

Preparing the Next Generation of Nurse Leaders: Lessons Learned

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Over the course of my nursing career, I often reflect back on the many mentors who have helped to mold my nursing career and set the standard for succession planning within the profession. As one of the predicted thousands of nurse leaders to retire within the next 10 years, I want to ensure that the future generations of nurse leaders will have instilled in them similar values and high standards of nursing leadership that I learned from my mentors along the way.

I think many of us would agree that nurse leaders are not born, but developed through appropriate selection balanced with mentorship, coaching and education. There is so much in the literature about development of emerging nurse leaders. However, when I reflect on the talented role models I was fortunate to have guide my 37-year transformation from a bedside nurse to an organization's top nurse leader, I believe the most valuable lesson taught was learning how to be resilient in the face of adversity and change.

Nursing is full of challenges that more times than not make nurses want to leave the profession, but developing resilience will give you the strength to tackle problems head-on, overcome adversity and ultimately determine how you succeed in this ever-changing healthcare environment. A resilient mindset is not only essential to successful leadership, but enables us to embrace the vast opportunities our profession provides.

Brené Brown, author of the new bestselling book, "Rising Strong," suggests that resilient people view a difficulty as a challenge, not as a paralyzing event. They look at their failures and mistakes as lessons to be learned from, and as opportunities for growth. They don't view them as a negative reflection on their abilities or self-worth. Here are 10 tips from the experts that can help you to become more resilient in your leadership during tough times:

1. Build positive beliefs in your abilities and focus on your signature strengths.
2. Find a sense of purpose in your work and life every day.
3. Develop a strong supportive network of family, friends and professional colleagues.
4. Embrace change as inevitable and recognize what is in your control and what is not.
5. Stay optimistic in the face of dark periods in your life – believe that things will get better and brighter days are ahead.
6. Nurture yourself with the right foods, exercise, recreation and sleep.
7. Develop your problem-solving skills to overcome challenges.
8. Establish small and achievable goals.
9. Practice thought awareness so you don't get into a cycle of negative thoughts.
10. Maintain perspective – don't blow a setback out of proportion – instead learn from it.

If I can leave future generations of nurse leaders with one Pearl of Wisdom that I gained from those before me, it would be to learn how to develop resiliency and choose the path of role modeling this each and every day for your future generation of nurse leaders.

References

- Brown, B. (2015). *Rising Strong*. New York: Spiegel and Grau.
- Wicks, R. (2009). *Bounce: Living the resilient life*. Oxford University Press.