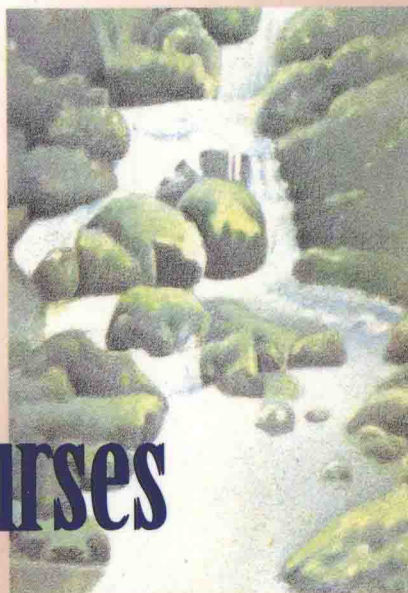


NURSE AS HEALER

Series Editor • Lynn Keegan

Healing Life's Crises

A Guide for Nurses



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Healing Life's Crises

A Guide for Nurses

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**I N T R O D U C T I O N
T O N U R S E A S
H E A L E R S E R I E S**

LYNN KEEGAN, PhD, RN, Series Editor

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To nurse means to care for or to nurture with compassion. Most nurses begin their formal education with this ideal. Many nurses retain this orientation after graduation, and some manage their entire careers under this guiding principle of caring. Many of us, however, tend to forget this ideal in the hectic pace of our professional and personal lives. We may become discouraged and feel a sense of burnout.

Throughout the past decade I have spoken at many conferences with thousands of nurses. Their experience of frustration and failure is quite common. These nurses feel themselves spread as pawns across a health care system too large to control or understand. In part, this may be because they have forgotten their true roles as nurse-healers.

When individuals redirect their personal vision and empower themselves, an entire pattern may begin to change. And so it is now with the nursing profession. Most of us conceptualize nursing as much more than a vocation. We are greater than our individual roles as scientists, specialists, or care deliverers. We currently search for a name to put on our new conception of the empowered nurse. The recently introduced term *nurse-healer* aptly describes the qualities of an increasing number of clinicians, educators, administrators, and nurse practitioners. Today all nurses are awakening to the realization that they have the potential for healing.

It is my feeling that most nurses, when awakened and guided to develop their own healing potential, will function both

as nurses and healers. Thus, the concept of nurse as healer is born. When nurses realize they have the ability to evoke others' healing, as well as care for them, a shift of consciousness begins to occur. As individual awareness and changes in skill building occur, a collective understanding of this new concept emerges. This knowledge, along with a shift in attitudes and new kinds of behavior, allows empowered nurses to renew themselves in an expanded role. The Nurse As Healer Series is born out of the belief that nurses are ready to embrace guidance that inspires them in their journeys of empowerment. Each book in the series may stand alone or be used in complementary fashion with other books. I hope and believe that information herein will strengthen you both personally and professionally, and provide you with the help and confidence to embark upon the path of nurse-healer.

Titles in the Nurse As Healer Series:

Healing Touch: A Resource for Health Care Professionals

Healing Life's Crises: A Guide for Nurses

The Nurse's Meditative Journal

Healing Nutrition

Healing the Dying

Awareness in Healing

Creative Imagery in Nursing

D E D I C A T I O N

*The authors dedicate this work to
Linda Hunter, MSN, RN, who shared her work,
life, and friendship with us while she taught us
how to live life and approach death.*

P R E F A C E

As part of the Nurse As Healer series, this book provides the practicing nurse with a new look at the concept of “crisis intervention.” In the literature, crisis intervention is used to describe the nursing/health care responses to clients in some kind of emergency situation. Typically, nurses think of crises as those situations requiring immediate counseling, usually counseling of a short-term nature. Nurses involved in crisis hotlines provide support to those under stress resulting from assault and trauma, physical abuse, depression, and suicidal ideation. Nurses on crisis teams in the community respond to calls from distressed families and individuals. Nurses in emergency departments become skilled in handling the anxieties and stress associated with accidents and injuries. In acute care settings, nurses care for clients undergoing treatment for numerous medical conditions resulting in an upset or upheaval of the person’s life. Thus, nurses see these situations as the unusual events in an individual’s life, the unexpected situations that leave the clients and their families coping with unanticipated consequences.

Although most nurses have developed the skills in helping clients cope with crises, a nurse as *healer* will go beyond the immediate crisis or precipitating event to understand the crisis event in terms of the whole client. For years, nurses have observed that a crisis is in the eye of the beholder: that is, a particular situation will be a crisis for one individual and not for another. Starting from this observation, we will examine the crisis as a natural event of living as well as an unusual one. We will consider which skills for living aid one in facing the inevitable,

unpredictable, and critical occurrences that change the course of one's life, work, and/or relationships. From this perspective, nurses are invited to explore the meanings of living, growing, and changing as we look in-depth at individuals' efforts to order, control, and make sense of their experiences.

This book is organized into four parts: an introduction to the meaning of a crisis as a challenge; an evaluation of crisis in relation to body, mind, and spirit; a look at special client situations; and lastly, an examination of specific tools for dealing with crises.

Chapter 1 introduces the idea of a crisis as a challenge and explores the various ways in which crisis presents and affects the person as a whole. The Modeling and Role-Modeling nursing theory is introduced as a basis for holistic nursing care. Chapter 2 examines the challenges of physical illness. Through understanding of the experience of illness, nurses are assisted in facilitating successful resolution of crisis events for their clients. Chapter 3 examines situations where persons perceive mental anguish and evaluate the subjective experiences of such events. From the understanding gleaned, the authors consider nursing interventions useful to assist clients dealing mentally with difficult situations and events. Chapter 4 provides nurses with a picture of how to identify and care for a client experiencing a spiritual crisis. Issues addressed include: What constitutes the spiritual component of a person? How is the spiritual component related to health? When is there evidence of a spiritual crisis? What is the nursing role in spiritual care? Chapter 5 addresses the special situation of the client who is dying. This chapter explores the role of caregivers in assisting dying clients through the crisis of dying, employing techniques of healing rather than of curing. Chapter 6 focuses on the special considerations of the client facing a significant loss. The definitions of grieving and the subjective experience of grief are presented, along with suggestions for appropriate and sensitive interventions. Chapter 7 examines families from a perspective of family theory and family development, as well as from nursing theory. Nurses are frequently called upon to assist families facing crises. Approaches for assessment and interventions are presented. To address tools for preventing crises in nurses' lives, chapter 8 evaluates organizations from the perspective of nursing theory and discusses how organizations work and what can be done to affect positive change. Chapter 9

provides information on conflict resolution. Written by Mr. Evan Ferber, Executive Director of the Dispute Resolution Center of Thurston Co., Olympia, WA, this chapter examines interpersonal and multiparty conflict as stressors that contribute to disease. Practical working models of community-based conflict resolution are introduced for nurses to use in their own self-care, as well as referral sources for clients.

Throughout the book, the authors recognize that life's challenges produce crises for individuals and groups. We believe that positive nursing interventions can help to heal and can assist others in finding peace and health in their lives.

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

The authors wish to acknowledge our teachers, students, and colleagues who have helped us understand the holism of nursing. Particularly, we thank Dr. Helen Erickson, whose work and enthusiasm for nursing have provided great motivation, and Professor Marshelle Thobaben for her assistance in the review of this manuscript. We thank Bob Boden, RN, who assisted with the graphics. We also thank Stephanie Ericsson for publishing her personal account of grief, which provided us the ability to learn and, ultimately, to support others.

Lastly, we acknowledge the dual muses of Art and Music who provide lasting inspiration for our lives.

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Part

1

**CRISIS,
A DEFINITION
AND NEW
UNDERSTANDING**

1

THE CRISIS AS
ONE OF LIFE'S
CHALLENGES

Nurses are often called upon to deal with crises. In any given day, a nurse may face crisis in the staffing schedule, crisis for the patient with a disturbing diagnosis, crisis for the family victimized by assault, crisis for the teenager suffering from an accident, or crisis for the patient contemplating suicide. These examples are typical of the crises encountered at work. In addition to these, of course, nurses will face their own individual crises, such as failed babysitting arrangements, cars that do not work, minor health problems, and the inability to complete a day's work in a day. Further, as members of society, nurses are constantly reminded of crisis situations around the world—crises of the environment, the economy, and politics of the world. Nurses may rightly feel that enough is enough and that they cannot be responsible for resolving all of the crises that surround them. Indeed, nurses may find that dealing with their own crises leaves them with little energy or interest left to devote to uncovering additional crises from patients or others.

To experience crisis is to experience anxiety. A crisis is an unexpected situation that upsets a plan. As such, a crisis leaves a person out of control, often in a state of powerlessness. A crisis may leave one angry as well, for when something doesn't