

# Empowering Nurses to Lead from Where They Are

By Katoria Westbrook-Stewart, DNP, APRN, AGPCNP-BC, WCC



Empowering a leadership mindset fosters critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and a proactive approach to patient safety and advocacy, strengthening our approach to patient-centered care.

Leadership in nursing is not defined by position or title, it is rooted in the passion for change and the unwavering commitment to elevate patient care, the profession, and the people we serve. Unfortunately, healthcare systems often spotlight individuals in leadership positions who lack the desire to be impactful or the drive to cultivate transformation. As a result, a disconnect forms between authority and influence, leaving many nurses uninspired to see themselves as leaders.

The nursing profession demands a shift in this mindset. Every nurse, from the bedside to the boardroom, holds the capacity to lead. Leadership must be reframed not as something exclusive to administration, but as a mantle that all nurses can put on with confidence and clarity. To do this, we must motivate, recognize, and champion nurses at every stage of their careers to embrace leadership as a daily practice.

Dismantling the traditional persona of leadership is especially important in academic and clinical settings. As nurse educators, we must recognize that our

influence is not isolated to the classroom. The impact we make today becomes a residual force experienced by students as they transition to the frontline. When we approach education through a leadership lens, we model behavior, decision-making, and advocacy that students will replicate in practice. Nurses who view themselves as leaders in the clinical setting are more likely to practice with heightened accountability and a deep sense of professional responsibility.

Empowering a leadership mindset fosters critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and a proactive approach to patient safety and advocacy, strengthening our approach to patient-centered care. Research by Alsadaan et al. (2023) confirms that the behaviors of nurse leaders directly influence staff performance and motivation, ultimately impacting patient outcomes and staff retention. Nurses who see themselves as leaders are more equipped to connect the dots between individual patient needs and broader health outcomes. This connection enhances

clinical decision-making, strengthens interprofessional collaboration, and drives improved benchmark metrics such as reduced hospital readmissions, improved chronic disease management, and increased patient satisfaction.

For this shift to take root, organizational structures must enlarge the capacity for leadership among nurses. It is time to view the nurse not just as a worker within the system, but as a visionary with the ability to influence future outcomes. When nurses are empowered to investigate the harvest of the next generation, whether through mentorship, preceptorship, or policy work, they must be equipped to see students, new graduates, and peers not only as learners but as emerging leaders.

Cultivating this culture from the ground up will yield far-reaching effects. According to Ystaas et al. (2023), transformational leadership within the nursing work environment not only enhances nurse well-being but is also closely tied to improvements in patient care qual-

ity. When leadership is embedded in the roots of nursing practice and education, it creates fertile ground for policy transformation, evidence-based implementation, and innovation. Nurses become not just doers, but drivers shaping systems that work better for patients and communities.

Now more than ever, the call to lead is not just for the few it is for us all. Leadership at every level will be the cornerstone of a stronger, more sustainable, and more impactful nursing workforce. Let us put on the mantle and lead well. ■

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## References

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# The Art of Nursing

By Tina Mason

*In quiet halls and buzzing rooms,  
Where life unfolds and with hope blooms,  
A healing touch, a steady hand,  
A soul who strives to understand.*

*They listen not just with their ears,  
But heart attuned to pain and fears.  
No paint nor clay, but blood and grace,  
Their canvas is the human face.*

*With every pulse, with every chart,  
They practice science and wield art.  
A whisper here, a gentle nod,  
Their presence speaks louder than loud.*

*They hold the hope that doctors write,  
Through sleepless days and endless nights.  
Yet ask them why they still endure?  
They'll say: because it makes you sure—*

*That kindness heals, that time can mend,  
That care begins where rules must end.*

*Each wound they tend, each life they touch,  
Unfolds a love that means so much.*

*We advocate with steady grace,  
Translate the science to each face.  
As leaders, mentors, guides unseen,  
We bridge the gaps that lie between.*

*The art is found in patient care,  
But also in the way we share—  
Through protocols we dare refine,  
And teaching lines we re-design.*

*Though evidence must chart the way,  
We elevate each healing day.  
For nursing's art is not just skill,  
But passion, purpose, heart, and will.*

*Here's to nurses—brave, unsung—  
Whose quiet art is never done.  
The masterpiece they shape each day  
Is life itself, in a bright array.*