



# ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

## Message from the President

### Heart and Science of Caring - Adopting a Caring, Compassionate, and Open Heart

*September/October 2022*

**Connie Hardy Tabet MSN RN CPAN CAPA FASPAN**  
ASPAN President 2022-2023

#### **Care and Caring**

Have you considered the difference between the commonly used words care and caring? The word care is associated with attentiveness, focus or concern.<sup>1</sup> The noun 'care' has been spoken since 1550. The adjective 'caring' has been shared since 1966.<sup>2</sup> There are many synonyms for caring. A few standing above the others are understanding, selfless, kind, or open-hearted.<sup>3</sup> Collaboratively, we each are obliged to engage in caring behaviors and actions. Perianesthesia nurses deliver quality care as a basic need to ensure patients' well-being. How nurses demonstrate the heart and science of caring is an art of excellence that captures the attention of our patients and their caregivers.

#### **Compassionate Care**

It is assumed all healthcare workers exhibit compassion through their vocational calling. As it is often said, never assume. Compassionate care may disappear and become a victim due to stress, burden of care, or burnout.<sup>4</sup> The collaboration of Drs. Stephen Trzeciak and Anthony Mazzeoli's work pioneered as a hypothesis, in which they followed healthcare providers to identify compassionate interactions. These interactions were measured in a mere 40 seconds between healthcare provider and patient and they observed the actions favorably impacting patients' lives.<sup>5</sup> The effects of compassionate care were found to have positive boomerang effects for healthcare providers, and were a remedy for compassion fatigue and burnout.<sup>4,5,6,7</sup> This clinical inquiry related to compassion behaviors has shown significantly amplified patient outcomes, and reduced healthcare costs evident from powerful caring actions.<sup>4,5,6,7</sup>

#### **Open Heart, Open Mind, and Open Soul**

Compassionate communication is an excellent and effective manner to foster a culture of caring. Even if you are not a yogi practicing open heart poses daily, everyone can embrace a caring, open heart and mind. These qualities can influence a change of heart, or state of mind, even if we take just a few short, mindful breaths. It may come across as an easy skill set. Transforming heartfelt intentions into actions can still be challenging if not adopted as a purposeful habit. I challenge each of you, myself included, to start all future interactions or communications with an open heart and open mind. Being sincere and genuine, and closely listening to all sides of a story are essential. Intentional understanding and deep empathy create significant ripple effects to feel the power of compassion for one another.

I was recently reminded of two eloquent Japanese words: kaizen and shoshin, each of which has a valuable meaning. A kaizen mindset encompasses an open soul, encouraging personal betterment, harmonic actions, and regular ongoing improvement for oneself or organizational processes.<sup>8</sup> Shoshin, a Zen Buddhist term, means having a fresh or beginner's mind.<sup>9</sup> John Perricone, keynote speaker at the 41<sup>st</sup> ASPAN National Conference, shared an inspiring and uplifting presentation. He imparted his daily shoshin practice and philosophy in action by maintaining a fresh, beginner's mind and attitude.<sup>10</sup> Every day offers a blank slate and a fresh start. Each day we are graced with micro-opportunities to adopt novel ideas, such as communicating and practicing integration of an open heart, mindset, spirit, and soul.

#### **Body Language**

It is no secret: facial expressions and body language speak loud and clear. Our nonverbal interpersonal messaging and cues certainly do not require words to communicate a caring heart. A slightly tilted head

elicits more open and compassionate interactions. Share a smile with your kind eyes, even while sporting your facial mask. With a real smile, we have Duchenne eyes, engaging the orbicularis oculi muscle at the eyelid by squinting eyes, wrinkled skin at the eye corner or crow's feet, and elevated cheeks. A joyous smile promotes the release of "happy" endorphins.<sup>11</sup> When people share a mere 30% of intentional mutual eye contact, it authenticates trust and credibility.<sup>11</sup> The literature on communications shows that a range of 60-90% of our interactions are nonverbal.<sup>12</sup>

Nurses can offer daily understanding, and be impactful with empathy, effective communication, and compassionate touch to our patients. Compassionate nurses value bonding with patients through eye contact, therapeutic touch to provide comfort, establishing rapport, and by demonstrating genuine caring. Matching our verbal and nonverbal body language is essential to establish trust and respect. When the two behaviors do not mimic each other, a non-therapeutic barrier is created. Nurses are encouraged to develop a better understanding and self-awareness of their own, patients', and colleagues' nonverbal communications, cues, or gestures.<sup>12</sup>

As caring professional nurses, we can be reminded to share our servant and heart-centered legacy through a compassionate open heart, mind, and soul. Liberally give away your smile, with a head tilt and through squinting eyes. Each of us can offer a diverse, caring manner and meaningful purpose to those we touch daily. Caring and compassion matter to us all as a person, ASPAN member, and an excellent perianesthesia nurse!

For those readers who enjoy a powerful visual experience of understanding the difference between care and caring, review the video links in the last two references listed.<sup>13,14</sup>

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