Fostering Nurse Renewal Through Compassion: A Model for Alleviating Nurse Workplace Stress

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Introduction

Nursing workplace stress is a known deterrent to nurse satisfaction within the work environment.1 It can lead to compassion fatigue and burnout and is a contributing factor to nursing turnover and decreased retention of a skilled workforce.2

The Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare’s Sentinel Alert Event #57, issued March 1, 2017, states that failure to address staff burnout is an example of inadequate organizational leadership.3

Workplace stress can rob nurses of the joy and fulfillment they derive from their work.4 It can lead to compassion fatigue and burnout and is a contributing factor to nursing turnover and decreased retention of a skilled workforce.5

This 770-bed urban hospital nursing team recognized the signs of nurse workplace stress due to heavy patient loads, persistent staffing shortages, and multiple competing organizational initiatives.6

They partnered with The BirchTree Center for Healthcare Transformation to present The Integrative Healing Arts Academy™ and The BirchTree Center Model™ (Figure 1) to create a framework for self-care and self-renewal practices to alleviate workplace stress and to introduce the benefits of Renewal Rooms.

Figure 1

The BirchTree Center Model™

Objectives

- Review the negative cascading effects of nurse workplace stress on patient care and healthcare organizations.
- Identify the benefits of a designated renewal space for nurses on the job.
- Define the essential elements of a successful renewal room project.

Process

Nursing administrators developed a Pilot Project to create a Renewal Room on the Women’s Health Unit.

- Renewal Room - a designated space for nurses to rest and re-focus while on their shift.
- The Renewal Room conveys a sense of tranquility and peacefulness for self-reflection and relaxation (Figure 2).
- A room that held extra equipment was selected – located near the nurses’ station and too small to be a patient room.
- Clinical nurses were enlisted to transform the room through the use of:
  - Soft lighting
  - Comfortable chairs and pillows
  - Electric teapot/cups
  - Portable music player with relaxing music
  - Uplifting reading material and inspirational quotes
  - Journal to share reflections

Results

The Renewal Room became an overnight success! Nurses used it to refresh and rejuvenate before, during, and after their shifts.

As the usage increased, nurses from other units requested their own Renewal Rooms. There are currently 17 Renewal Rooms, including one located in Nursing Administration (Figure 3).

Benefits of Renewal Rooms:

- Improved healing presence for patients and colleagues.
- Increased nurse-patient engagement.
- Self-Care is now viewed as an expectation (lunch, breaks, Renewal Room usage).
- Self-Care is a professional competency.

Elements of a successful Renewal Room project:

- Nursing administration role modeling the value of self-care through use of Renewal Room.
- Include staff in room preparation (decoration, etc.).

Testimonials

- When I visit the renewal room, I feel invigorated and ready to conquer the day. Andrew C., RN
- After spending time in a renewal room, I am re-connected to myself and my purpose. Kim R., RN
- Visiting a renewal room is like stepping at the gas station to refuel. Lacey L., RN

Future Vision

- As new units are built/re-designed, Renewal Room inclusion will be foundational in the architectural plans.
- Introduce the purpose of Renewal Rooms at new associate orientation.
- Formalize collaboration between Medical and Nursing Education for joint use of Renewal Rooms to teach the value of self-care to reduce risk of burnout.
- Install common entry code for access to all Renewal Room locations.

References

6. www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/18/SEA_57_Safety_Culture_Leadership_0317.pdf