



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Purpose: You Can Make a Difference

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Twilla Shrout, MBA, BSN, RN, CPAN, CAPA
ASPAN President 2013-2014

“In your own practice, do you ever think about your purpose?”

My presidential theme for this year is “Dealing with Challenges: Winning with Power, Practice, Purpose. Everyone has workplace and life challenges, but it is the way we each attempt to deal with these issues that creates or negates success. We need to ask ourselves how each of us can make a difference. All ASPAN members truly have an advantage by being a part of an organization that will provide guidance and advice, and answer questions through the Clinical Practice Network. ASPAN also has educational opportunities, and research opportunities along with the addition of the Joanna Briggs Institute to assist in finding evidence for perianesthesia practice. We can make a difference by sharing purposeful messages to those who ask questions, seek education or are looking for evidence-based information for their practice.

“Purpose” is defined as:

1. The reason for which something exists or is done, made, etc.
2. An intended or desired result, aim, goal.
3. Determination, resoluteness.
4. The subject in hand, point at issue.¹

It was that wisdom of 13 perianesthesia nurses who realized they had a purpose – to hold the first organizational meeting that led to where ASPAN is today.

The Mulberry Tree

A few months ago, I drove past a familiar site of days gone past. Driving back home from college, I would pass a farm that had a silo with a mulberry tree growing higher than the top of the silo. The purpose of a silo is to store silage made from the corn and green stalks that is chopped up for winter cattle feed. This farmer no longer used this brick silo for that purpose—but how did this tree survive the years to finally emerge past the top? Do any of us recognize our true purpose in life or work and ever reach our potential? How did this tree survive all those years to finally reach the top of the silo that stands at least 50 feet tall? I wonder how many years did it take for this seedling to take root and its leaves to finally reach towards the sunlight?

What is Your Purpose?

In your own practice, do you ever think about your purpose? It takes your own personal strengths, abilities and perseverance to meet your goals. Do you dream that someday you could attain growth that will lead to the rays of sunshine or glimmer of hope when you had reached your purpose in life? Growing year after year, waiting for the chance to reach the top—the top of the silo—when it would reveal the sunlight that would allow your leaves to grow? It was thirty nine years ago that I first drove past that tree. It still stands tall, just as ASPAN continues to raise the bar through its compelling vision to be “the leading association for perianesthesia education, nursing practice, standards and research.”²

We Are Like the Mulberry Tree

I believe each of us needs to take time to reflect on how WE can make a difference. ASPAN, the perianesthesia specialty organization, has over 15,000 members who have joined for their own personal reasons. Together, ASPAN gives all of us the stability to continue to grow from the foundation that it provides for each of us. ASPAN standards are the foundation, much like the roots of the mulberry tree that continues to reach for the sky from the confines of a brick silo where the limbs have no way to expand the diameter of the silo. The limbs can only grow upward, just like new ASPAN members need the support of the rest of the ASPAN members. We were all graduate nurses eager to learn while we waited to become registered nurses. As seasoned nurses, we need to be there for the new graduate to support each other with the goal of meeting the needs of our patients and families.

Passion and Purpose

Author Steve Pavlina writes about “The Meaning of Life: Discover Your Purpose.” He mentions one method that will assist you in defining your purpose. This method is to determine your emotional intelligence. “Passion and purpose go hand in hand. When you discover your purpose, you will normally find it’s something you’re tremendously passionate about. Emotionally, you will feel that it is correct.”³ This is certainly a true statement if you have ever attended an ASPAN national conference. It is such an invigorating experience to be in the same room with 1800 or more perianesthesia nurses. There you’ll find energy, hugs and a renewed feeling of purpose. We are all there to improve the care to our patients and families, and renew our own spirit of learning. I would encourage any perianesthesia nurse to come to just one national conference to see how fulfilling it is to be together with so many committed nurses, and to realize the hundreds of volunteer hours it takes to make ASPAN what it is today. It is with the input of so many members that allows ASPAN to grow just like the mulberry tree—reaching for the sky. ASPAN’s National Conference is truly an experience that invigorates attendees and reinforces their purpose and passion in becoming perianesthesia nurses.

Purpose to Action

Pavlina also writes about purpose to action. “The basic ideas are that you must align your purpose with your needs, abilities and desires. Your purpose tells you what you should do. Your needs (money, shelter, clothing) dictate what you must do. Your abilities (skills, talents, education) dictate what you can do. And your desires (enjoyable work, passion) dictate what you want to do. Taken individually, each of these areas will only point you in a general direction, but when you put them all together you’ll find it easier to set specific, practical goals. This way, you’ll be setting goals that help you fulfill your purpose, meet your needs, do what you love to do, and do what you’re really good at.”³ Perianesthesia nursing’s return on investment is that we are willing to share of our time through our hundreds of volunteer hours to have purposeful meaning to our practice. We all contribute through our sharing of knowledge and skills to be the premier source for perianesthesia information.

Conclusion

I could not end this article with only one of the following quotes---they were all worthy to be included:

“The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience.” - Eleanor Roosevelt

“You were put on this earth to achieve your greatest self, to live out your purpose, and to do it fearlessly.”
- Steve Maraboli

“The purpose of life is to contribute in some way to making things better.” - Robert F. Kennedy

“The purpose of life is a life of purpose.” - Robert Byrne⁴

ASPAN is the perianesthesia organization that “serves nurses practicing in all phase of preanesthesia and postanesthesia care, ambulatory surgery and pain management.”⁵ ASPAN members are the experts in perianesthesia practice and we determine how we are all winners in defining our specialty.

REFERENCES

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