



# Second thoughts about second thoughts

Step back to discover what we've learned

**I'LL NEVER FORGET** March 12, 2020. That's when the pandemic became real for me and my organization. Clinical operations swiftly implemented new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to deter COVID-19 spread, and academic operations quickly pivoted to virtual learning. The pandemic completely

disrupted the everyday routine of work. We discovered how unprepared we were to deal with this disruption to our management, clinical, and individual routines, but also how

quickly we adapted. Over the past 6 months, the entire nursing profession has scrambled to deal with the mounting personal toll on nursing staff across the United States and the world. The nursing shortage has been exacerbated by burnout and its residual impact. Mental health issues have worsened due to the duration of the pandemic, as more and more nurses consider leaving the field.

Time, energy, and financial resources are being invested to determine how to address these issues. Well, it's about time. Many of our best leaders and staff are working hard to mitigate any further harm to nurses' mental and physical health. The healthcare industry is finally having second thoughts about how we ended up where we are and whether we're doing everything we can to remedy the damage already done.

For me, I'm having second thoughts about our industry's second thoughts on causes of the nursing shortage and challenging work environments. We absolutely need to keep working on providing support and resources to every nurse in every clinical and administrative setting. At the same time, however, we all need to step back and reflect on what we've learned

from our individual and organizational experiences. I ask each and every one of you to step back and ask yourself what you've learned from your personal experiences over the past 2 years. Ask yourself what you need to do to become stronger and better prepared to endure future disruptions, which we know will come. That's what I'm doing.

Frequently, the organizations where we work need to do a better job than we do personally to prepare for the next disruption. They know that they need to do more to ensure consistent, uninterrupted access to clinical resources, protective equipment, and clinical supplies. More important, they need to step back and look at whether they built the enduring resources that can support staff physically and mentally. And they need to design technology and resources to safeguard uninterrupted patient access and care delivery.

Each of us needs to recover from all that we've faced during the prolonged pandemic. What you'll need to recover may involve physical, mental, and financial resources. Step back and reflect on what we need to do to become better prepared for the next disruption. Step back and learn how to become more resilient, self-supportive, and self-caring. Some describe it as learning to hug yourself. You may need outside resources to do it.

So, please, step back and reflect on your past 2 years. Reflect on where you are and what you've learned. Ensure that you're on the path to recovering from the dramatic impacts of the pandemic in both your work and personal lives. Then do what you need to become stronger, healthier, and ready to keep going because your family needs you, your profession needs you, and, most importantly, you need you.

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