

YES, IT GOES ON ... ONE AT A TIME

As part of the process of unfolding this article, I accessed my inner wisdom by asking for guidance one night before going to sleep. I manifested a clear message through my dreams to begin this narrative with "once upon a time." This narrative explores the purpose, philosophy and program structure of the Certificate Program in Holistic Nursing, and my participation in its development.

BY VEDA ANDRUS

Veda Andrus, E.d.D., RN, HNC is Program Director, Certificate Program in Holistic Nursing, American Holistic Nurses Association.

Interview by Lyda Hill
(Healing Editor)

AND SO IT BEGAN...

Once upon a time, I was elected to the Board of Directors of the American Holistic Nurses' Association (AHNA). This was in 1986 and was the first board on which I had ever served. I was a novice in holistic nursing and felt rather uncertain about myself in this new position as a leader.

While at my first Board of Directors meeting in Telluride, Colorado, a well-seasoned board member raised the idea that the AHNA needed to develop a Certificate Program in Holistic Nursing and asked if someone on the board would be willing to initiate and direct this process. In what I now (10 years later) affectionately call an "out-of-body" experience,



my hand shot up and I volunteered for what has become a remarkable journey of personal, mutual/universal transformation and healing.

I was fortunate to access a small group of holistically-minded nurses in my Massachusetts community and invited them to participate in the creation of what is now a nationally recognized Certificate Program in Holistic Nursing sponsored by AHNA. This innovative and integrative program is presented in a dynamic way to provide nurses with a foundation of holistic philosophy and holistic nursing theory to ground their nursing practice. The program involves four phases: Phase I. Introduction to Holistic Nursing; Phase II. Core Concepts in Holistic Nursing; Phase III. Independent Practicum in Holistic Nursing; and Phase IV. Advanced Concepts in Holistic Nursing. I will not share all the details of its development. Suffice it to say this continues to be a journey of conscious intention; heartfelt passion; and commitment to assist in the evolution of the healthcare system into one of caring, by, for and about ourselves, other beings, our planet and the broader universe.

VISION OF HEALING

As this tale of shaping social change continues, one might observe an interesting phenomenon about this Certificate Program. We began, as many novice holistic nurses do, with placing an emphasis on the various modalities which nurses could gather as skills for their nursing practice. These practices, such as Thera-

*Do you want to be a positive influence in the world?
First, get your own life in order.
Ground yourself in the single principle so that your behavior is wholesome and effective.
If you do that, you will earn respect and be a powerful influence.*

Your behavior influences others through a ripple effect. A ripple effect works because everyone influences everyone else. Powerful people are powerful influences.

*If your life works, you influence your family.
If your family works, your family influences the community.
If your community works, your community influences the nation.
If your nation works, your nation influences the world.
If your world works, the ripple effect spreads throughout the cosmos.*

*Remember that your influence begins with you and ripples outward. So be sure that your influence is both potent and wholesome.
How do I know this works?*

All growth spreads outward from a fertile and potent nucleus. You are a nucleus.

peutic Touch, Guided Imagery, Reflexology, and Massage, are often referred to as alternative healing modalities. As we have evolved the program over the years, we now refer to them as 'complementary' and even more recently, as 'integrative' healing modalities. Simultaneously, we have recognized that while these modalities serve as vehicles for connection between the nurse and the other person (patient, client, co-participant), they are not truly the essence of holistic nursing. Although these modalities are important skills for holistic nurses to consider integrating into their nursing practice, the essence of holistic nursing might be expressed with words such as caring, compassion, love, intention, respect, honor, heart-to-heart connection, presence, conscious awareness, mindfulness and others denoting one's approach to sharing a specific healing modality. I suppose, simply put, holistic nursing is about our way of being in the universe, personally and professionally.

Does this differ from what you expected me to tell? Are you surprised that I am inviting you to consider that we can heal and transform our healthcare system and our world by placing an emphasis on our way of being? Well, that is what I am saying. How might it feel to enter a healthcare institution as a client and be greeted by a nurse or other healthcare practitioner as a whole, healthy, mutually collaborative partner in health care? To be honored and respected for the beautiful human being/spirit you truly are? To be encouraged to care for your self, body-mind-spirit, in a mutual process of self-growth and healing? It sounds pretty good to *me* ... and is certainly a paradigm shift from most of our current experiences within the healthcare system.

This is the vision which we build upon the Certificate Program in Holistic nursing. Participants are encouraged to empower themselves with new ways of being, exploring what has perhaps long kept them from nourishing

themselves so that they could be as present, available and mindful they would like to be with their patients/clients. They come together as a community of nurses with a common vision and return to their homes embraced within a network of professional support.

In their home environment they carry with them a message that they are bright spirits within the universe with the capacity to influence others by coming from their hearts and living in a new way. Heider (1985) assists our experiencing the potentiality

our world. My intention has always been to be an active change agent by encouraging nurses to come from their hearts and spirits through the scientific art of nursing. It is my responsibility to remain clear on my purpose and vision, to honor and respect the diversity of nurses who touch my life, and to do so mindfully and with integrity.

The Certificate Program in Holistic Nursing is an avenue which is available for nurses to remind themselves to come from their hearts and if they choose, to transform their way of being. Living

in the world through the expression of loving and caring behavior is healing.

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

Reflection allows us to recognize the power of our actions. As helping professionals, we have created an opportunity to model ways of being which can either

perpetuate unhealthy behaviors on our planet or mutually develop healing environments. I invite each of us to take the time to observe ourselves and consider our energetic, Intentional contribution to the evolution of wholeness and harmony. Let us not isolate ourselves in this process, for isolation from a perspective of holism is an illusion. Our actions do affect the bigger picture of our uni-

verse.

The Certificate Program in Holistic Nursing is not merely a tale. It is a true story, unfolding and enfolding ... an avenue for nurses (and perhaps one day other healthcare professionals and lay people) to reflect on their hearts and participation in social change.

I would like to share a poem by Marge Piercy (1981, p. 44-45) which reminds me of our interconnection and the importance of coming together in common vision.

The Low Road

*Alone, you can fight.
you can refuse, you can
take what revenge you can
but they will roll over you.*

*But two people fighting
back to back can cut through
a mob, a snake-dancing file
can break a cordon, an army
can meet an army.*

*Two people can keep each other
sane, can give support, conviction,
love, massage, hope, sex.*

*Three people are a delegation.
a committee, a wedge. With four
you can play bridge and start
an organization. With six you can rent a whole
house.*

*eat pie for dinner with no seconds, and hold a
fund raising party.*

A dozen make a demonstration.

A hundred fill a hall.

*A thousand have a solidarity and your own
newsletter;*

ten thousand, power and your own paper;

a hundred thousand, your own media;

ten million, your own country.

*It goes on one at a time,
It starts when you care
to act, it starts when you do
it again after they said no,
it starts when you say We
and know who you mean, and each
day you mean one more.*



of our energetic influence through his writing of "The Ripple Effect." (p. 107)

COULD THIS BE HEALING

I feel fortunate to have embarked upon a remarkable journey, one which has allowed me the opportunity to co-create a vehicle for nurses to reflect upon their presence and influence in

REFERENCES

Heider, J. (1985). *The Tao of Leadership: Leadership Strategies for a New Age*. New York: Bantam Books.

Piercy, M. (1981). "The Low Road." *The Moon is Always Female*. New York: Alfred Knopf.

The AHNA Certificate Program in Holistic Nursing can be reached at:

P.O. Box 307
Shutesbury, MA 01072
Telephone: (413) 253-0443
Facsimile: (413) 259-1034

**EDITOR'S NOTES BY
LYDA HILL:
INTERVIEW WITH
LYDA ANDRUS**

Ten years ago, before you began this journey, how did you think about your self in terms of holistic practice or holistic nursing?

I had been away from the nursing profession for a number of years. I had been working as a nurse practitioner at a college health center in Connecticut (1975 to 1977) and really lost heart in what I was doing. In my second year I began driving students to the natural food store, talking about supplements and stress management and those kind of things which were not particularly popular in the broader realm. In 1977, I resigned from that position and ended up leaving nursing for nine years. In 1983, I moved to Massachusetts and one of those synchronous experiences occurred. I was handed a brochure from the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies which described a weekend workshop

called "Nurses in Transition." After nine years, I certainly was a nurse in transition. I dropped everything and went the next day. It was like coming home to the spirit of why I went into nursing in the first place. In 1985 I was asked to join the Board of Directors of the American Holistic Nurses Association. Looking at Benner's progression from novice to expert, I was a novice in regard to any clear conception of holistic medicine, or what it might mean in my life.

Earlier you said you were taking students to health food stores; so you were already thinking of alternatives.

I was. I knew there was something broader than curing – something bigger that had to do with mind-body connection. I didn't know where to go with it, so I left the nursing profession. In those years, I traveled and lived in different parts of the country, which (in retrospect) was helpful – it gave me a sense of something bigger.

And then a turning point was the workshop that you went to...

Yes. I was invited to teach the "Nurses in Transition" workshop at Omega the following two years. I taught a five-day section on nutrition, one of the areas of my expertise. Charlotte McQuire, founder of the American Holistic Nurses Association, came to Omega and gave a keynote speech for us the second year the Association. I hadn't known there was such an Association, but agreed to serve, and it was a turning point. Since childhood, my personality is to jump in and take

risks, and I take huge risks with things that (on a certain level) one would think I know nothing about, yet on some other level, I seem to know what's going on. I feel grateful for that part of me.

What made you decide to accept the invitation? Informally you had said it was an out-of-body experience that you...

Absolutely. I would have no other way to describe it. In retrospect, using vocabulary that's familiar to me now, I would call it intuition, divine guidance, universal guidance, something like that. On some internal, soulful, knowing level I knew that this was an aspect of manifesting my purpose here on Earth and have no doubt that it's true.

What vision of healing was created? You've said that rather than only the modalities, that there is a way of being in the world; and as you began the certificate program you began to think about holistic nursing. Tell us what it began to mean for you, and about some transitions that occurred

The transition began in 1983 when I started to think differently about nursing. I knew from speaking with other nurses that I was not alone in being disillusioned with the health care system. I felt that if nurses return to something that creates joy in their lives, it's really an energetic healing. That's what the vision is, that this will ripple into the way in which nurses are being with their patients, their presence and their being available with caring attention, offering touch in whatever way that's comfortable. Then that ripples into other dimensions of the

health care system. I feel, on a certain level, that what I have embraced was knowing I contribute energetically to the universe. This ripples out to anyone I touch. That's just what the universe had in mind for us to manifest.

Nicely put. Did your group have concrete images that they shared together? Did you meditate together within these visions or images?

After I raised my hand and accepted the charge to facilitate a task force to develop the Certificate Program, our group began to identify the core concepts holistic nurses needed as a foundation and a springboard for holistic nursing practice.

Every time we get together, we have a moment of silence to bring us to presence. and ask for guidance. We ask for alignment with each other. We developed a vision statement as a foundation of intent which we revisit each January.

We do the same thing in teaching the Certificate Program in Holistic Nursing. We start the very first night in each of the four phases with joining our hearts and spirits to work and play together, to have joy, and to grow together.

It sounded like you were very clear about how you would want to be treated if you were ill and walked into a health care facility, that you could walk through each step of what you would want?

Yes, and what I have found in my teaching over the past 10 years is that nurses want to give and receive that same kind of treatment:

they want to be able to offer presence, listening, loving and caring. If they were in the reverse situation, let's say in a hospital bed, they would like these same things. It's really the artistry of mutual-ity.

What was it like for you being involved in this program?

It has been a remarkable experience. Because I have such deep passion and commitment for this work, probably because it really is my sole purpose here... my only purpose. I cannot separate my personal life from professional life because the journey is all one. What's been important is to reconsider over and over what I came here for, what my purpose is, and to stay clear on that.

I have found in this journey that I am more awake and more aware of life and life processes. I am present and more aware of my contribution to the whole of our universe than ever before, and that continues to evolve.

I believe it is energetically who we are becoming in the world that draws people to the Certificate Program, along with the fact that they are ready to look at this for themselves and their own transformation.

A key word that is really has been powerful is "allow." This is supported through my spiritual practice of Tal Chi which assists me in being present and to listen to my inner knowing.

I see myself and all beings as an expression of the Earth— not living



on the Earth; rather being of the earth. I feel that we all have a responsibility to allow ourselves to manifest our creative potential to fulfill our purpose for being here.

How much time do you devote to the Certificate program?

It is a full-time commitment. I serve as the director and administrator for the program. I do a lot of letter-writing, outreach and marketing. I do a lot of other things I didn't have time to do years ago because we were developing the program and now I'm at a point where I can do more creative work.

I see where we're going and I'm grateful to have that vision, to listen carefully and know that this program is growing as an organic process. We are not pushing the river, we are not pushing to go faster than what we know is our truth. We're really listening carefully to the process and we have not been disappointed. We plant ideas and let them develop. We listen as ideas come from the Earth.

So your a gardener?

Yes. This past March, my business partner, Jane Yetter Lunt, and I incorporated our business called Seeds and Bridges, which is about planting seeds and building bridges. That's our umbrella business under which we teach the Certificate Program.

Tell us about the joy, the struggle, or pain in starting?

Developing this program was extremely time consuming. I kept the books and did most of the paper work. We hired an administrative assistant which frees me to

do more of the creative aspects. For me the joy has been my own transformation, along with recognizing the deep receptivity of the participants. Our programs are filling now — we used to be concerned about whether we were going to fill the program, but we aren't concerned anymore. We trust in the right action of what we're doing/ being.

What other changes have you noticed in relation to the process?

I have compassion and feel much more patient with others. I recognize that nature is evolving all the time, and that it does not rush. We rush here and there. Savoring life and hurrying are not congruent with being present. The secret is how we approach what we have chosen. I look at nature and watch nature's ability to just be... If I am an expression of the earth, then I need to be present and attend to all I'm involved in. My being is within that doing. The program has been a wonderful teacher.

What do you think leads you and other nurses to embrace thinking and living in holistic ways?

Nurses are not happy with the type of nursing care they are giving. They want a way of being that feels more comfortable, integrated and whole to them. This program is really an opportunity, an avenue to work in a new way and feel better about themselves and their work. The old system has not worked for many nurses.

□

Copyright of Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping is the property of Cleveland State University and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.