let the world know we are here! Let us build on our strengths and have a great year together!

Thank you for all you do!

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