

THE GIFTED NURSE



BY:
RENEE
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HEALTHY  WORKFORCE
INSTITUTE

Welcome Friend and Fellow Nurse,

It brings me great joy to welcome you to my newest eBook, *The Gifted Nurse*. You are about to discover four (4) important characteristics of all successful nurses – nurses who thrive, despite the challenges and who seem to be immune to the ravages of fatigue and burnout.

Although I spend the majority of my time working with healthcare leaders to cultivate a healthy, professional workforce by eliminating workplace bullying and incivility, I'm taking a bit of a diversion. Instead, I thought it would be nice to focus on the gifts bestowed by successful nurses. In my 27 years as a nurse, I've admired, been humbled by, and worked along side some of the most amazing nurses in the world. These nurses not only inspired me to want to be a better nurse but they inspired me to be a better human being. Like Rita Gabriel; who taught me how to be a good cardiac nurse; Joanne Turka who taught me how to be a good educator (Game Master!); Louise Jakubic who taught me how to be a successful nurse business owner; Michelle Podlesni who taught me how to think like a business woman; and Pamela Triolo who taught me how to lead. All of these nurses shared similar traits.

In this eBook, I share a four-part series called "The Gifted Nurse" with you. We'll cover perseverance, continuous learning, compassion and optimism. These are the four traits I feel you simply must have in order to be truly successful in the nursing profession no matter what your role.

Cheers to your success!

With gratitude and kindness,

Renee Thompson

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DEEDS

THE GIFTED NURSE

PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance is a beautiful thing. Thomas Jefferson described it best when he said “When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on.” It’s perseverance that allows you to keep going long after others have thrown in the towel. Without it you wouldn’t be in nursing because nursing school without perseverance is like macaroni without cheese. No thanks.

In her book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, Angela Duckworth shares her extensive research demonstrating the power of persistence and passion, in other words – GRIT. I first learned about her research on this topic when I watched her TED talk. She studied the debate between natural talent and I.Q. versus practice and plain old hard work. Her research is fascinating and actually, makes me feel a bit better about the fact that I wasn’t born with certain talents but with passion and perseverance, I can achieve almost anything I want. So can you!

She explains that grit is very SIMILAR to resilience but not quite the same. Resilience is the ability to spring or bounce back from adversity (we will talk about resilience in part two of this series). However, grit is all about the perseverance you need to accomplish your goals – no matter what. It’s getting up at 4:30am to train for a marathon or spending hours and hours practicing IV insertion until you master it.

It isn’t by chance that perseverance is first on the list, because let’s face it; you wouldn’t have made it through nursing school without it. It’s likely there that you figured out how to harness the power of perseverance in a way that has benefited you throughout your career, but why is it so important?

Nursing isn’t easy. We have days when we leave work feeling really good about the work we’ve done. And then we have those OTHER days when





we leave work questioning our decision to become a nurse in the first place. “What was I thinking?” It’s on THOSE days that nurses with perseverance are able to rise above the muck and come back the next day to do it all over again.

THIS IS WHERE PERSEVERANCE COMES IN.

One parable Duckworth shared in her book Grit made me immediately think of the nursing profession and why some of us struggle with “those” nurses who aren’t in it for the right reasons – who don’t have the perseverance it takes to keep moving forward.

THE BRICKLAYERS

Three bricklayers are asked, “What are you doing?”

The first says, “I am laying bricks.”

The second says, “I am building a church.”

The third says, “I am building a house of God.”

The first has a job. The second has a career. The third has a calling.



WHAT IS NURSING TO YOU? JOB, CAREER, OR CALLING. IF NURSING IS A CALLING, YOU HAVE PERSEVERANCE.

Only perseverance can ward off self doubt and giving up by helping us remember our ultimate goal, which gives us the strength and resolve to push past any difficulties and focus on what really matters. It reminds us why our work is important. Perseverance is all about committing to “building a house of God”..not “laying bricks.”

DEDSERVE

It's easy to start thinking that anyone and everyone you know who has ever achieved even a shred of success throughout their lifetime has done so through some sort of natural ability, but in reality they simply persevered when others gave up. In order to be successful you have to consistently work harder than you thought possible with no guarantee of success. This is TOUGH and no amount of talent can give you this ability.

And I'm no different than any of you! Quitting a really great job to start my own company 6 years ago required a healthy dose of courage and a TON of perseverance. I knew I was a good speaker but had NO IDEA how to build a COMPANY as a speaker. Early on there were many days when I would hop on the job boards to see what was out there just in case I failed as a business owner. One day, I was feeling discouraged and my sister reminded me that if it was easy, everyone would be doing it. That if I really wanted to build a successful speaking company, I would have to be okay with the slow path to success. What kept me going was knowing that no matter how long it took, I was going to succeed.

Perseverance helped me stay the course then and helps me stay the course now!

After many years as a nurse, I've learned that success has nothing to do with the school you attended, the organization you work for, or the credentials after your name. Success has everything to do with adopting a success mindset and it all starts with perseverance!



Successful people are fascinating. What makes someone who started with nothing become a world famous celebrity, activist, philanthropist, etc. while someone else born into riches becomes a drug addict, criminal, or toxic, unhappy human? Is it luck, circumstance, or something else?

Many of my readers know that I got off to a rough start, not as a child but as an adult. I was raised by loving parents, grandparents, and lots of aunts, uncles, and cousins but found myself pregnant at 19, quit college where I was enrolled in a pre-med program, and got married. Two kids later, no money, on welfare, and with a husband who wasn't exactly supportive, I realized that I was not living the life I thought I was supposed to have. So I stepped up and took 100% responsibility for my life. I went back to school, became a nurse, got remarried and now own a successful company.

What enabled me to go from government cheese to having a successful nursing career is that I committed to continuous learning through reading, formal and informal education. The thing is, neither of my parents were educated, nor did they read the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, or any other business/success publications. I don't even remember my parents reading at all (well, maybe Reader's Digest) but they did encourage every one of their children (there are 5 of us) to read and go to college. And we all did.

I've never stopped committing to continuous learning and neither do gifted nurses.

Gifted nurses invest in continuous personal and professional development. They engage in every opportunity to continuously learn – reading books and articles, attending in-services, becoming certified, getting an advanced degree, attending conferences, etc.



HERE ARE 5 WAYS TO INFUSE CONTINUOUS LEARNING INTO YOUR BUSY LIFE SO THAT YOU MAY BE GIFTED TOO:

1

READ

Spend a minimum of 30 minutes each day reading something instructional or inspirational. Read to enhance your leadership and management skills. Learn about a specific disease process or new surgical intervention. Read beyond healthcare-related content. Share what you are reading with your co-workers and supervisors. Make reading a habit.

My reading success strategy is that I have a stack of books, journals, and online articles ready for me at all times. Every morning, I make a cup of coffee and as I drink my coffee, I read. I will go without food before I will go without reading. Reading is more nourishing.

2

JOIN A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION

Choose a nursing organization that most interests and challenges you. By joining, you will gain access to their journal and online resources, which are included in your membership. A few added bonuses are the dinner meetings, conferences, and networking events most organizations host. I've learned so many things from other nurses within these organizations – things I would have never learned had I not joined. Participate as much as you can. Enjoy meeting people from other organizations. Use this time to expand your network and your knowledge.

First join an organization related to your specialty. For example, I was an educator and supported med surg nurses so I joined the Academy of Medical Surgical Nurses (AMSN). I'm now a professional speaker so I joined the National Speakers Association (NSA). However, sometimes you might want to join an organization unrelated to your specialty just to learn something different. For example, I joined the Oncology Nurses Society (ONS) a few years ago but I'm not an oncology nurse. Why? Because I didn't know a lot about cancer care and wanted to learn.

THE POINT IS - JOIN!

3

GET CERTIFIED

I've been teaching certification preparation courses for about 8 years now. However, I'll always find a nurse, who has been practicing for decades, who gets a bit testy when we start talking about the importance of certification. Some older nurses get really offended when you even suggest they get certified. "I've been a nurse for 40 years and don't need no stinkin' certification to prove I'm competent!" Actually, they're right. Certification doesn't PROVE competence, it VALIDATES competence; to your patients, your coworkers, and to yourself.

Here's the deal - Certification in a specialty in nursing is significant. Did you know that studies show, patients who are cared for by nurses who are certified, achieve better outcomes? It doesn't matter how many years you've been a nurse, certification makes you better.

4

GET SOCIAL

Ask any group of nurses if they are on social media and most will say yes. Ask the same group if they are ACTIVE, meaning that they post, read and engage in conversation, and only some will say yes. Then, ask if they use social media as a professional nurse and hardly anyone will say yes. Although I believe it's getting better, meaning, more nurses are finding the value in social networking via social platforms, we are still way behind other industries. Getting involved in social media can improve your knowledge; connect you to other amazing professionals, and expose you to remarkable innovations. For example, did you know that Baylor Scott & White just delivered the first baby using a transplanted uterus? Fascinating!! How did I know that? I saw the post on Facebook and then read more about it. I've been invited to give the keynote address twice now in Dubai UAE. How? Because of the relationships I've grown on LinkedIn with a few amazing nurses from Dubai. They read the articles I posted and reached out asking me to speak for them.

My opinion – if you're going to dip your toe in the water of professional social networking, start with LinkedIn. Why? Because LinkedIn is where the professionals go to learn and to network.

5

GO BACK TO SCHOOL

The mac daddy of them all, go back to school. Many nurses say they are too old to go back to school or that it will take soooo long to finish. When nurses are in school, often people ask, “When are you going to be done? When will you graduate?” That’s because everyone is looking at school as a destination – a finish line. Instead, look at it as a journey.

When I was in school (I started with an associates degree, and then got my BSN, MSN and now have my DNP), I looked at each semester/class individually. I would ask myself, “What can I learn in THIS class, THIS semester that will help me to grow professionally and personally?” Before I knew it, I was done.

One of the greatest gifts you can give to the world and to yourself is the gift of continuous learning. Just make learning a habit – every day, bite-sized nuggets of knowledge that accumulate over time until you don’t even recognize the person you were when you started.

One of my very favorite quotes of all time is from the late Jim Rohn who said this, “Formal education will make you a living. Self education will make you a fortune.” How are YOU incorporating the gift of continuous learning into YOUR nursing practice? I’d love to learn from you!

BACK
2
SCHOOL





COMPASSION

THE GIFTED NURSE

Compassion in nursing is so much more than being nice to patients. Compassion is about connecting with human beings on a level deeper than just “the GI bleeder in room 14 bed 2”. When nurses extend compassion, they provide the patient a sense of security. A feeling that their condition and concerns are being heard, recognized and acted upon. Compassion fosters a strong foundation of trust and assures them that you’re both working towards the best possible outcome for them physically, emotionally, mentally, and at times, spiritually.

Patients expect their nurses to be competent - that we're going to give them the right medications, detect any complications early, intervene appropriately, and maintain the knowledge and skills we need to save their lives. What they WANT from us is our compassion, but it can't be taught. You won't find a chapter in your nursing books about it.

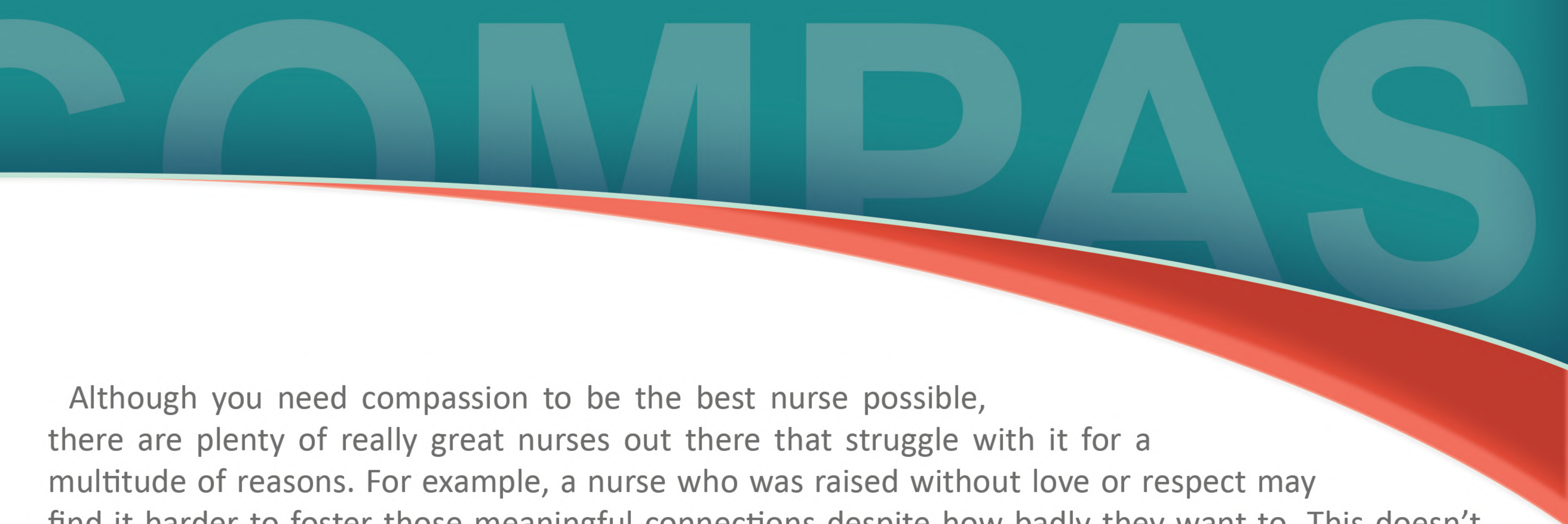
COMPASSION HAS TO COME FROM WITHIN.

It takes compassion for the pediatric nurse who's caring for a 12 month old little girl with a terminal disease to somehow get an adult bed into the pediatric ICU and encourage this precious child's mother to climb in bed and hold her baby against her abdomen as though she was back in her womb when they take her off life support. Compassion is what leads us to hold a patient's hand as they endure the side effects of chemo. It's actively listening to the patient whose family hasn't visited them in a month. It's deciding to spend your personal time reading to the little girl in room 402 that's waiting on a liver transplant.

Melissa Hart described it perfectly in her 2011 winning essay “Compassion: A Necessity for Quality Nursing Care.” She wrote:

“Compassion is not merely the sympathy you show toward a friend or family member in need, but rather the sympathy that causes you to act on an inner desire to help those very same people. Compassion links the entirety of a nurse’s scope of practice, not only what one is obligated to do under licensure, but what one is compelled to do as a human being; make a difference and make it count.”

Melissa Hart | “Compassion: A Necessity for Quality Nursing Care.”



Although you need compassion to be the best nurse possible, there are plenty of really great nurses out there that struggle with it for a multitude of reasons. For example, a nurse who was raised without love or respect may find it harder to foster those meaningful connections despite how badly they want to. This doesn't make them a bad nurse. In fact, it's quite the opposite. They want to give the world something more than what they've received; and for that they're my own personal heroes. There are also nurses who love caring for their patients, but the part of nursing that comes naturally to them tends to fall on the more "practical" side of things. These are the awesome nurses that helped us pass Microbiology and talked sense into us when we wanted to quit.

So, if compassion is a must in nursing, but it can't be taught, is there a way to improve upon it?

Absolutely! Today we will cover *three simple ways we can cultivate compassion and create a culture of care without feeling like we're stepping outside of our comfort zone to do so.*



BUILD RAPPORT



EMPATHIZE



LISTEN



Build Rapport: Your patient doesn't want to feel like a patient; they want to feel like a human being. The best way to do this is to express a genuine interest in them. Ask them about their interests, hobbies, and families. My favorite way to establish rapport is to ask them about their favorite foods! Everyone likes to talk about food (when appropriate). Take the time to notice their fears and vulnerabilities, acknowledge their thoughts, feelings and what matters to them. Express as much verbal kindness as possible, but make sure it's genuine and supported by your body language. Just a simple smile goes a long way. Expressing interest and getting to know them not only shows compassion, but it also lays the foundation of trust between the two of you and can help you empathize better with them.

Speaking of empathy...

COMPAS



Empathize: Empathy is best described as simply “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes.” It’s the ability to really understand or feel what someone else is going through. Maybe you had a mom, father or sister who went through a similar experience as your patient. Your ability to let them know you understand and care is powerful. I realize this can be easier said than done, but it’s an essential trait to possess as a nurse. If you’re not sure where to start, just build on the rapport you’ve created by expressing interest in them and letting them know it’s okay to be afraid, anxious, or even a bit angry. Remember that they may be apprehensive due to the medical problems they’re dealing with. This is where empathy can really help. From a position of rapport and empathy, extend compassion by instilling hope, just make sure it isn’t false hope.



Listen: A lot of times what someone who is sick or in pain wants the most (other than not to be sick or in pain) is someone to listen to them. Listening not only comforts them, but helps you better understand their concerns. Simply listening with intent will often allow you to pick up on symptoms or feelings that a patient may not even be aware of or just doesn’t know how to communicate. “Listening” to a patient simply to reply isn’t listening at all and it won’t serve either one of you well in the long run, so make sure you’re present and engaged. Ask them questions about their physical AND emotional needs, as well as any care-giving preferences they may have, and accommodate them when possible. Doing so will make their care go smoother and can greatly improve their condition.

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If YOU want to be happy, practice compassion."
~ Dali Lama

OPTIMISM

THE GIFTED NURSE

OPTIMISM

Humans are born either more positive or more negative – it's genetic. You can be born more positive but when you enter into a negative work environment, you can easily adopt the negative attitudes and behaviors from other people because of something in our brains called mirror neurons.

Basically, mirror neurons mimic what we see and hear most often. They say you are the average of the 5 people you spend the most time with: average type of house you live in, average income level, lifestyle, and average waistline! Some of you may be thinking that you need to get new friends!!

Mirror neurons are the exact reason why being optimistic is a gift for those who possess it. In their book, *Connected*, authors Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler demonstrate the power that social networks have to influence interpersonal behaviors and relationships. Numerous studies show that you do not have complete control over your behaviors, thereby conforming to the most common behaviors within your social network. The bottom line is that if you want to be happier – surround yourself with happy people. If you want to have more money – spend more time with people who have money. If you want to be in a loving relationship – spend more time with loving couples.

If you want to be more optimistic as a nurse – spend more time with optimistic nurses!

WHAT EXACTLY IS OPTIMISM?

Optimism isn't someone who lives in a state of constant joy, who walks into work skipping and smiling, or who never seems to be upset about anything. That would be weird. Optimism is a BELIEF that good things are possible. It's being hopeful about the future and confident that no matter what the current situation is, things will get better. There is so much gloom and doom out there. People who are optimistic don't let the media or the break room chronic complainers suck them into the vortex of hopelessness. Instead, they rise above and remember that MOST people are good people; that there is more goodness in the world than badness; that nursing is a wonderful profession filled with numerous opportunities to make a difference in the lives of millions of people despite the challenges.

OPTIMISM

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN OPTIMISM & POSITIVITY

Martin Seligman is known as the father of positive psychology. As the former president of the American Psychological Association, he spent the majority of his life studying human strengths and potential. As it turns out, what can unlock human potential is positivity.

Positive emotions, such as enthusiasm, excitement, and joy are more contagious than negative ones. Positive emotions compound quickly and positive leaders were perceived as more effective and more likely to persuade their followers to do what they want them to do. Positivity and optimism go hand in hand.

People who are optimistic and positive build strong relationships with others, are trusted, and typically perform better than their counterparts; pessimistic, negative people.

HOW OPTIMISM SHOWS UP IN THE NURSING PROFESSION:

-  New nurses entering into the profession with bright eyes and eager minds.
-  Experienced nurses who master the art of the electronic medical record even though they don't own a computer!
-  Nurses who sit for a certification exam or who go back to school to get an advanced degree even though they are nervous.
-  A nurse who has the worst shift of his career, goes home, sleeps, and then gets back up the next day to do it all over again.

OPTIMISM IS THE HOPE THAT WE CAN AND WE WILL MAKE THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE.

HOW TO GIVE YOURSELF THE GIFT OF OPTIMISM:

Create opportunities for laughter



There are 4 primary neurochemicals in the brain: endorphins, dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. They all contribute to our positive feelings of happiness, pride, joy, well being, achievement and fulfillment. Dopamine, in particular, gets released when we laugh! The benefits of laughter include improved immune function, stress relief, increased tolerance for pain, improved cardiovascular health, reduced anxiety, and improved mood.

Not only is laughter good for individuals but it also improves the workplace. According to Daniel Goldman, workplace jokes and laughter improve communication and trust. You and I both know you can get a lot more done with people you feel comfortable communicating with and whom you trust.

Get social



The more friends you have, the better you feel! Did you know that people who have less than 5 friends are more likely to die before those who have more than 5? A study of 20,000 people found that people who felt disconnected from others were more likely to get sick, miss work or even suffer a heart attack!!! The less socialization you have, the shorter the life expectancy. Social relationships provide the best guarantee of heightened well-being and lowered stress. It's like the antidote for depression and prescription for high performance and optimism.



Spend more time with optimistic people!

Just like we talked about with mirror neurons, you are influenced greatly by the people you spend time with. Take a look at your inner circle of friends and colleagues. Who are the most positive? Deliberately go out of your way to spend more time with them. In my professional life, I have a list of colleagues whom I regularly spend time with who “fill my cup” and give me hope for the future. Same thing in my personal life. I have friends and family who always encourage me and make me believe that I can do and handle anything!! And of course, like you, I have those people in my life who suck the life right out of me!! I try to spend less time with them and more time with the cup fillers. You need to do the same.

If you spend time with people who care about your development you will grow.

If you spend time with people who are hostile and negative, they will bring you down too.

The greatest gift you can give yourself, your colleagues, and the world, is the gift of optimism. Nurses who are optimistic BELIEVE that their work matters. They have clarity of purpose and believe they are making a difference even if it's to that one person.



CONCLUSION

There you have it! The four (4) characteristics, or gifts, of successful nurses.

Being a nurse isn't easy. After all, we are in the service industry caring for the sick public, which means that every day you work as a nurse, you are being inconvenienced. It doesn't matter how WE feel, we must always consider the needs of our patients first. However, there is no greater joy than knowing you've made a difference in the lives of other people.

It's my sincere hope that these tips have helped you, but more importantly I want to thank you. Thank you for caring for our families, friends, and loved ones. Thank you for all the things you do that fall outside of your scope of work. Thank you for being the type of nurse who strives to incorporate kindness and compassion in all you do. Thank you for being a gifted nurse.

Your next step if you want to continue to grow and succeed as a nurse is to join my community of other amazing nurses who get it – nursing is a calling; not a job. Joining is easy! Just click on this link and enter the path that makes the most sense to you.

JOIN RENEE'S COMMUNITY

There are 3.1 million practicing nurses in this country and close to 200,000 aspiring nurses in nursing schools. Just imagine the positive impact nurses can make by choosing to step up and embrace these gifts.

It all begins with you.

Be kind. Take care. Stay connected.

Renee Thompson

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RENEE THOMPSON

ABOUT RENEE THOMPSON

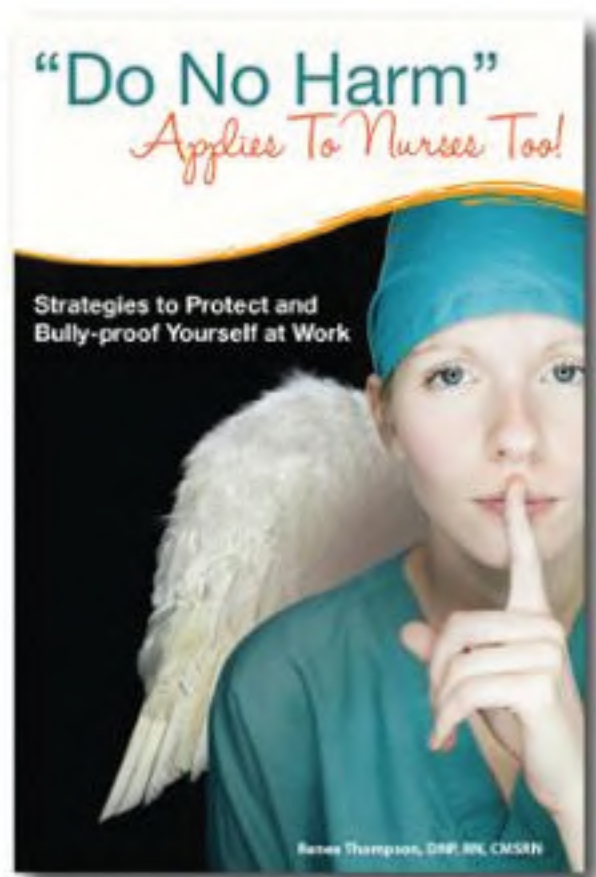
Dr. Renee Thompson is a sought after speaker, author, consultant, and leading authority on creating healthy workforces by eliminating bullying and incivility. With 27 years as a clinical nurse, nurse educator, quality manager, and nurse executive, Dr. Thompson is an expert on workplace bullying, and spends the majority of her time working with healthcare organizations that want to eliminate bullying and incivility.

Renee is the CEO of RTConnections and founder of The Healthy Workforce Institute. She has been repeatedly published, interviewed, and awarded for her work to educate, connect, and inspire current and future nurses in healthcare. Renee is the author of several books and is in demand as a keynote speaker.

Dr. Thompson has been published in numerous nursing journals including, but not limited to, Journal of Medsurg Nursing, Journal of Nursing Administration (JONA), Nursing 2008, and Oncology Nursing News. She is a frequent invited guest on radio, podcasts, webinars, and online nursing blogs.

In 2016, Renee received the Nursing Excellence award as a nurse entrepreneur to honor her work to eliminate workplace bullying. She received the first Outstanding Nursing Alumni for Excellence in Leadership Award and Distinguished Alumni recognition from her alma mater, and was a finalist in the Healthcare Heroes Awards as a Healthcare Provider in her hometown of Pittsburgh, PA. Her blog has won numerous awards as a Top Nursing Blog “must-read” by the online nursing community and her anti-bullying videos are viewed by healthcare organizations around the world.

Renee has a Masters degree in Nursing Education and a Doctorate of Nursing Practice from the University of Pittsburgh.



ABOUT THE HEALTHY WORKFORCE INSTITUTE

The Healthy Workforce Institute is a training and consulting firm dedicated to working with your front line leaders to create a happy and healthy work environment that inspires compassionate patient care.

Our programs and services reflect our three-fold mission to strengthen your organization, equip your leaders and thereby empower your employees to bring their absolute best to work.

Whether she and her team are delivering a workshop on bullying, working with nurse leaders to establish a Healthy Unit Plan, or leading her online program hailed for its powerful impact on workplace culture, Renee's work is inspiring lasting and meaningful change within hospitals across the country.

OVERVIEW OF SERVICES

Workforce Assessment & Analysis

This 6 week assessment includes a thorough review of your organization's documents regarding your mission, vision, and values, workforce education and policies related to disruptive behaviors. Once the assessment is completed, you will receive a comprehensive analysis, with key areas of focus and recommended next steps.

Healthy Workforce Intervention

Through onsite and virtual collaboration, this 1-year program is designed to create and sustain a healthy, professional, and supportive workforce and reduce incidents of bullying and incivility.

Eradicating Bullying & Incivility Workshops

These powerful on-site workshops boast a 99% satisfaction rate by participants because it delivers practical, real-world solutions that empower healthcare leaders to recognize disruptive behaviors, develop the skills needed to confront and eliminate the behaviors, and transform their unit into a nurturing, supportive, and professional environment.

Healthy Workforce Online Resources

The Healthy Workforce Academy is an online educational resource, designed to provide solutions for front line leaders who want to establish a standard and expectation for professional behavior within their unit and cultivate a healthy workforce culture.

Creating a Culture of Caring

This program is designed to empower your leadership team and engage employees to address the most common disruptions in healthcare organizations and transform the work environment at the unit level. Designed to be delivered as part of an onsite consulting arrangement or virtual format via the Healthy Workforce Academy.



For a more detailed description of services, please go to www.healthyworkforceinstitute.com

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