

LIVEWELL NURSING

NURSE'S NOTES; Prioritizing Self-Care, Compassion, and Support: A Guide for Nurses

By: Angela Mitchell, CNO



Angela Mitchell

Nursing is a demanding profession that requires both physical and emotional resilience. Nurses often focus on caring for others, sometimes neglecting our own well-being. This article emphasizes the importance of self-care, compassion for others, the significance of workplace friendships, and accessing mental health support resources to help nurses thrive personally and professionally. Self-care is vital for nurses to prevent burnout, reduce stress, and maintain overall health. Activities such as regular exercise, mindfulness practices, healthy eating, adequate rest, and engaging in hobbies can significantly impact a nurse's well-being (Kim & Han, 2019).

Compassion and kindness are fundamental values in nursing. Research shows that acts of kindness not only benefit the recipient but also enhance the well-being of the giver (Seppälä et al., 2020). Building strong relationships and fostering a culture of kindness in the workplace can create a supportive environment for nurses. Compassion and kindness also align with having a close friend at work that can provide emotional support, reduce feelings of isolation, and improve job satisfaction for nurses. **A work best friend is someone who understands the challenges of the profession and offers camaraderie and encouragement (Chen, 2020).** These relationships can enhance job satisfaction and overall well-being.

Despite self-care practices and supportive relationships, nurses may still experience mental health challenges. Accessing mental health resources through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) pictured on page 3, or The San Diego Access & Crisis Line (ACL), 1-888-724-7240. Counseling services provide valuable support for mental health needs. Prioritizing self-care, showing compassion, nurturing workplace friendships, and seeking mental health support are essential for nurses to thrive in our roles. By taking care of themselves, nurses can better care for others and contribute to a positive, healthy work environment. Live Well!

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July Topic: Independence



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Employee Assistance Program Service Summary County of San Diego

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- Free legal resources, forms, and seminars online



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- Digital tools to improve emotional well-being
- Team up with an experienced clinical coach
- Practice mindfulness on the go



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- Online information about child care, adoption, elder care, and assisted living
- Phone consultation with a work-life specialist
- Help with pet sitting, moving, and other common needs



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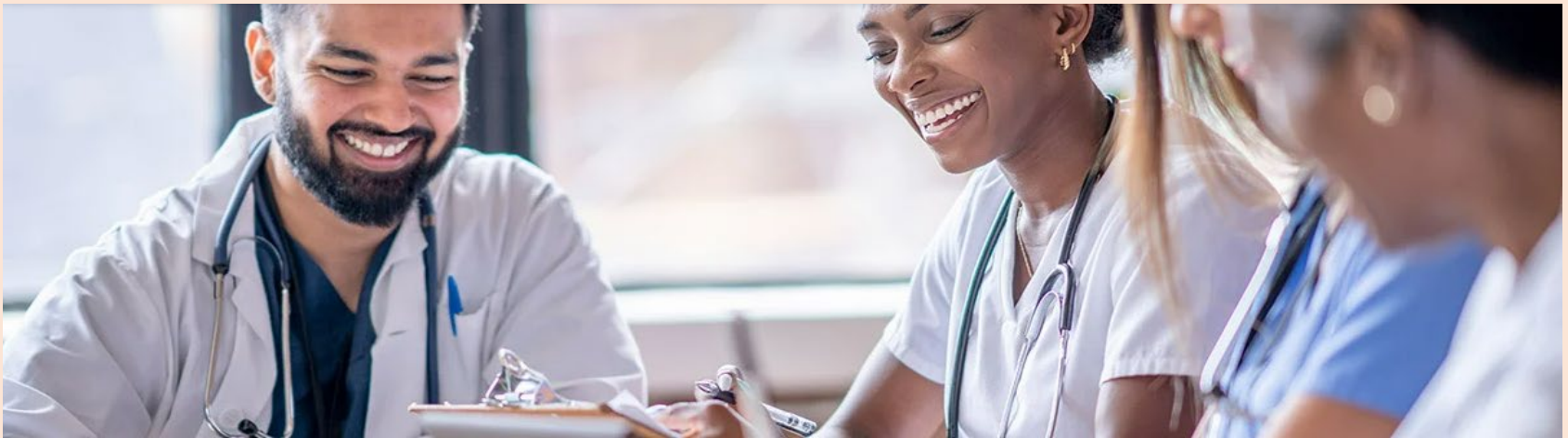
Nurses Make a Difference

By: *Aracely Ruvalcaba, RN, BSN, PHN*; PHN Supervisor East/North Central Public Health Center.

Nurses make a difference in many ways, for example, inpatient care, community services, education, advocacy, and mental health support among others. However, another crucial approach where nurses can make a difference is by “helping each other” by creating an atmosphere of camaraderie, sense of security and belonging.

According to the American Nurses Association there’s seven ways we can continue making a difference by applying a few positives steps to create a positive work environment. For example, as per ANA recommendations if we “encourage open communication, promoting teamwork and collaboration, advocate for career development, ensure appropriate staffing, supporting a positive work-life balance, recognizing their value and most important making SAFETY a priority” will not only decrease nurse burnout but also will help increase nurse retention as well as creating a strong support system and a sense of belonging. Nurses helping nurses is one way to “Make a Difference” in this career that is not for the faint of heart.

Additionally, since May was “Mental Health Awareness” advocating for one another but most important for oneself is also a way of making a difference. Please always remember to be kind, treat your co-workers with respect and dignity because actions speak louder than words. Luckily since I started my journey with the County of San Diego, I have experienced nothing but support, kindness, and most important a tremendously sense of teamwork. Thank you all for all you do and “Happy Nurses Week.”



References:

7 Ways to Create a Positive Work Environment for Nurses 2024, Accessed 8 May 2024, [How to Create a Healthy Work Environment in Nursing | ANA \(nursingworld.org\)](https://www.nursingworld.org/ANA/7-Ways-to-Create-a-Positive-Work-Environment-for-Nurses-2024)

Not Just a Nurse

By Jiezi Galanto, QAS, Office of Nursing Excellence

Last month's newsletter revolves around the American Nurses Association's (ANA) theme of the year: "Nurses Make the Difference." So, what better way to discuss how nurses make a difference than to talk about the reason why we celebrate nurses for an entire week!

Florence Nightingale was born on May 12th, and because of her renowned contributions to the health field, ANA decided this day as Nurses Day, later turned to nurse's week. Although she was very important to the medical field, not many people know exactly why Nightingale is so well-known. One of her most notable contributions was her emphasis on hygiene.

Nightingale was a nursing leader in the Crimean war. She was designated to lead a small group of nurses to aid in one of the hospitals. After seeing the horrendous conditions, she had her team work diligently to ensure that the area was clean and refurbished. She emphasized to the nurses to wash their hands frequently and clean constantly. What's amazing is that, at the time, the nurses probably did not know they would not only contribute to better health outcomes, but that they would be a part of history. Studies have even shown that because of the actions of Nightingale and the nurses, they had "reduced the mortality rate from 40% to 2%" in the hospital they worked at (Young P; Hortis De Smith V; Chambi MC; Finn BC, 2011).

Nightingale is passionate, a statistician, and an individual driven for quality improvement for her patients and staff. Most importantly, she is a nurse who made a difference. This goes to show that even the littlest ripples can contribute to a monumental wave of change.

So, the question is... How will you make a difference?

References

Clark, Caitlin, et al. Half-face drawing of Florence Nightingale and a modern-day nurse. 16 Dec. 2020. *The New Age of Nursing*, <https://nursing.wisc.edu/the-new-age-of-nursing/> Accessed 14 May 2024. Illustration by Alexander André

Young P; Hortis De Smith V; Chambi MC; Finn BC; "[Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), 101 Years after Her Death]." *Revista Medica de Chile*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22051764> Accessed 14 May 2024.

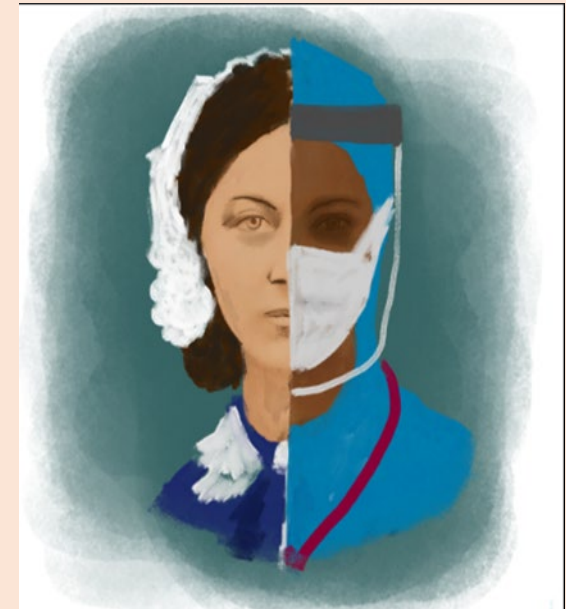


Fig 1. Half-face drawing of Florence Nightingale and modern-day nurse. 16 Dec. 2020 (Clark, 2020).

Self-Care

By Carla Macias, MSN, RN, PHN, CNS, PHN Supervisor, Office of Nursing Excellence

Truly, the concept of self-care is critically important in the nursing profession, yet it is often overlooked due to the demanding nature of the job. The motto “Care for yourself so you can care for others” underscores the necessity for nurses to prioritize their own well-being in order to effectively care for their patients. As highlighted by Halm (2017), self-care is essential for mitigating the adverse effects of stress inherent in the fast-paced and ever-evolving healthcare environment. Without adequate self-care, nurses are at risk of burnout, which not only impacts their own health but also the quality of care they provide. In response to this challenge, healthcare organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of supporting whole-person-centered care. This approach extends beyond patient care to include the well-being of nursing staff and other interdisciplinary team members. By fostering an environment that encourages self-care and provides resources to support it, these organizations aim to improve job satisfaction, reduce burnout, and enhance overall patient care. Investments in wellness programs, mental health support, Employee Assistance Programs, and professional development opportunities are examples of resources that can help nurses maintain their own health and well-being. Ultimately, a focus on self-care within the nursing profession can lead to more sustainable careers for nurses and better outcomes for patients.



References: Margo Halm; The Role of Mindfulness in Enhancing Self-Care for Nurses. *Am J Crit Care* 1 July 2017; 26 (4): 344–348. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4037/ajcc2017589>

Self-Care for Nursing Excellence

By: Carlos Ayala BSN, Sr. PHN, Public Health Services – HIV, STD, and Hepatitis Branch

Nurses work in a variety of settings and stress is a daily part of life. Public health nursing has its own set of stressors, and they can be detrimental to our health if not managed well. Even how we manage our reaction to stress can be harmful. Some people utilize negative methods such as overeating or smoking to handle stress, which will only worsen the problem in the long run. As nurses we have the duty to take care of our patients, but we also have a duty to take care of ourselves.

Practicing mindfulness is an easy and practical way to relieve stress at work and home. Deep breathing, guided meditation, and taking walks while reflecting on the day can alleviate daily stress. There are self-care apps that are available and may be available free of charge through health plans. Moderate physical activity releases endorphins which relax the body and mind. Group exercise and yoga classes are an excellent way to reap this benefit. The County Employee Wellness Program offers yoga and meditation classes online and at selected sites. Diet and exercise are also related to overall wellbeing. Cutting back on sugary and processed foods will improve your energy levels during the day. And finally, good quality sleep can affect how you handle stress, improve cognitive function, and avoid the release of stress hormones like Cortisol. You should set aside a regular sleep schedule and avoid stimulant distractions like phone and tablet use prior to going to bed. Alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine will also affect the quality of your sleep.

Take care of yourself! Your family and your patients will thank you for it!

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Williams, S. G., Fruh, S., Barinas, J. L., & Graves, R. J. (2022). Self-Care in Nurses. *Journal of Radiology Nursing*, 41(1), 22–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jradnu.2021.11.001>

Kaiser apps [Digital Self-Care Tools for Mental Health | Kaiser Permanente](#)

County Wellness Site: [InSite - \(sharepoint.com\)](#)



Left to right: Carlos Ayala (Sr. PHN), Donna Redondo (NP), Sara Covarrubias (RN), Timothy McWilliams (PHN Supervisor), Maricris Zisselsberger (RN), Lourdes Medina (RN).

Kelee Meditation Practice Reflection

By: Alison Casciano, Sr. PHN- Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch

“Challenges are gifts that force us to search for a new center of gravity. Don’t fight them. Just find a new way to stand.” –Oprah Winfrey, as noted in 5/29/24 Wellness Wednesday email

The topic of Kelee Meditation was presented during Ground Rounds back in October of 2023. It was intriguing, and though I had never done any type of “traditional” meditation before, I enrolled when the opportunity to attend an 8-week course, beginning early February, was offered to all County nurses. I thought that the potential benefits of improving mental strength and self-compassion would be valuable. Kelee teaches that through clearing one’s mind during short 5-minute periods one or twice daily, improved mental calmness, clarity of perception and emotional regulation, may be achieved. Kelee can also address negative thoughts or “compartments” that we may carry with us, unknowingly, for years. When I signed up back in November of 2023, I did not have any idea that I was about to face numerous family related challenges, including the unexpected death of my mom at the end of January.

I participated in this course as planned, and found surprisingly, that I was better able to manage the many overlapping emotions I felt during this challenging time, and during the toughest moments, often felt an unexpected sense of calm. The feelings of loss were still there, but I’m certain my emotions were more stable than they would have been otherwise. These days I am intent on being gentle on myself and finding new tools to support my mental and physical wellbeing. Kelee is one of those tools I plan to carry with me on my continued journey.

Thank you to Interim PHS Public Health Officer Dr. Ankita Kadakia and CNO Angi Mitchell for making this 8-week Kelee Meditation practice learning opportunity possible within our professional day.



Self-Care: Nourishing Your Mind

By: Brenda Aguirre, BSN, RN, PHN -Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch, Immunization Unit



Despite nurses having a vast amount of knowledge on health-promoting behaviors, both for physical and mental well-being, sometimes amid the stressors of work and life, nurses may unintentionally forget about the importance of nourishing their mind and overall mental well-being. There are many effective ways to promote one's own mental well-being, including regular physical exercise, positive social connections, meditation or relaxation activities, prioritizing sleep (National Institutes of Health, 2024) and having a healthy work-life balance. Furthermore, foods containing certain macronutrients and micronutrients have been shown to be nourishing to the mind (Melzer et al., 2021) and incorporating them into meals may perhaps be a feasible strategy for nurses to nurture their mental well-being.

Types of macronutrients that are nourishing to the brain are unsaturated fats, also known as “healthy fats” (Melzer et al., 2021). Foods containing unsaturated fats include avocados, olive oil, nuts, fish, and seeds such as flax and chia seeds. So why consider unsaturated fats as not just heart-healthy, but brain-healthy as well? Research findings indicate that consumption of foods containing unsaturated fats is associated with improved cognitive function and performance and decreased risk of age-related cognitive decline (Melzer et al., 2021). Consider taking a moment every day to leverage the power of food in fostering intentional self-care that promotes your mental well-being.

References

Melzer, T. M., Manosso, L. M., Yau, S. Y., Gil-Mohapel, J., & Brocardo, P. S. (2021). In Pursuit of Healthy Aging: Effects of Nutrition on Brain Function. *International journal of molecular sciences*, 22(9), 5026. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijms22095026>

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Self-Care

By: Kristine Almario, Public Health Nurse, East Public Health Center

Self-care is something that can be easily forgotten among our nurses. Nurses are selfless individuals who dedicate their time to caring for others. Often, the need for self-care can be placed on the bottom of their to-do list. Beyond their professional role, nurses are also parents, daughters or sons, spouses, and friends. With these roles come responsibilities and commitments, and other priorities can unknowingly take precedence over taking care of one's mental health. However, it is essential to understand that taking care of yourself is okay, and there is no need to feel guilty about it. Even a few minutes dedicated to self-care can be a significant step towards incorporating it into our lives. For me, self-care means taking care of my mental and emotional health to prevent burnout.

I have started taking small measures towards self-care. After working, I spend at least 30 minutes doing something I enjoy, such as watching a favorite show while sipping on some tea, before transitioning into mom-mode. I have realized that this routine helps refuel me. Writing this has also enlightened me and made me realize that I need to do even more for myself. Sharing ideas with colleagues can be highly beneficial and can also be a motivating factor especially with the friends that I've made here at East. Let's remind each other to take care of ourselves, especially during times when we tend to forget.

