



Mentorship creates cycle of success

I AM ALWAYS MOVED BY THE stories of students and their amazing experiences on the journey to becoming RNs. As a student, I remember seeking out mentors who could help me grow and develop as a nurse.

One of the best mentors I had was a seasoned public health nurse who talked to me a lot about my passion for nursing. I remember how she made me feel like I could change the world. More than anything, she taught me to be fearless in my convictions and to embrace my values. She constantly asked me: "What really matters most to you?" And depending on the answer to that question, she always pushed me to act on what mattered, and helped me map out a plan to get there.

Throughout my nursing career, whether I've worked in direct care, management, or administration, I have enjoyed the benefit of close ties with a few key mentors. I know I can rely on them to coach me through new or challenging experiences.

I have to admit that even after almost 32 years in the profession – and in very demanding roles over the decades – there are situations during which I could still benefit from a kind word or some guidance from time-to-time. We all can.

Whether you are fresh out of nursing school, an RN who has just been promoted to charge nurse, or a seasoned registered

nurse who has moved from acute care to primary care: a little help goes a long way.

Mentoring is about guiding, teaching, and, very simply, helping others. We all have the capacity to mentor. In fact, I believe that many conversations during a nursing shift provide an opportunity to share what we

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know and to support and inspire others. Mentoring is also about opening up possibilities for people so that they can identify their strengths or weaknesses and work on them. Recognizing challenges can often help people overcome them.

Being a mentor can take many different forms, such as advisor, listener, resource person, confidante, strategist, sounding board, and role

model. I have served in all of these roles at one time or another. Many years ago, I committed to formally mentoring at least one student every year. I have lived up to that commitment for the past 18 years. When I was Ontario's Provincial Chief Nursing Officer, I mentored two master's students

from the University of Toronto. And, in my current role as chief nurse executive at London Health Sciences Centre, I act as a mentor for another master's student from York University.

Mentoring doesn't always have to be formal. Recently, a peer reached out to me for help with a problem she was trying to solve. During our conversation, I realized she was lacking evidence-based information. I gave

her the information she needed and showed her an alternate approach that I thought was effective when I was dealing with a similar problem.

The desire to learn – and the commitment to mentor others – has helped to shape the satisfying career I enjoy today. And one of the most important things I have learned as a mentor is that giving, without expectation about receiving in return, has earned me the trust and support of many people. I have also learned that it is a two-way street. Mentors can also benefit from the advice and direction they give to colleagues.

As you read this issue of the *Journal*, and learn about how other members are sharing their experiences and wisdom with colleagues and nursing students alike, I ask you to do the same in your own practice. Ask yourself: How can I be a mentor?

It doesn't matter what setting you work in, or what stage you are at in your career; we all have something to give. And by mentoring others, we create a cycle of success for everyone. **RN**

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