



ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

Message from the President

Celebrate Strengths: Elevate Practice

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Let us celebrate the strength of ASPAN! It begins with the foundation of governance via the Representative Assembly that gives equal voice to every component. Every member can bring his/her concerns, ideas and suggestions to their respective component leadership. This is democracy in action.

The strength of ASPAN is found in the incredible work that supports all perianesthesia nurses. The *Perianesthesia Nursing Standards, Practice Recommendations and Interpretive Statements* book provides the working documents that defend safe practice in the many areas of perianesthesia nursing. In addition, ASPAN's liaisons reach out to other organizations whose practice may overlap with ours. We work with these groups, sharing expertise and best practices for perianesthesia patients, wherever these patients are located.

The Uniqueness of ASPAN and Perianesthesia Nurses

The strength of ASPAN is its perianesthesia nurses. Many of us started on a medical-surgical floor as new graduates, working our way to an intensive care unit and eventually to the PACU. The postanesthesia environment is fast-paced, with many patients, many of whom hardly remember us. Families are stressed waiting for their loved ones, so we take care of them as well. We toil day and night, with call in-between, to keep our patients safe. Many of our units are windowless, so we don't see the sun or moon. If this was the job description for perianesthesia nurses, no one would apply!

But, it is the camaraderie, support, friendships and teamwork present in this environment that makes our work in the PACU, ambulatory surgery and preoperative care areas all worthwhile. We all work towards the same goal and are ready to dig in to make it happen. Our environments lend themselves to supporting each other. But it must be more than that. There are other similar units in our hospitals that are small and unique, but that same camaraderie just doesn't exist in those places. Why are perianesthesia units so unique? I can tell you why. It is the strength of its nurses.

How Do You Identify Your Strengths?

Each nurse has unique strengths that have made us successful in our professional and personal lives. I would venture to suggest that many perianesthesia nurses have similar strengths. Do you know your own strengths? Are you curious about your strengths?

There are several ways to discern these strengths. You can ask those around you who know you well. They can articulate your strengths and identify those attributes at which you excel. You can do some introspection and identify those activities at which you are most happy or comfortable. You can think about what other people have asked you to do. These requests may be based on others' opinions of your strengths and successes. You can also identify your strengths using an online assessment tool, many of which are free. These tools ask you to complete a quiz, at the end of which you are given a report detailing your strengths. Think about reaching within yourself to discover your strengths.

My Own Self-Assessment

I was curious about my strengths, so I did an online assessment. The results were amazing. As I read each strength, I was totally astonished at the accurateness of the report's description of me. The summary indicated that I like lists and checking things off. This is so true. I will even add some activity to

the list I completed just so I can cross it off. The results indicated that I am also highly responsible, keeping commitments that I make. Feedback from colleagues reveals that I do what I will say I am going to do. Knowing my strengths allows me to put these skills to good use in my work and personal life.

The awareness of my strengths also gives me insight into my potential blind spots. Most of us are not strong in every aspect of life, so we need to keep in mind those areas in which we may need help. This is where knowing your colleagues' strengths is helpful. If I know that my colleague's strength is being visionary and that is not my strength, I can use that knowledge to improve the outcome. I would ask my colleague to offer suggestions on strategic planning or long-term goals so his/her strength could be utilized.

There are many arenas in which knowing strengths is beneficial. Perhaps your component Board of Directors would function smoother if you could identify each other's strengths. Or, use your strengths to apply for a new position or even become confident enough to move up to a leadership position. I suggest you identify your strengths and use them to benefit yourself, your patients and ASPAN. You just might be surprised at what you learn.