

THE LEARNING PATH OF A CARITAS COACH NURSE

–DIANE POULIOS, MA, RN, CHCR,
AHN-BC, CARITAS COACH

In this chapter, Diane invites us to explore caritas literacies. These serve as a guide to seeing self, others, and the world as whole, valued, and interconnected. Emphasizing all ways of knowing, Diane explores how integrating this approach into her interviewing practices and hiring decisions helps to ensure a good fit for the organization. Finally, Diane shares her experiences incorporating a spiritual dimension into her caring-healing practice. This adds an element of the sacred to the purpose, intentions, and actions of the Caritas CoachSM and serves as a professional development guide for all healthcare professionals.

DIANE'S CARITAS JOURNEY

For me, the key part of the question, “What does it mean to be and become a Caritas Coach?” is not the label “Caritas Coach,” but the words *be* and *become*. Being and becoming define the dynamic ongoing process of Caring Science.

One does not merely study Caring Science, learn its principles and dimensions, and suddenly possess the ability to manifest competency as a Caritas Coach. The evolution of a Caritas Coach is not linear. Rather, it is an inward journey of winding roads that lead to new ways of thinking, feeling, and becoming. The journey invites an exploration of previously held ideas about self and the world. These ideas are figuratively tossed up into the universe and allowed to float back down and realign, enabling us to reinterpret our beliefs and stories through new eyes and wisdom. In this way we become a slowly transformed and transforming spirit.

As we integrate this knowledge with our spirituality and beliefs about self, the world, and our higher power, this caring-loving energy finds a home in our heart. So as we live Caring Science, it creates a foundation of meaning and living—framed in pan-dimensional time, language, creativity, and love—that reflects a new life, spirit, and philosophy, and a renewed relationship with the world. As Watson writes, “Caring and love ultimately become one...we are all called to care, and it is through the energy of Love that we reach out to the universe of possibilities to connect with Other, nature and that which is greater and more magnificent than our isolated separate, physical-ego existence alone” (Watson, 2005, p. 54).

Of course this is not to say the transition is easy. We struggle with previously held beliefs. This new way of being and becoming is organically tested, challenged, and sometimes masked as we enter each helical turn of change, growth, and understanding. Rogers defines the world as manifesting a helical pattern of increasing complexity and diversity of energetic frequencies. As the helix turns there is a downward spiral that is inherent in the process of transformation (Rogers, 1988). This explains the meaning of being and becoming.

Transformation is a process of stepping back, letting go, acknowledging self, and eventually moving forward with the new. There is often conflict before transformation. Internal turmoil ensues when we pause to challenge and make sense of new ways of thought. This all occurs before the backdrop of the universe itself, which—seen or unseen—is changing as well. Chaos and conflict come before clarity and unity. Anguish comes before joy.

Being and becoming is the dynamic nature of life and part of what it means to be human. The universe has given us the gift of being conscious of this process, especially if we allow ourselves to be active rather than passive as we journey through it. My ninth grade English teacher challenged the class to write without using the verb “to be” in any form due to what he felt was its inactive and passive nature. He believed there were more descriptive and powerful verbs. Upon reflection as I have undergone the process of being and becoming, I wish he would have allowed responsive discourse regarding this statement. He could have dedicated time to discussing the dynamic nature, power, and use of the verb “to be” in all its conjugations. *Being* can have great meaning.

As a Caritas Coach I am introduced to ways of thinking and being, as well as to practices and methods that are considered unconventional in the Western world. For example, Westerners learn of Newton’s third law of motion, which states that for every action (or change) there is an equal and opposite reaction (Newton, 1687). This universal phenomenon is evident and organic. In contrast, a Caritas Coach influences self, others, and the world by integrating and preserving space to allow for a different kind of process not beholden to conventional paradigms. We do this by identifying with another person’s story, synchronizing with one’s life story, and withholding judgment. We help draw connections, identify patterns, create resonance, and guide one toward emergent readiness. In other words, a Caritas Coach encourages new ways of thinking within the Newtonian law of time and action-reaction. The coach faithfully trusts that in this process, a higher good unfolds. The inherent nature of this process is dynamic, emergent, and without hierarchical force (Watson, 2005). When one resonates with this unique caring

way of perceiving the world, one is less inclined to revert to the conventional pure Newtonian way of thinking and being.

HEALING HUMANITY WITH UNIVERSAL COMPASSION

I have always felt a strong connection to God or a higher divine force that allows us to surrender to its goodness and love. This inspirational and loving energy spoke forcefully to my heart and soul, calling me to nursing as a child. I understood from a young age that I was meant to serve and care for others. My soul was drawn to a universal compassion for humanity.

As a graduate nursing student, I became interested in the science of unitary human beings, a nursing worldview espoused by Dr. Martha Rogers. This worldview is an integral part of Watson's science of human caring. This led me to study complementary healing arts such as therapeutic touch, craniosacral therapy, reflexology, shiatsu, creative visualization, and the relaxation response.

I began using these modalities to help cancer patients in hospitals. One was a young female colon cancer patient who was experiencing great pain and anxiety after surgery. I described to her the healing effects of therapeutic touch and asked if she'd like me to administer it to her. She agreed to receive the treatment. After 10 minutes of treatment, the patient smiled. She was amazed by her experience during the treatment. She told me that during the treatment she saw colors and felt a much-needed sense of healing peace. Interestingly I had seen the same colors. We also shared a sense of time as pan-dimensional. Although the treatment lasted only 10 minutes, we both felt we had experienced a healing moment that was much longer.

In contrast, I once cared for a young female patient who had been surgically dismembered during treatment for sarcoma (with little attention to her spirit). This was years before I studied Caring Science. It seemed that during her entire hospital stay, she simply lay in her

bed and cried. Her suffering was so extreme, no one quite knew how to *be* with her. Years later, after I had studied Caring Science, and a philosophy of healing and practice of unconditional love had crystallized in my mind, I wondered how healing that patient's experience could have been if she'd had a caritas nurse alongside her!

Whether at the point of care, while teaching, or while recruiting staff, Caring Science provides a foundation to actualize true nursing. The theory is clear, foundational, dynamic, focused, and ever evolving to include new ways of knowing and understanding humanity and the world. Nurses help others make sense of critical experiences in ways other professionals may not. Healing humanity is at the core of nursing. Now more than ever, Caring Science illuminates the true essence of nursing and provides the best home in which the nursing spirit and heart can dwell. "It is life giving and life receiving" (Watson, 2008, p. 58).

CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF OPENNESS AND HONESTY

I work as a nurse recruiter. As part of my job I interview candidates for placement. The purpose of any job interview is to provide the candidate with an opportunity to research the hiring organization and to enable the interviewer or recruiter to assess whether the candidate is the right fit for the organization (and vice versa). Whether someone is the right fit depends on whether he or she resonates with the organization on a mental, moral, and clinical level. Various factors come into play, such as skill set, accountability, leadership abilities, values, personality, energy, culture, and beliefs about nursing practice.

Naturally, candidates often feel nervous or unsure when they enter the interview room. This can jeopardize open communication. To combat this I have taken several steps. One is to create a relaxed environment. Our environment and the living entities within it can be defined in terms of energy and energy waves. Huisman,

Morales, Van Hoof, and Kort (2012) show that the intentional use of color, nature, and aromas can influence this energy, as they all translate into healing frequencies. With this evidence in mind, we painted the interview room a soft green—the color of life, renewal, and groundedness—and hung images of ocean scenes on the wall. We also infuse the room with a relaxing lavender aroma. Finally, the room contains figurines that relate to nursing or to universal kindness and caring, including one of Florence Nightingale. Simply put, our environment affects how we feel and therefore how we communicate. The more relaxed the environment, the more open candidates feel to communicate their true selves (Chesser, 2017).

My own energy also affects each interview. I'm a sentient and pan-dimensional being. Therefore, I am an integral part of my environment and those around me (Rogers, 1970). As a Caritas Coach, I am obligated to use Caring Science in all my interactions—including interviews. That means exhibiting both transpersonal caring and *transpersonal presence*. Transpersonal caring is the transformational integration of caring energies between living entities with an intention to help or to heal. It “invites full loving kindness and equanimity of presence of another...that can be a turning point in one's life” for all entities involved (Watson, 2008, p. 79). To possess transpersonal presence, one must first be intentionally present with self.

To achieve this—and to shift the field toward wholeness, goodwill, and healing—I begin each day with a meditative prayer. This helps me to center myself so I can create caring relationships with others while feeling loved and cared for. I hold a positive intention to smile at others and show kindness to all with whom I interact. I also take deep breaths to center myself before an interview. Research shows that mindful breathing establishes a synchronicity in the body between the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems, resulting in calm and focus (Benson & Proctor, 2010). Finally, I greet candidates with a warm smile. I welcome them by saying, “It's an honor to meet you” and by offering water, almost as a blessing. Manifesting transpersonal caring brings down barriers and creates an atmosphere of open and honest dialogue and transformation.

During the interview itself, I use all ways of knowing. Our interview questionnaire and evaluation form are rooted in Watson's science of human caring and the 10 Caritas Processes. For example, we ask the candidate to "describe the experience(s) in your life that has affected the way in which you view humanity or has influenced your reason for being in this world." This question often takes candidates by surprise. However, they do not hesitate to share their stories in response. One candidate explained that her father died in her arms, and she believed she could "speak" to him every day by becoming a nurse. Another question asks candidates to describe someone in their profession they admire and the impact that person has had on their life and development. When asked, this question evokes feelings of gratitude and honor. The interview questions are open-ended to encourage self-reflection and to help to reveal each candidate's higher self. Patterns, commonalities, and transformational experiences often unfold. This transpersonal process, made possible by authentic communication and caring literacy, enhances my ability to determine a good fit—or a resonance between the energies of the candidate and that of the organization. Interestingly, the limited 30-minute interview time frame often seems to expand and contract in response to the ebb and flow of the interview.

CARING LITERACY: A GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One cannot manifest transpersonal caring without calling on caring literacy. Caring literacy is how we put Caring Science into action.

I live and breathe Caring Science. It is who I am. I progress from living in the world to witnessing it, experiencing it, and understanding it, as I become more fully myself—a self that is constantly evolving, just like the world around me. I don't think of it as constantly chasing myself as I strive for progress—rather, I feel as if

I am enveloping myself in acceptance and love, which encourages further becoming. Caring literacy integrates an evolving emotional intelligence, consciousness, intentionality, sensitivity, and efficacy that cultivate skills and awareness of loving-kindness integral to one's professional being (Watson, 2008). Through caring literacy, I have been able to express my soul and spirit to all I encounter. How I present myself is a direct reflection of my relationship to the world. If Caring Science is my spiritual essence, then I can be beautiful, and so can the world and people around me.

I use caring literacy as a guide for my professional development. Indeed, my quest for caring literacy has fused with an interest in holistic health coaching. In addition to becoming a Caritas Coach, I have also become a certified holistic health coach. This provides me with another way to offer one-on-one or group healing and love to others. Caring Science works as a backdrop to interpret the holistic health program, while caring literacy provides me with an implementation method—a way to practice Caring Science in various facets of my work and my life.

I also work with others to provide caring-healing classes to nurses throughout our system. These 1-day classes cover holistic nursing, self-care, and the importance of viewing the world and our patients through the lens of Caring Science. Through the class we reawaken our nurses to why they went into nursing, as well as the importance of their roles and influences in the world. Most importantly, these classes introduce the concept of transpersonal caring and loving presence. It is a powerful program for self-care and affirmation. Helping to create, develop, and present this program has been a great expression of my own love for the nursing profession. I'm proud that our nursing leadership understands how important this is and desires to help our nurses feel valued and cared for!

PERSONAL DISCOVERY OF BEAUTY AND UNIVERSAL LOVE

Self-reflection and self-awareness do not always come easily. Critiquing oneself takes courage and skill. Often it is painful. But intentionally opening ourselves to greater awareness is both enriching and transformational.

As a young teen, I spent one summer away from my family while working on a ranch in Colorado. I didn't know anyone else there, nor was there anyone else my age. Although I was excited about being away, I missed my family. To ease my yearning for their presence, I took frequent walks in the mountains. Through self-reflection during these walks I realized how dear my parents were to me and how lucky I was to be their daughter. I also witnessed the magnificent beauty of our world. I felt a oneness with God or spirit that was beyond articulation. I felt soothed by my abundant thoughts of gratitude and the nature that lovingly embraced me. The warm wind against my cheeks and the blue-purple sky were sacred to me.

I began to look forward to my daily sacred walks of prayer and comforting beauty. Nature offered me strength and purpose as I performed my housekeeping chores at the ranch. This experience made me feel at one with the universe, and my spirit soared to places it had never been before. Although I felt like a small being in the midst of grandeur, I did not feel insignificant. I was part of a living entity that needed me as much as I needed it in order to be whole. What I felt, I realized, was love. "Such becomingness makes sense within a pan-dimensional framework of unfolding patterns in human time" (Poulios, 1997, p. 230).

I returned home wiser and calmer. I felt sustained. My experience had a harmonious lingering presence. This transcendental feeling of love stayed with me through college, on my wedding day, at my first job, and when I gave birth. It was a gift. It nourished me and those around me on my life journey. It only takes one person to change the

energy of a room, and it only takes one person to shift how others experience the world toward love and harmony. These miracles in life that seem small have far greater influence than our awareness permits.

We can draw on these moments of peace and love at will. The divine engages, loves, and comforts upon request through prayer and meditation. Sometimes a feeling of divine energy comes without warning through the transcending language of music or nature. Through self-reflection and the awareness of being connected with the divine, I have faith that I will always be comforted and guided through life.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

My journey as a Caritas Coach started when I discovered my path to nursing as a young girl. Learning about Caring Science, experiencing healing moments of lingering presence, and realizing that love and caring are organically symbiotic requires a shift from a closed way of thinking to one that is open and accepting. As we dwell in this space, we become embodied by a way of living, being, and becoming that reflects peace and connection with a greater good. My path reflects the wonder, experiences, and challenges of illuminating the life of a caritas nurse. It is not a point in time but a flowing existence of constant unfolding along a path of caring for humanity, self, and the world. I embrace and wonder at this path every day. “Today, open your mind, your heart, and your life to that which you don’t yet know, that you might contain that which is greater than yourself” (Cahn, 2016, p. 1).

REFERENCES

- Benson, H., & Proctor, W. (2010). *Relaxation revolution: The science and genetics of mind body healing*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Cahn, J. (2016). *The book of mysteries*. Lake Mary, FL: Frontline.
- Chesser, J. (2017). *Human resources management in a hospitality environment*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Huisman, E. R. C. M., Morales, E., Van Hoof, J., & Kort, H. S. M. (December 2012). Healing environment: A review of the impact of physical environmental factors on users. *Building and Environment*, 58, 70–80.
- Newton, I. (1687). *Philosophiæ naturalis principia mathematica (mathematical principles of natural philosophy)*. London, UK: Imprimature Press.
- Poulios, D. A. (1997). A celebration of unitary human beings: Becoming a mother. In M. Madrid (Ed.), *Patterns of Rogerian knowing* (p. 230). New York, NY: National League for Nursing Press.
- Rogers, M. E. (1970). *An introduction to the theoretical basis of nursing*. Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis Co.
- Rogers, M. E. (1988). Nursing science and art: A prospective. *Nursing Science Quarterly*, 1(3), 99–102.
- Watson, J. (2005). *Caring science as sacred science*. Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis Co.
- Watson, J. (2008). *Nursing: The philosophy and science of caring* (rev. ed.). Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.