Sustaining Gratitude in Practice
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Objectives
• 1. Explore definitions, sources, and types of gratitude
• 2. Share personal definitions and stories of gratitude
• 3. Explore personal gratitude practices
• 4. Link personal gratitude practice with professional nursing practice
• 5. Highlight importance of gratitude practice to patient-centered care and the nurse-patient relationship

Introductions

Gratitude
• Gratitude has been defined as a trait, an action, an emotion, and as a moral virtue that exhibits an inherent thankfulness (Gulliford, Morgan & Kristjánsson, 2013; Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Gratitude has also been described as more than just a feeling. It is power to evoke focus, and motivation to act in kindness (Froh et al., 2010).

Practicing gratitude
• Personal stories of gratitude
• Personal gratitude practice – What are you already doing?
  • Barriers
  • Facilitators

Gratitude in practice...
• The evidence for personal-centered care and the nurse-patient relationship
  • From a patient perspective, gratitude is part of the inherent foundation for the patient-nurse relationship (Molina, Fonseca, Waidman, & Marcon, 2009); however, gratitude can also be important for the caregiver.
  • Psychological literature is abundant with research that indicates gratitude is associated with increased mood, self-esteem, well-being, happiness and life satisfaction (Toepfer, Cichy & Peters, 2011; Watkins, Woodward, Stone & Kolts, 2003; Sun & Kong, 2013).
  • Gratitude interventions predict job satisfaction, increase meaningfulness and engagement in the classroom, and can ignite a passion for helping others (Baxter, Johnson & Bean, 2012; Flinchbaugh, Moore, Chang & May, 2012; Froh, Bono & Emmons, 2010; Waters, 2012).
Further evidence for practicing gratitude

- Bauer, Sterzinger, Koepke, & Spiessl (2013) observed that gratitude modified caregiver burden for providers of care for people with mental illness.
- Landgren & Hallström (2011) observed the same for parents caring for infants with colic.

Gratitude is an important coping mechanism for nurses serving in high stress environments such as emergency medical practice (Romanzini & Bock, 2010), and palliative care (Ferrell, 2013).

Gratitude has been associated with self-awareness, connectedness, and relationships that are profound and meaningful (Hlavá & Effer, 2014).

Meaningful person-centered relationships may impact positive outcomes and overall well-being for both patients and nurses (Entwistle & Watt, 2013; Lusk & Fater, 2013).

Sustaining gratitude in practice

- Gratitude Exercises/Reflections –
  - What does it mean to you to be "thankful"?
  - Have you received unexpected help recently with a personal or professional struggle? Without using the words grateful, gratitude or thankful, how did you feel? How can you “pay it forward”?
  - In what ways are you fortunate? Make a list of 10 things you are grateful for in your life. Include people and things, events and experiences, both past and present.
  - Write a letter of gratitude to the person or “experience” that you are most thankful for helping you to develop into the nurse that you are today. If your letter is to a person, mail your letter of appreciation.
  - It's easy to feel gratitude when everything is going our way. But what happens when we do not get everything we want?
  - Gratitude Actions/Practices -
    - Mindful handwriting
    - Pick up that penny
    - And more!

References (continued)

“IF THE ONLY PRAYER YOU EVER SAY IN YOUR ENTIRE LIFE IS THANK YOU, IT WILL BE ENOUGH.”

MEISTER ECKHART