

# **A Nurse I Am**

## **Discussion Guide**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nursing is a rich and rewarding career. It offers endless and diverse opportunities to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Individuals who are drawn to the profession often have a sense of altruism and idealism and a strong desire to change the world. And while there is much to be gained by walking the path of the healer, the road can be rocky and hard.

The transition from the classroom to the workplace represents a significant culture shock for new graduate nurses. Some hospitals report new graduate turnover rates of 30% and more during the new nurses' first year of employment. There are also an alarming number of nurses leaving the profession within their first few years in practice<sup>1</sup>. The reasons cited are varied and include a perceived lack of respect and recognition in the workplace, as well as a sense of the work being "too hard" and the rewards "too few." And while it is important to support the new graduate nurse in developing his or her clinical skills and expertise, it is just as important to reinforce those things that make nursing meaningful to the individual nurse. One important way to do this is to provide positive nursing role models - nurses who are competent and compassionate and have a deep commitment to their patients and to their profession in spite of the challenges. This is the impetus behind *A Nurse I Am*.

### **ABOUT THE DISCUSSION GUIDE**

This discussion guide was developed so that instructors and educators could use the film as a learning tool and maximize benefit from it in a classroom setting. It contains a brief summary of the film, key learning points, questions to stimulate discussion, and suggestions on how to best utilize the film. The key learning points have been included as a stand-alone document so that they may be used as a handout.

### **ABOUT THE FILM**

*A Nurse I Am* spotlights four outstanding nurses, all of them recipients of the 2005 Cherokee Inspired Comfort Award. It captures them, and other nurses, in real life situations in various settings interacting with real patients, students, and colleagues. The film offers advice and encouragement for students and new nurses by highlighting key points for a successful career as well as words of wisdom and encouragement from the nurses in the film. Be sure to stay tuned for the 'Update' section after the credits.  
(Length: 30:52 minutes)

## **The film features:**

Bob Wilkinson, RN  
Pediatric oncology nurse  
Children's hospital (in-patient unit)

Angela Bytheway, RN  
Nurse Care Coordinator  
Children's hospital (out-patient unit for  
children with special needs)

Ardis Bush, RN  
Nurse Manager  
General hospital (in-patient unit)

Mona Counts, RN, PhD, NP  
Nurse Practitioner / Nurse Entrepreneur  
Primary care center (Appalachia)

## **SUGGESTED USES FOR THE FILM**

*A Nurse I Am* was designed to teach, inspire, and provoke. The content is targeted to nursing students and new graduate nurses, but even experienced nurses will benefit from the passion and wisdom of the outstanding nurses featured in this film.

Used in nursing programs, the film is ideally suited for viewing and discussion in senior leadership classes. However, the film is appropriate for all levels of students — even newer students once they have had several weeks of clinical experience.

When used in healthcare facilities, the film is a perfect tool for new graduate orientation programs. It is also recommended as a training aide for those who will be working closely with new nurses. A review of the basics can assist preceptors, mentors, and managers in supporting the new graduate's transition into practice. Additionally, the film can be shown to general staff during Nurses Week or any other time. It will remind all nurses why they're in this profession and demonstrate to anyone who watches it what nursing care is all about.

## **HOW TO USE THE FILM AND GUIDE**

### **For students and new graduate nurses**

Before viewing the film, ask students or new graduates to note the unique personality and style of each nurse. Advise them to note specific ways these nurses relate to patients, family members, and others. Distribute the last two pages of the guide (Key Points Summary and Advice From Nurses) either before or after the discussion. You may wish to review the key learning points after the discussion.

*General questions for discussion after viewing the film -*

- How do these nurses establish rapport with their patients and their patients' families?
- How does each nurse's individual style serve the patient population he or she works with?
- What particular actions or interactions between nurses and patients in the film stand out in your mind? Why?
- What were some points made either by the narrator or the nurses themselves that struck a chord with you? Why?
- What characteristics do each of these nurses have in common?

## **For experienced nurses who work with students and new graduate nurses**

*General questions for discussion after viewing the film —*

- What message does the film send to students and new graduate nurses?
- Which of the key learning points made do you think are most significant?
- What additional advice would you / do you give to students and new graduates?
- What are some specific ways you can support and encourage students and new graduates to stay the course?

## **Closing**

In closing the session, help the group to summarize and reflect upon the themes or important points that emerged during the discussion. Ask for the one thing that was most meaningful or memorable to each participant.

## **RECOMMENDED READING FOR PARTICIPANTS**

*Your 1st Year as a Nurse – Making the Transition from Total Novice to Successful Professional* 2nd ed., by Donna Wilk Cardillo, (Random House, 2010)

*Chicken Soup for the 'Nurses Soul* by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Nancy Mitchell-Autio, LeAnn Thieman. (Health Communications, Inc. 2001)

## **REFERENCE**

1. Sochalski, J. Nursing Shortage Redux: Turning the Corner on an Enduring Problem. *Health Affairs*, September/October 2002; 21:157-164.  
[http://www.nursing.upenn.edu/news/pdf/male\\_nurse\\_stduy.pdf](http://www.nursing.upenn.edu/news/pdf/male_nurse_stduy.pdf)

## **ABOUT THE DISCUSSION GUIDE AUTHOR**

Donna Wilk Cardillo, RN, MA, CSP is author of “Your 1st Year as a Nurse - Making the Transition from Total Novice to Successful Professional” (now in its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), “The ULTIMATE Career Guide for Nurses”, “A Daybook for Beginning Nurses”, and “Falling Together – How to Find Balance, Joy, and Meaningful Change When Your Life Seems to be Falling Apart”. As president of DonnaCardillo.com, she is a passionate advocate for nurses, keynote speaker who encourages transformational change, seminar and retreat leader, and motivator. She is the original Dear Donna columnist at Nurse.com and the former Healthcare Careers Expert at Monster.com. For timely encouragement, updates and offers, like Donna on Facebook at [facebook.com/DonnaCardilloRN](https://www.facebook.com/DonnaCardilloRN).

# **A Nurse I Am**

## **Key Points Summary**

### **1. Get to know your patients**

Not only does getting to know your patients foster a therapeutic environment, it also keeps the humanness - the heart - in nursing. There is a tendency to refer to patients by their disease or room number and forget that the person has a unique personality, background, and life circumstance. Even their own condition or illness is unique in how it affects them. By getting to know patients and their families, the nurse can better relate to that person and care for that person.

### **2. Communicate**

Communication involves dialogue, interchange, and conversation. Focused listening is vital to hear not only the words but also the underlying message. Although medical language and terminology is second nature to nurses, it is not to the average patient. Consider each patient's background (cultural, socio-economic, age, ethnicity) and adjust your language accordingly. Family and close friends are an extension of the patient. Include them in your communication and caring.

### **3. Be an Effective Information Provider**

Information empowers patients. Nurses are the primary source of information for patients and their families. You are an interpreter of complex information. It is important to realize that everyone learns and "hears" differently. Just because you tell someone something or give that person something to read, it doesn't mean he understands the material or even has the ability to read it. Don't assume anything. Learn effective ways to test a patient's knowledge of his own condition, treatment, and follow-up as well as his ability to carry out that follow-up.

### **4. Help Patients to Cope**

Nurses are in a unique position to help patients deal with life-changing events and navigate their way through a complex healthcare system. Patients and families are stressed, overwhelmed, afraid, and often confused. They will look to you for comfort, encouragement, reassurance, and guidance. You must help them find their way.

### **5. Nurses are Multidimensional**

Nurses must wear many different hats and look after endless details. They are multitaskers personified! Nurses are healers, teachers, and nurturers. They are clinicians, technicians, scribes, and negotiators. They are counselors, mediators, translators, and coaches.

### **6. Mentor**

Students and new nurses are the future of the profession. Without them, the profession would slowly die out. Every nurse, whether novice or experienced, has a responsibility and a professional duty to support and nurture the next generation of nurses. Even nursing students, at any level of experience, can help and support those with less experience than themselves.

# **A Nurse I Am**

## **Advice From The Nurses**

### **1. Stick with it**

It's worth it. The rewards are great.  
You have a unique opportunity to influence the lives of so many in a positive way.

### **2. Be a lifelong learner**

Keep up with advances in nursing.  
Continue your education.  
Stay current on best practices.  
If you don't know the answer – ask or find out. No one knows everything.  
Ask for help when you need it.

### **3. Be your patient's advocate**

That patient is relying on you to look out for his or her welfare. Sometimes that involves standing up for what you think is right even if it involves questioning a physician's order.  
Encourage patients to do what's right for their own health and well-being.  
Find out what they need, and help them get it.  
Develop collegial relationships with physicians and others. You're all on the same team, and you have the same goals for your patients.

### **4. Care for yourself**

Stress is part of the job. Learn to manage it.  
Establish and nurture a rich spiritual life.  
Don't be afraid to feel and express emotion.  
Use humor to cope. Be willing to laugh.  
Find respite through hobbies, outside interests, and other diversionary activities.  
Keep your options open in nursing; you always have choices.