



Personal Values: The HeArt of Holistic Nursing

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What is really important to you? What activities leave you feeling fulfilled and satisfied? When you behave in a way that results in this special feeling, it is usually the fact that a personal value has directed your behavior. So, what happens when a group of holistic nurses clarify their personal values and then get together to share the results? This is where real value and collective consciousness emerges, the impetus for global change...

“Holistic Nursing is not necessarily something you do; it is an attitude, a philosophy, and a way of being.”

(AHNA, 2016)

A *way of being* is the translation of a complex matrix of experiences, biochemical interactions, and emotions into behaviors unique to the individual. Carl Rogers (1951) explains that a way of being is a “state of focus that incorporates a total togetherness of body and mind” and that “The best vantage point for understanding behavior is from the internal frame of reference of the individual.”

This internal frame of reference (or personal knowing/attitude) emanates from individual values that direct one’s way of being. This is the art of holistic nursing. “Knowing thyself,” a basic tenet of Socrates, is without a doubt the primary requisite for moving from an interior individual perspective to an exterior group/collective consciousness (Dossey, 2016). Essentially, a clear understanding of who we are in the world is necessary for communicating the *way of being* a holistic nurse, which ultimately lends to shaping our profession’s identity and perceived value within health care.

How do we define value? And why is this important for imparting knowledge of holistic nursing’s way of being to others? How are values important in describing holistic nursing? In today’s world, we often hear the word ‘value’ in terms of financial inputs and outputs. In health care, value is frequently associated with words like ‘outcomes,’ ‘metrics,’ ‘quality,’ and ‘cost-effectiveness.’ In addition to considering the relative utility or monetary worth of our contributions, what if we were to look at value through a more person-focused lens? First, it all starts with what we each value as individuals – what is most important to us and drives our actions.

Clarifying Our Values: A Self-Care Process

A basic requirement of self-care, values clarification is a self-discovery and reflective process that allows us to know ourselves, who we are, and how we behave. It helps define what is most important to each of us and how we bring our personal values into holistic nursing practice: “Self-reflection allows one to know oneself more fully in order to become more authentic and mindful” (AHNA & ANA, 2013, p. 20). Through this process, we become conscious and aware of what is directing our actions and are better at evaluating our purpose and direction.

Determining our personal values provides a substantial foundation for internalizing and translating the philosophy and core values of holistic nursing. These values then provide a foundation for sharing a collective consciousness that forms a group structure process and opens our perspective from the internal individual to an integral worldview. This integral perspective can then be communicated and shared with others.

“Values are internal and subjective and represent that which we feel strongest about in guiding our behavior.”

—Stephen Covey, *The 8th Habit* (2004)

Personal Values vs. Core Values

Individual values are internal, emotional, subjective, and arguable, whereas principles (or core values) are scientific, factual, and self-evident – the objective reality or the territory in which we all function (Covey, 2004). Our core values provide a standard for holistic nursing practice, yet each of us must use our own “map” or subjective values to define how we will behave within the structure of those principles. Specifically, internalized and conscious personal values are the roadmap for how one translates the philosophy, standards, and principles/core values of holistic nursing into a way of being that supports others’ healing.

“What is most personal is most general.”

—Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist’s View of Psychotherapy* (1961)

Co-Creating the Integral: Moving From Individual to Global

So, what happens when a group of holistic nurses get together and share the results of their own personal values clarification? This group comes to an understanding, a collective consciousness, and an awareness of a set of shared values that guide the actions of the group. These shared values form the collective way of being for holistic nursing.

Just as partnership and co-creation are important principles of holistic nursing that support others in their own healing, so do our personal values support and co-create the collective way of being for all holistic nurses. A shared values clarification (that is based on reviewing and prioritizing our common individual values) aids all of us in describing holistic nursing to others so that we are able to authenticate a respected practice and valued contributions within health care. Accordingly, our collective

consciousness resonates a frequency that attracts others, ultimately moving us from an individual to global perspective within the integral paradigm.

Barbara Dossey’s (2016) Theory of Integral Nursing provides a way for understanding the importance of moving from the individual to the global perspective. In Dossey’s model of Personal Statements and the Four Quadrants (Figure 1), movement between quadrants is not a linear progression; instead, there are forward and backward movements as the system learns to adapt to different levels of health. This is a natural progression, and the time it takes to accomplish the process is as unique as the growth and development of individuals.

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Coming Home...Discovering My Shared Meaning

I had left nursing and health care in 1980 to explore other careers. In 2008, through a series of coincidences, I heard the term ‘Holistic Nurse’ for the first time and found myself in New Hampshire at an AHNA conference. I don’t know why I went, but from the moment I walked through the front door of the hotel, something felt different.

I had been to many nursing conferences and conventions in the past, all with informative and interesting presentations, but at the AHNA conference, I experienced something more than just intellectual stimulation. Here, I felt a connection with others who understood what I was saying. My thoughts and beliefs were not foreign, and I was welcomed, embraced, and heard. I felt cared for and about; this was a place where I “fit.”

What I experienced during that conference in 2008 was the translation of a way of being, of heart values ingrained and integral in a philosophy about people and the world. The manner in which each person translated those beliefs was different, but in totality I felt it nonetheless. I was automatically tuned into the other conference attendees, and their way of being allowed me to experience authentic holistic nursing. I was *home*.

I have since recognized that the values I resonate with and experienced as heart values during that first AHNA conference are:

- **Authenticity:** honesty, integrity, joy, humor, honor
- **Connection:** collaboration, co-creation, caring, openness
- **Respect:** consideration, self-care, presence, dignity and listening

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The planners and faculty have declared no conflicts of interest related to this activity.

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Figure 1: Personal Statements and the Four Quadrants.

Source: Adapted from Dossey, B. M. *Integral Perspectives and Change*. In *Nurse Coaching: Integrative Approaches in Health and Wellbeing* (2015) by B. M. Dossey, S. Luck, & B. G. Schaub, p. 285. Reprinted with permission. Copyright © 2015. The International Nurse Coach Association. www.inursecoach.com

Examining Figure 1, let's think of Holistic Nursing as a unified "being"— an integral whole made up of individual interconnected parts that is learning how to use its collective voice. Starting at the My Meaning/I quadrant are the personal values of individual holistic nurses that provide the way of being within Holistic Nursing for each person. Once each person has clarified their personal values, Holistic Nursing uses the "My" or individual as a foundation for creating the My Body & Actions/It quadrant – where the structure, standards, and core values of Holistic Nursing exist. Herein lie the principles that provide a foundation for speech and for moving from isolation to creating its own individuality within a larger environment, ready and poised to be seen and heard within a shared partnership of personal values (Dossey's Shared Meaning/We quadrant). As our collective voice grows and expands to exterior systems, organizational structures, and the global environment, we then move into Dossey's lower right quadrant of Group Processes/Its.

In 1980, Charlotte (Charlie) McGuire brought together a group of nurses who were angry "disillusioned and disappointed with conventional healthcare" (AHNA, 2008). This small group developed the consciousness of Holistic Nursing (Dossey's My Meaning/I quadrant). They came with individual concerns and alternated between the individual interior and the exterior. Over time, this group grew. They clarified and developed the

standards and competencies of Holistic Nursing – the core principles that direct our behavior and way of being (Dossey's Body & Actions/It quadrant). Charlie wanted to provide a vehicle whereby nurses who saw health care and nursing through the same lens as Florence Nightingale would be supported in their "own healing and welfare" (AHNA, 2008).

Throughout AHNA's growth, there has been a process of maturing and moving between the My Meaning/I to the lower left Our Shared Meaning/We quadrant. These are necessary steps in order for an organization in partnership with its members to clarify its own set of values while retaining the integrity of the individual. AHNA represents the collective voice of Holistic Nursing, the shared understanding of caring for the whole person – body, mind, and spirit. It is the partnership that supports holistic nurses in self-care and practice. Holistic Nursing is at the tipping point of bringing the philosophy, principles, and contributions of our specialty practice across the nation and the globe. As AHNA moves into the global arena, we must demonstrate the value of our practice and communicate our significance within the larger context of health care.

To move forward and effect change in health care and the world, it's important that we clearly co-create and communicate our shared personal values as an organization – starting first

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PERSONAL VALUES INVENTORY

If holistic nurses were to each undergo self-discovery and identify our personal values, would we find commonalities? Let's find out.

The following list and clarification process provides an opportunity to identify your own values and sets the stage for determining a collective set of values that we can codify and then connect with the philosophy and conceptual principles/core values of holistic nursing. Your values inventory provides the roadway to *living* Holistic Nursing. But more importantly, it is your personal values that are the foundation for sharing a common voice, a commitment to a way of being within Holistic Nursing that each of us can model.

Personal Core Values Exercise & Checklist

Remember that values are subjective. There are no right or wrong values. These are the moments when you explore what is important to you. Your values will provide an opportunity to co-create and communicate a common voice.

- Step 1.** Review the list and choose 10 of the words with which you resonate.
- Step 2.** Then rank this list from 1 to 10 with 1 being most important and 10 the least.
- Step 3.** You may notice that some of the words share similarities and can be categorized under other all-encompassing words. Identify and group these words.
- Step 4.** Now rank the words that are left over in order of importance. These are your personal values.
- Step 5:** Look at your top 3-4 values. These are your *core* personal values.

Note: No list can ever be complete. There may be additional personal values that are unique to you, so don't be limited by the list. Add anything else that just feels right.

Acceptance	Excellence	Intuition	Risk taking
Achievement	Excitement	Justice	Romance
Adventure	Expertise	Kindness	Routine
Altruism	Fairness	Leadership	Security
Ambition	Faith	Learning	Self-expression
Appreciation	Fame	Love	Service
Authenticity	Family	Loyalty	Sharing
Authority	Fast pace action	Making a difference	Solitude
Autonomy	Financial rewards	Nature	Spirituality
Balance	Focus	Nurturing	Status
Beauty	Freedom	Order	Success
Belonging	Friendship	Passion	Teaching
Challenge	Fun	Peace	Teamwork
Choice	Happiness	Personal growth	Tolerance
Collaboration	Harmony	Power	Tradition
Commitment	Health	Privacy	Travel
Community	Helping others	Productivity	Trust
Compassion	Honesty	Promotion prospects	Variety
Competition	Humor	Reaching potential	Winning
Connection	Imagination	Recognition	Wisdom
Contribution	Independence	Respect	Zest for life
Creativity	Influence	Responsibility	
Equality	Intellect	Results	

This checklist of core values has been adapted from Rebecca McLean, Circle of Life Coaching, www.circleoflife.net. Printed with permission.

What are your values? If you would like to share these please let us know at editor@ahna.org



THE ROCKING CHAIR EXERCISE

Imagine you are very old (you decide your age), and you are sitting relaxing in your rocking chair at home. You are reflecting on your life and thinking about how you have achieved or experienced what is most important to you in your life.

- What would you like to be looking back on?
- What are the highlights that you enjoy reliving?
- Whose lives have you touched?
- What difference have you made?
- What are you proud of?
- What makes your heart open?
- What was soul satisfying?
- How did you fulfill your life purpose?
- How did you use your unique gifts (e.g. humor, kindness, organization)?
- What will your legacy be?

Thinking about these questions can help you tune into what really matters to you.

Consider what the main themes are that emerge for you. What does this mean about your core values?

These core values exercises are perhaps the most important self-awareness exercises for you to do. They really tap into what you could call your underlying life purpose.

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with the individual interior of our personal values. I encourage you to take the personal values inventory (see page 9), reflect on your own individual values, and consider how these relate to your Holistic Nursing practice and AHNA as a whole. This is a major self-discovery and can bring up many feelings about who you believe you are and how you have been seen in the world. It requires intense reflection, courage, and openness – especially if your analysis indicates the need for a personal change.

When we build a collective voice, great transformation can happen, but it must first start from within. Actually living our values and behaving in a way that lets others authentically experience those values is at the core of our Holistic Nursing way of being. This is the true heart of Holistic Nursing.

“It takes generosity to discover the whole through others. If you realize you are only a violin, you can open yourself up to the world by playing your role in the concert.”

– Jacques-Yves Cousteau

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