

Bloom Where You Are Planted, Lead Where You Can

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Leadership in nursing may be demonstrated in many ways and many different environments throughout one's nursing career. There are similarities, though, that strong nurse leaders possess. Strong nurse leaders are able to constantly evolve as healthcare changes evolve. Nurse leaders are motivators, role models, and influencers who have the ability to encourage and inspire others (*Leadership in Nursing: Qualities & Why it Matters, 2024*).

Delaware is a small state, yet there are countless opportunities for nurses to lead and inspire others, no matter what role a nurse finds themselves in or what career journey the nurse is on. Nurse leaders may be at the executive level and lead entire organizations. In acute and chronic care settings, nurse leaders may be managers or supervisors who maintain budgets and safe staffing numbers. They may be policymakers who develop guidelines for safe practice. Clinical nurse specialists, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and nurse practitioners are leaders who

possess advanced professional skills and knowledge to enhance and ensure excellent care for their clients. Leaders may be nurse researchers who inspire staff nurses to engage in evidence-based practice activities or nurse educators who model safe practice to improve client outcomes. Nurse leaders may be those who step up to precept new nurses or those who take on the mentor role, whether formally or informally. At the state and federal levels, nurses have the opportunity to lead initiatives that change policies to improve outcomes for entire populations. In academia, nurse leaders have the distinct opportunity to help shape and guide student nurses to not only be critical thinkers and safe practitioners but also be professionals who go on to lead and inspire others. Nurse leaders may or may not be in a position of authority, but are defined more by their actions and ability to inspire and motivate (*Leadership in Nursing: Qualities & Why It Matters, 2024*).

Every nurse has the ability to be a

leader in their field, however, not all choose to take on that role. For those who do, the role expectations and qualities needed will differ depending on whether that leadership role is informal, formal, or voluntary in nature (Begley & Hughes, 2023). Nonetheless, there are many unique qualities that nurse leaders possess. Nursing leadership practice models and characteristics have been developed by the American Nurses Association (ANA) (*177626 Ana Leadership Booklet 01, 2018*) and by the American Organization of Nurse Leaders (AONL) (*Aonl_ccdocument_pg3update_060524_pro, 2024*). These professional organizations have identified particular competencies and characteristics that nursing leaders should possess. These include a strong sense of self-awareness, initiative and self-motivation, adaptability, a professional demeanor, and a collaborative approach to building relationships. Nurse leaders are great communicators, are decisive, and deal with conflict well. Most importantly, nurse leaders understand the need for continuing professional development, growth, and learning (*Leadership in Nursing: Qualities & Why It Matters, 2024*).

Interestingly, these characteristics that are seen in nurse leaders are the same qualities we see in many nurses across the continuum and even in our student nurses. These are the same qualities that nursing students must possess to complete a rigorous nursing curriculum and to successfully study for and pass the nursing boards. They are the same qualities graduate nurses possess and develop during their first-year residency programs. These characteristics will naturally grow and develop as nurses journey from novice to expert. They may just need

to be watered, nurtured, and have light shown upon them to flourish and grow. Those of us who have gone before them have the privilege and responsibility to help nourish these qualities in others.

So, no matter where you find yourself in your nursing journey, plant a seed. If you are a nursing student, join and get involved in your student nurses' association. Develop a relationship with a nursing instructor that you admire or seek out additional opportunities for learning. If you are a graduate nurse starting your career, seek a residency program and continue learning as much as you can. Align yourself with a mentor on your nursing unit who you admire and can learn from. If you have been practicing for a while, be that mentor to a newer nurse and help open up opportunities for their growth. If you are a practicing nurse with ideas to improve outcomes for your clients, join a Shared Governance committee or collaborate with your Nurse Educator or Nurse Researcher. If you love management or the business side of

healthcare, reach out to your Nurse Manager and let them know your interest in being mentored in that realm. Finally, always take the time and make the effort for your own professional development and continued education. You never know what doors will open for you if you have done the work and prepared for the growth.

So, no matter where you find yourself along your nursing journey, plant your seed, find joy there, and bloom and lead where you are planted. It's a wonderful ride. ■

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