As difficult as it is to be a nurse today with the nursing shortage and problems in the workplace, can a nurse hope to find joy and passion in nursing? If a nurse wants to stay in this profession that is exactly what needs to happen. Passion is that feeling inside that propels us to accomplish things in life. It is an “extreme inordinate desire” towards something (Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1998). Joy has been described as “an intensely positive, vivid, and expansive emotion that arises from an internal state or results from an external event or situation” (Manion, 2003, p. 653). Part of finding the joy and passion in nursing is finding the right job in the right institution that shares a nurse’s same values (Haylock, 2003). There are so many different specialty areas for today’s nurse that it should not be hard to find some area of nursing about which a nurse can feel passionate.

Pathways to Joy

Joy and passion can come from many sources. Manion (2003) identified the four distinct pathways to joy as connections, love of work, recognition, and achievement. Some nurses may find joy in the work that they do. Some nurses enjoy the connections and relationships they have with co-workers as well as patients. Simply connecting with other human beings can be a source of joy. Getting along with and forming friendships with co-workers can make the work much more enjoyable and fun. Connecting with patients can provide a deeper meaning to the work.

The joy may come through the satisfaction of helping others find their path of healing. It can be very gratifying to help patients to better understand health, wellness, and disease; make informed choices about care; and assist patients through the difficulties caused by illness. The nurse-patient relationship can also be a source of joy. Nurses may enjoy developing a working relationship with patients. The joy may come from the sense of accomplishment as patients reach their goals with the help of a caring nurse. It may be helpful for a nurse to keep a gratitude journal to describe the things that brought joy during any given day (Carpenter, 2004). It is then possible to go back and reflect on the aspects of nursing that brought you the most joy.

Everyone likes to be recognized for the work they do, and nurses are no exception. Recognition can be an important factor in feeling positive about your work. Satisfaction can come from being recognized by peers, managers, patients, families, and the community. Recognition provides validation for the quality of a nurse’s job performance.

Hindrances to Joy

There are also hindrances to feeling passionate and joyful about your work. Nurses often feel they can not provide quality care to patients due to poor staffing ratios and lack of institution support. Studies clearly link nurse’s job dissatisfaction with poor staffing ratios and the related decrease in the nurse’s ability to give quality care to patients (Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber, 2002; American Nurses Association, 2001; Hart, 2001). It is difficult to feel joy if the workload is completely overwhelming. Another hindrance to joy and passion might be the nature of the job itself. Some nurses might find the repetitious quality of some jobs, such as spending each day doing nothing but starting intravenous drips, monotonous. Nurses may find a particular job unsatisfying; for example, if connecting with patients is a nurse’s passion, she may not like working in the operating room where the nurse-to-patient interaction is limited.

Finding Your Path to Joy

It is possible for nurses to find joy in the profession through several paths. The first step is to determine the aspects of work that bring the most joy and passion. Begin by looking for joy and passion through the four pathways identified by Manion (2003) as discussed earlier. Nurses who find joy through a sense of connectedness to patients and co-workers want to work in a job that allows time to develop those relationships. Mentoring/precepting
can provide both the mentor and the nurse being mentored another source of connectedness and joy. Another way to connect with other nurses and mentors is through membership in professional organizations. Managers can facilitate co-worker connectedness through networking and/or group social activities for staff. Remember, in today's busy nursing world, connecting with patients will probably come while performing a nursing skill or closely monitoring the patient during or after a procedure.

There is a multitude of job opportunities for nurses today, but the key is for a nurse to find a job he or she truly loves. If nurses find joy in being recognized, they can work on developing a peer recognition system. This can be accomplished through something as simple as placing a peer recognition box on the unit, which allows nurses to identify and acknowledge a co-worker who has demonstrated excellence in patient care or collaboration.

Lastly, if nurses discover joy comes from a sense of accomplishment or achievement, they might want to work in a facility that will allow them to care for patients throughout the continuum of care. This will allow the nurse to personally experience the outcomes of a patient's journey toward healing. Nurses can also find a sense of accomplishment through professional activities such as publishing or presenting to the community or colleagues or through advanced nursing education.

**Conclusion**

It may seem difficult to find passion and joy in nursing during these tumultuous times, but it is essential. Now, more than ever, nurses need to feel a strong passion for work that brings about joy. It is too easy to become stressed and burnt out in today's work environment of increasing patient care demands. Passion will continue to propel the nurse forward toward the joy he or she discovers in nursing.

**References**


