Self Care: The Forgotten Component of New Graduate Onboarding Programs

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Introduction: Much has been written and researched about how to best “onboard” the new graduate nurse once he/she is hired into their first job. A review of this literature reveals that the emphasis of most on-boarding programs, is on the knowledge and skills required to actually do the job, while little or no emphasis is placed upon how to just be while participating in the work required by their respective jobs. This project will address how to work with new graduate nurses to help them understand and engage in self care practices, leading to a greater caring consciousness, resulting in greater fulfillment in their personal and professional lives, and in the care of their patients and families.

Significance: In today’s fast paced and often frenetic healthcare environment there is great emphasis upon efficient use of resources, measurement of outcomes, and the financial bottom line. Although the current state of healthcare often demands such attention, the new graduate nurse often finds him or herself in the throes of this environment; ill prepared for their first job, and the on-boarding process often abbreviated, with the expectation that the new graduate quickly learn the technical skills required for the job so that they can be “up and running” and quickly counted in the staffing mix. Research by Mills and Mullins, 2008, reveals turnover rates of the new graduate between 22.6% and 60%. Research by Duchscher, 2008, Etheridge, 2007, reveals that the new graduate period is a time of learning and stress often not supported by the organization. Given the expectations by most organizations that the new graduate nurse learn the technical aspects of their jobs in as short of time as possible, most on-boarding processes do not provide opportunities for nurses to learn self – care practices that assist in their evolution of Caritas consciousness. This often leads them to discouragement, despair, and seeking other career opportunities or leaving the nursing profession all together.

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to demonstrate the importance of incorporating self-care practices into the new graduate orientation program.

Setting and Participants: The Professional Practice Department of a 250-bed community hospital west of Boston, MA. The participants are four new graduates; this is their first position after graduation.

Project Description/Process: This project will be an integral part of an evolving new graduate nurse program. To authentically engage in and sustain personal/professional practices guided by Caritas Consciousness, one needs skills (Watson, 2002). To help the
new graduate nurse develop these skills they will receive the following as part of their on-boarding: a “Caring Basket” which will contain: a journal and article on journaling, Touchstones: Setting Intentionality and Consciousness for Caring and Healing (Watson, 2002), as well as some soothing lotion. For each of the ten weeks of orientation, there will be a section devoted to each of the Caritas Processes™.

**Projected Outcomes:** New graduate nurses will engage in self care practices that will prepare them for work that is life giving and life receiving. They will identify how they ARE the environment. Nurse colleagues will express that the preparation of this group of nurses differs from the outcomes of a traditional on-boarding that focuses primarily on the tasks associated with patient care.

**Partial Evaluation:** Nurses in the program will identify the value of, and demonstrate the practice of “centering” prior to patient interactions. They will also incorporate this practice into the plan of care for their patients.

**Future Directions:** This will be expanded to all nurses as part of the on-boarding process.

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**References:**


