

## **My Personal Philosophy of Nursing**

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Florence Nightingale famously explained, “nursing is an art and if it is to be made an art, it requires an exclusive devotion as hard a preparation as any painter's or sculptor's work; for what is the having to do with dead canvas or dead marble, compared with having to do with the living body, the temple of God's spirit?” With the high demand for nurses in the workforce, nursing today is often viewed as a rewarding profession that provides a high degree of job security; but for those called to the vocation of nursing, it is much deeper than that—it is, as Ms. Nightingale describes, ‘a fine art’ born of compassionate devotion to patient care and the desire to serve others. While there are certainly several dimensions that guide one’s call to nursing, for me the prevailing motivation is a desire to bring comfort to others through compassionate care.

I have known that I wanted to be a nurse ever since I broke my elbow as a child and was transported via ambulance from New Salem, ND to Bismarck, ND where I underwent surgery to repair my arm. Even today when I think about that experience, I can vividly remember the scrubs my nurses were wearing (they were purple with tiny pink and blue bubbles), and the little kindnesses they showed me that made me feel better--even though it was a very scary time for me. Over the years, I considered studying to be a pediatrician, but the experience I had as a child kept bringing me back to the nursing profession. To be a steady presence bringing comfort through regular, frequent contact with patients and their families simply speaks to me and is what I aspire to do. There is a selflessness in the nursing profession that is not lost on me, and being able to serve others compassionately and selflessly is what I feel called to do.

In today’s world, at times it seems as though long understood definitions are ever changing; but there is a constancy when considering what it means to be a person. While one can examine the multi-faceted nature of the human person from scientific, philosophical, or religious

perspectives, at a base level, being a person is synonymous with being human. But a person is not just a being that is able to breathe and employ sensory function, rather, a person is someone who has the capacity to love and demonstrates humanity from the depth of the soul. A person is someone with the ability to think, reason, and communicate. Each person generates their own unique thoughts and perspectives in response to the stimuli of the world around them because each person experiences life differently; living their own experiences that shape their identity. A person possesses inherent worth, and is deserving of love, respect, and joy.

Of the many factors that impact the human person, one's environment is of substantial significance. The environment can be considered all that encompasses a person's life—the people, places, cultures, and things that comprise each moment of the human experience. It is fluid, meaning that it changes—sometimes frequently, and sometimes not for long periods of time. But, one's environment is not only made up of external factors, such as where one lives or works; but also, internal factors like health, well-being, and mindset, play a significant role in one's environmental state. Interestingly, there are correlations between internal and external factors and experiential outcomes for the human person. For example, immersing a person in a positive external environment, like spending time with loved ones doing a fun activity, has a positive impact on that person's mindset and mental health. Ultimately, one's environment plays a significant role in one's health outcomes.

Simply stated, health is the state of being without illness or injury. However, our understanding of health has become more complex, involving so much more than the simplicity of this definition. Health means being in a state of wellness, comfort, and joy—all of which vary from person to person. Perfection in terms of defining or describing health is impractical—it is too broad, with so many aspects that it is impossible to be in “perfect” health. Likewise, it is

impractical to divide health into categories of “good” or “bad,” as there are no absolutes.

Understanding the uniqueness of the human person combined with a person’s lived experience within their specific environment, is impossible for another person to be essentially identical in composition and experience at the same given time. Clearly, a ‘one size fits all approach’ to understanding or defining health is impractical.

Over the years, I have had countless experiences with nurses—each of which has shaped my perception of what nursing is. When I hear the word nurse, the first word that comes to my mind is “caregiver.” Nursing is the only division of healthcare where its professionals spend the majority of their time at the patient’s bedside. Without nurses, who would serve as the nurturing caregiver for a scared little girl with a broken elbow who needs a hand to hold? Nurses are direct caregivers for each of their patients, and they are the heart and soul of successful healthcare. Nurses go out of their way to provide loving support and care for the living body--the temple of the soul--throughout its healthcare journey. To me, servant leadership is truly putting others’ needs before my own and doing the work that is not always desirable but is necessary—this is especially true in healthcare. It is my hope to be that helping hand, serving in the communities that helped shape who I am today, journeying along with the people I serve as they seek care and counsel for their healthcare needs.

## References

Nightingale, F. (1969). *Notes on nursing*. Dover Publications.