CREATION OF A SELF-CARE SANCTUARY

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Introduction: In October 2011, the Veterans Administration (VA) formally embraced Watson’s Theory of Human Caring (Watson, 2008). Today the VA is a Watson Science Caring Institute (WCSI) Affiliate. Nebraska/Western Iowa senior leadership has invited nursing to bring a consciousness and a remembrance of why they became nurses to help align beliefs and behaviors with the caring science framework (Watson, 2008). Strong organizational support has enhanced efforts to promote healing and caring for staff.

Significance: The daily demands that challenge VA caregivers may contribute to staff burnout and call-ins. A quiet, reflective space where staff can practice self-care, and where they can stop, pause and reflect in the midst of their stressful tour of duty will help them deliver focused, present and compassionate care to our Veterans and their families, care that is based in the principles of Caring Science.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to create a Self-Care Sanctuary for centering and healing for VA nursing and all multidisciplinary staff. This sanctuary and healing space is designed to enable staff to renew their energy and caring intentions, and to continue to provide a healing environment for the veterans.

Setting and Participants: This ongoing project is being conducted on a 42-bed rehabilitation, skilled care, respite care, and hospice unit at the VA Medical Center in Grand Island, Nebraska. All personnel on this campus are invited to utilize the Self-Care Sanctuary. The Community Living Center, where the sanctuary will be located, has nursing staff who cover all three shifts, management personnel, and ancillary staff, all of whom will benefit.

Project Description: The project is embraced by administration and funding is available. A master plan has been developed and the project will be implemented as soon as the room is available. The goal is to make the environment comfortable and inviting for all health care providers who want to practice self-care rituals. The plan is to tie the Self-Care Sanctuary closely to a sister facility in Omaha. The Omaha VA Self-Care Sanctuary was developed by their Caritas Coach last year. The Grand Island facility will be sharing the name and will be using the same paint/color schemes and decorating ideas. The Nurse Practitioner on the team developing the Self-Care Sanctuary is eager to use aromatherapy in the Sanctuary. There are also plans for a recliner with massage options, music, end table and/or coffee table, a bookcase, rug and other items to help make the room warm and inviting.

Projected Outcome: The Self-Care Sanctuary will be completed quickly once the physical room is available. All hospital staff will have access to the room. The first projected outcome is that the staff will discover the potential and actual benefits of caring for self. The secondary outcome is that staff who utilize the room and practice self care will be better able to provide compassionate
care to Veterans and their families and will better honor their dignity to promote healing. Promoting and applying the caring values in practice is not only essential to the nurses’ own health, but is also fundamental for finding meaning in their intentional caring work and providing caring leadership within the healthcare culture (Watson, 2008).

**Projected Evaluation:** A survey/questionnaire will be given to those who utilize the Sanctuary. The survey results will be evaluated to help determine whether the Sanctuary was physically calming and how the space created changes in staff healing presence for the Veterans and their families.

**Future Directions:** The Self-Care Sanctuary will be presented as an example of “Caring for Self to Care for Veterans”. Having a space to re-center will allow staff to return to the Veterans more focused, present, and compassionate in caring for our Veterans.

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**Reference:**