

Nurse educators should use pedagogies of kindness and hope to teach nursing students' compassion

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The study by Younas and Maddigan [1] Proposing a policy framework for nursing education for fostering compassion in nursing students: A critical review, focused on the cultivation of the quality of compassion in nursing students. While these authors conducted a credible literature review that led to a conclusion that nurse educators should use a range of approaches to teaching students' compassion, they did not articulate what those approaches could be. The purpose of this commentary is to address this gap by proposing a theoretical foundation to guide educators who are seeking strategies for teaching student nurses how to infuse their care with compassion. Examples of some art-inspired learning activities that are congruent with the theoretical underpinnings proposed are outlined.

Pedagogies that nurture compassion in nursing students feature the values of care, compassion, and empathy as key elements. For instance, nurse educators who espouse a pedagogy of kindness [2,3], or a pedagogy of hope [4], encourage students to feel worthy as human beings and to experience a sense of kinship and community with others.

A pedagogy of kindness is a teaching philosophy guided by kindness, compassion, and care [5,6]. The use of kindness, which includes care and empathy, as a teaching approach in higher education positively influences learning environments and learner outcomes and favorably impacts learners' feelings of self-worth [2]. Feeling valued and worthwhile helps nursing students appreciate and value others (like the patients they care for).

A Pedagogy of Hope encourages community, kinship, and unity with others, both in the academy and the outside world [4]. Students and educators work together as equal partners in a learning environment that expands minds and increases social consciousness [4]. Being part of a community aids students in understanding differing viewpoints, which enhances their tolerance and appreciation for diversity.

Educators who adopt pedagogies (like the pedagogy of kindness or hope) foster learning environments that support open communication and collaboration among students [2,3]. Enlightening discussions on various topics by learners from different backgrounds with unique life experiences advance a deep understanding of the thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and values of diverse populations and facilitate advocacy for social justice [2,3]. Understanding and identifying with other learners promotes stronger human connections and cultivates feelings of empathy and compassion. When nurse educators embrace pedagogies of kindness and hope as their teaching philosophies, they motivate nursing students to feel compassion towards others.

Further, educators can employ specific teaching strategies to deliberately foster compassion in nursing students. Arts-based instruction incorporates an art form with course subject matter resulting in learning activities that are inspiring, innovative, and thought-provoking, strengthening learners' creativity and problem-solving skills [7-9]. The systematic review of undergraduate nursing students by Reiger et al. [8] found that arts-based instruction increases student engagement, enhances empathy and cultural awareness, and improves observational skills.

Perry and Edwards define arts-based instructional strategies as those that "include literary,

visual, musical, or dramatic elements" ([10], pp:179). This form of instruction creates a learning community where students and teachers have meaningful interpersonal interactions through shared values, norms, and beliefs [10]. Arts-based techniques like poetweet, photo pairing, reflective mosaic, and six-word story help students achieve affective and social-emotional domain learning outcomes, facilitating a richer and more meaningful learning experience and encouraging discourse and reflection on thought-provoking subjects [10,11]. Through these experiences, students become sensitized to the struggles of individuals who may be grappling with physical, emotional, and psychological traumas rendering them more likely to connect emotionally with patients in their practice. Nurses care for humans who are often at the most vulnerable moment in their lives. From patients who are facing serious illness or impending death to families who are welcoming a new life, people nurses care for require sensitive and empathetic responses from their caregivers. Students who engage in arts-inspired learning activities have the opportunity to experience (through music, poetry, or story) some of the emotions their future patients may experience. In this way, student nurses become emotionally equipped to respond with compassion when providing care after graduation.

By encouraging inquiry on power and privilege, and the sharing of different thoughts and experiences, arts-based pedagogy facilitates a better understanding of social inequities and increases the awareness of social injustices [12]. A study on the impact of arts-based teaching on student behavior by Seifert [13] concluded that this approach strengthens sharing, enhances active and empathic listening, and improves feelings of trust and mutual respect among learners.

Research shows that different pedagogies and teaching strategies can positively impact student learning outcomes and enhance students' social consciousness, making them kinder and more compassionate human beings and more effective practitioners. Further study into these pedagogies and instructional strategies should be encouraged and continued, not only in the discipline of nursing but in all educational fields.

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