



# ASPAN

American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses

## Message from the President

### Dealing with Challenges: Using Your Own Personal Strength to Empower Yourself

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National Conference is a time of renewal and a gathering of ASPAN members ready to have a week of education, fun and new friendships. It is hard to believe that almost three months has passed since over 1800 attendees were in Chicago. The weather presented many challenges with flights being delayed or cancelled. I was fortunate that my family was able to finally arrive after they experienced four flight cancellations.

My theme for the year is “Dealing with Challenges: Winning with Power • Practice • Purpose.” ASPAN members have powerful voices when they utilize evidence-based knowledge in all areas of perianesthesia practice. Each member has a power within that enables us to be the best and safest nurse for our patients. Empowerment is something that, I like to think, makes this possible. Empowerment is “about how you see yourself, what you do with your life and how you relate to other people.”<sup>1</sup> These eight points should help you begin to discover the expert in yourself:

1. “Assess how you’ve lived your life in relation to your values. This is a painful process that you must get through if you want to feel empowered. Admit the dreams you haven’t fulfilled and figure out what’s stopping you.
2. Feel the control you have over your decisions. Empowerment isn’t about doing everything right. Create an environment where you can make your own decisions and grow from your mistakes.
3. Write down goals based on what you’ve always wanted to achieve in your life. Concentrate on one goal at a time. Assess what information and skills you’re missing.
4. Learn to let go of mistakes. Accept that they’re a gift because they show you when you’re on the wrong path. Be brave enough to change course, even when you have to admit you’re wrong.
5. Keep a journal where you record your growth. Write about your values and evaluate how well you stuck to them each day. Instead of reprimanding yourself for falling short, come up with creative ways you could have done better for next time.
6. Take time every week to assess your progress. Note how much closer you’re getting to achieving your dream. Hold back expectations and instead take joy in what you’ve accomplished.
7. Seek out others who’ll support you. Turn to family members who’ve always been on your side. Look for support groups in your community.
8. Give of yourself at least once a week. Empowerment is as much about sharing with others as it is about your self-esteem. Help a neighbor, donate to charity or volunteer. Be an inspiration to others around you.”<sup>1</sup>

With challenges comes a means of overcoming what may seem like an insurmountable task at hand, but through one’s own inner strength, many great things can be accomplished. To think that I was in front of a crowd of over one thousand nurses, giving my inaugural speech at the Conference’s Closing Ceremonies, is something that would have seemed overwhelming and impossible when I was growing up.

When I began first grade, only two of my classmates could understand me when I spoke. I had a severe speech impediment thought to be related to hearing loss when I was a toddler from recurrent tonsillitis and ear infections. It seemed that the hearing loss did not allow me to form the correct speech pattern. It was a

time when schools did not have a speech therapist. Thus, my mother drove me twenty miles twice a week for therapy at our cost.

When I was in second grade, it was determined that my speech was improving and I should be able to further improve on my own. This improvement did not happen. I was terrified to read aloud since our teachers had us do this numerous times a day. I would try to look ahead to the paragraph that I might read knowing the words that I could not pronounce. I knew there would be giggles and laughing when I did not say the words correctly. I would talk softly hoping that my classmates would not notice. Needless to say, I feared talking during school and did not want to raise my hand to answer questions because there were so many words that I could not pronounce.

One of the happiest days of my life occurred when I was in seventh grade. My oldest sister came home from college and announced that she planned to major in speech therapy. As she learned about speech therapy techniques, she would come home on weekends and help me with the words that I could not pronounce. Even with her help, I still went through high school and college afraid to talk during class, since I would sometimes still pronounce words incorrectly.

It has taken me a long time to feel comfortable in front of a crowd, even as I delivered presentations over the last few years. I was always very nervous. A few months ago, it hit me that I would be in front of over one thousand ASPAN members when I became the ASPAN president. I knew I needed to stand before the membership and give my speech or I would be letting the members down. That morning, I could not believe that I was not nervous while giving my address. I had an inner strength that came from a confidence of knowing that I would have the support of all of the members in the audience.

There is power that comes from the knowledge that one's professional organization provides all of us with the confidence to know that we are not alone. We are all here for one another to assist, mentor and share all that is right about ASPAN. I truly believe that none of my success would have been possible without the power of this organization. Power comes from within. Power comes from ASPAN's membership of over 15,500. Power comes from ASPAN members willing to volunteer numerous hours of dedication to ensure that ASPAN is the premier voice for all of us. Empowerment is that inner strength that comes from our willingness to put ourselves out there to be the one lending a helping hand, to be the one to call if you have questions.

To know that ASPAN has 15,500 members that are just a phone call or an email away from answering a question, providing a policy, or investigating the best and safest way to take care of patients during their perianesthesia experience is empowerment. I did not make it here on my own. I had the assistance from so many that made my journey possible, and who are now lifelong friends. I started out as that grassroots member who dreamed of what might be some day. Through perseverance and determination, my dream of being the ASPAN president has come true. "You have been blessed with immeasurable power to make positive changes in your life. But you can't just wish it, you can't just hope it, you can't just want it - you have to live it, be it, do it."<sup>2</sup> Through the power of ASPAN, I have been able to follow my dreams from being a grassroots member. ASPAN offers the same to all of you as each of you aspire to be the best you can be.

## REFERENCES

1. How to Be Empowered. Available at: [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2121554\\_be-empowered.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2121554_be-empowered.html). Accessed April 27, 2013.
2. Quote by Steve Maroboli. Available at: <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/dilute>. Accessed February 16, 2013.