

Can you teach compassion?

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As nurse educators, who could be a better example of teaching compassion to us than the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ? Jesus was the ultimate teacher, healer, and lover of mankind. Matthew 9: 35-39 states: “ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘ The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. ”(NKJV) As Christians, Jesus Christ is our example of how to live. If Jesus could have compassion for those who He loved, so should we. We should show this compassion to our patients as we seek to help them reach healing. We should seek to teach our students how to have compassion for those that they will serve. Compassion, or caring, can be viewed as “ nursing’s most precious asset” (Schantz, 2007), a fundamental element of nursing care (Dietze and Orb, 2000), and as one of the strengths of the profession.

One can think of few other professions that are known for their “ caring”. But this act of caring does not come naturally to the nursing student-it must be taught. The nurse educator must seek out specific exercises to instill caring practices in the nursing student. According to Wright (2004), “ Society has witnessed an increase in the power of technology, and this appears to be mirrored in nursing, where the technical and managerial aspects of care take priority over care delivery - possibly because the expansion of nurses’ role has eroded the essence of nursing. The nurse of today is so busy with

computer charting, monitoring, and the technical duties of nursing that little time is actually left for “caring” for the patient. The nurse of today’s technology overloaded healthcare field must make a special effort to learn how to show compassion to his/her patients. Do nursing students understand compassionate care? According to Pearcey (2007), “student nurses considered that it was doing the little things for patients that constituted a caring approach. Pearcey goes on to offer the perspective that “nursing has a functional component or ‘doing’ role, as well as a ‘being’ role.” As human beings, we have all been touched by someone’s compassion for us. Therefore, most of us, including nursing students, have a basic understanding of what compassion is and how to administer it. That being said, nursing students do not automatically know how to integrate compassion into their daily nursing care and must be taught these skills. Dr. Patch Adams, M. D. (2011) of the Gesundheit Institute has studied the value of compassionate care and its positive effect on holistic care.

He has encouraged, challenged, and enticed medical schools to include compassion training in their programs. Dr. Adams has suggested that medical (and nursing) students be included in a two-year study of compassion to help them learn to recognize, appreciate, and integrate compassion into every aspect of the care they give. His suggestions for a small student group study of compassion include: 1. Keep a journal about your relationship to love and compassion. What is it? Ask everyday—How are you giving it? (Pay close attention. Be present.) How are you receiving it? From everything, from strangers, from trees, etc.) 2. Do outrageous things for love, like clowning. 3. Actually see if you can produce the vibration of

compassion for prolonged periods. What sustains it? (friends, having meaning, fun ...) What hurts it? (arrogance, apathy, tight underwear ...) Are there times you do not want to be compassionate? 4. Be observant of compassion in action around you, everywhere. Give details of its languages. 5. Become aware of compassionate projects around the world and plan on at least one elective at a project.

Post these projects on this website and ideally how to contact them. 6. Explore the language of love and compassion. Read psychologists and poets, write essays on things you love. Add books you love to our book list. 7. How do you recognize love/compassion? Are there measurements? 8. Do we invite professors in on our exploration? Who? 9. How do you change performances of compassion in different situations? 10. At the small weekly meetings, find easy ways to present your findings to the group. Mention difficulties and ways they were overcome.

Search for common languages to speak of these things. Keep notes. Bring questions for the group and preceptor. Integrating these discussion topics to be used in small nursing student groups could effectively teach the nursing student to administer compassionate nursing care. Not to say that teaching compassion to nursing students is an easy job. Not only is compassion difficult to define, but even more difficult to measure, leading to a broad range of definitions and measurements that confound and discourage the teacher and the student.

Newton (2010) argues that “ the key to developing a compassionate nurse is being a role model for them so they know how to act with patients and what kinds of approaches to care they should take. Too often, we make <https://assignbuster.com/can-you-teach-compassion/>

assumptions that a junior nurse instinctively “ knows” how to wash or feed a patient or how to deliver fundamental care. ” In conclusion, according to researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2008) emotions like compassion can be taught. The healthcare providers and patients expect and demand that nurses provide compassionate care.

The challenge exists for nurse educators to model and teach compassionate nursing care in an ever-demanding, technologically growing nursing profession.

References

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