

# Embracing Nursing Responsibilities to Mentoring

Submitted by the Nursing & Health Policy Committee:

Deborah Bach-Stante, BSN, MPH, MSW; Ramona Berry, MSA, BSN, RN; Holly Brooks, MSN, RN; Wanda Chukwu, DNP, MA, CNEcl, RN; Jessica Heacock, MSN, PMHNP-BC; Sarah Jennings, DNP, MPA, RN, NEA-BC; Kathleen Poindexter, PhD, RN, CNE, ANEF; Sandy Rye, BSN, RN; and Umeika Stephens, BSN, MSN-FNP, GC-PMHNP, DNP, GC Nursing Ed



There is an art to nursing that can't be found in a text or simulation. It's something more compassionate, more intuitive, and more holistic. It is a way of seeing and caring for our patients that has been passed down on with reverence through generations of nurses. This tradition of mentorship helps those just beginning their journey into what remains the nation's most trusted profession.

Mentorship takes many forms, from brief, informal relationships that guide novice nurses to longstanding advisory roles promoting career growth. At its core, Mentorship is a reciprocal relationship, inspiring both the beginner and expert to grow, find their voice and contribute to the future of nursing.

## Mentorship: A Historical Perspective

The concept of mentorship dates back over 2,700 years to Homer's *Odyssey*. In the poem, Mentor, a trusted friend of Odysseus, guided and cared for Odysseus' son, Telemachus, during his father's absence and thus, became the first "mentor." Over time, the term "mentor" became synonymous with a trusted advisor, coach, or role model who nurtures and supports others. (Venkatesa et al., 2023; APA, 2012).

The American Psychological Association (2012) defines a mentor as "an individual with expertise who can help develop the career of a mentee" (p. 5). Mentorship is a hallmark of nursing role transition, enabling novice nurses to develop not just skills, but the essence of what it means to be a nurse (Burgess et al., 2018; Nowell et al., 2017).

## The Importance of Mentoring

Mentorship benefits nurses at all career stages. New nurses often face significant challenges adapting to their roles, while experienced nurses transitioning to new departments or specialties also need guidance. A mentor's proficiency and support can ease these transitions by fostering confidence, teamwork, and a love for the profession.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges. Increased workloads and the rise of travel nursing left many novice nurses without mentors, leading to feelings of overwhelm and, in some cases, attrition from the field. To address these challenges, mentorship programs must be prioritized. By teaching, assisting, and inspiring newer nurses, experienced nurses ensure the sustainability of the profession while creating stronger healthcare teams.

## Mentorship Through the Lens of Self-Advocacy

Nurses often face significant emotional labor, including managing crises, witnessing suffering, and navigating workplace conflicts. These challenges were amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, further

straining nurses' mental health. Research has shown that understanding their rights to safe working conditions and learning to advocate for themselves are critical for nurses at all levels (Ross, 2024). Mentorship plays a vital role in this process by modeling effective self-advocacy and resilience.

Experienced nurses can guide novice nurses in managing emotional demands, fostering an environment where questions are welcomed, mistakes are learning opportunities, and professional growth is supported.

## Career Advancement Through Mentorship

Effective mentorship fosters skill development, networking, and professional growth. Mentees benefit from their mentors' expertise, gaining insights into clinical skills, decision-making, and navigating complex healthcare environments. In return, mentors often find opportunities for their own growth through the fresh perspectives their mentees provide.

Research highlights the career benefits of mentorship:

- Nurses with mentors are more likely to stay in the profession (Zhang et al., 2019).
- Hospitals with mentorship programs report increased career optimism and loyalty among their nurses (Gong et al., 2017).

By creating a culture of mentorship, healthcare organizations can improve nurse retention, job satisfaction, and patient outcomes.

## Mentorship Can Open Up Doors

To meet the diverse needs of nurses, programs like ANA-Michigan's mentorship program and the American Nurses Association's virtual mentoring program offer valuable resources. For example: ANA-MI's program connects experienced mentors with nurses who have less than five years of experience.

ANA's virtual program offers both long-term mentoring (minimum of eight months) and flash mentoring for time-sensitive needs. These programs provide tailored support for nurses, whether they are seeking guidance for career transitions or addressing acute challenges.

Additional resources and community spaces for mentorship are available through ANA's online platforms:

- <https://community.ana.org/pages/mentorprogram?ssopc=1>
- <https://mentorship.nursingworld.org/>

## Benefits of Mentorship—Building Confidence, Communication Skills, and Teamwork

Mentorship strengthens confidence, communication, and teamwork for both mentees and mentors. Through open dialogue and trust, mentors provide a realistic view of nursing's responsibilities while encouraging mentees to explore innovative approaches to problem-solving. Mentees gain a supportive foundation to navigate

complex healthcare environments, while mentors gain the satisfaction of shaping the next generation of nurses.

## Why You Should Consider Becoming Involved

If the ANA-Michigan mentor program is not a fit for you, ANA has developed a virtual mentoring program with two separate tracks. The first, which provides a minimum of 8 months of 1 hour a week mentoring to nurses with less than 15 years of experience, is designed to help nurses explore making career transitions or dealing with long-term challenges and stressors. The second track, a flash mentoring program, is designed to provide time-constrained nurses with any experience with short-term mentoring (1-3 sessions) for an acute need.

## Conclusion

Nursing mentorship is essential to fostering personal and professional growth in today's challenging healthcare environment. By sharing their expertise, mentors empower novice nurses to adapt to the high demands of the profession, reduce stress, and build confidence. For the nursing profession to thrive, mentorship must remain a cornerstone, providing the support and guidance needed to meet the evolving needs of patients and healthcare systems. ■

## References

- American Nurses Association (ANA) Community. (2023). *Welcome to ANA's Mentoring Program*. <https://community.ana.org/pages/mentorprogram?ssopc=1>
- American Nurses Association (ANA) Mentoring Hub. (2023). *Mentoring Resources for RNs*. <https://mentorship.nursingworld.org/pages/7788?src=tab>
- American Psychological Association. (2012). *Introduction to mentoring: A guide for mentors and mentees*. <https://www.apa.org/education-career/grad/mentoring>
- Burgess, A., van Diggele, C., & Mellis, C. (2018). Mentorship in the health professions: a review. *The Clinical Teacher*, 15(3), 197–202. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.12756>.
- Gong, Z., Van Swol, L. M., & Wang, X. (2022). Study on the Relationship between Nurses' Mentoring Relationship and Organizational Commitment. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(20). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192013362>
- Homer. (1919). *The Odyssey*. London: New York :W. Heinemann; G.P. Putnam's sons. [JaNW1]
- Ross, C. A. (2024). "It's a Thing": What Nurse Elders Believe Novice Nurses Need to Know About Managing Emotional Labour. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 56(4), 406–417. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08445621241272622>
- Zhang, Y., Huang, X., Xu, S., Xu, C., Feng, X., & Jin, J. (2019). Can a one-on-one mentorship program reduce the turnover rate of new graduate nurses in China? A longitudinal study. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 40, 102616 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2019.08.010> [JaNW1]This is what I found for the reference. Murray, A. T. (Ed.). (1927). *The Odyssey* (Vol. 1). Harvard University Press.