

LEAD!

Becoming an Effective Coach
and Mentor to Your Nursing Staff



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Patty Kubus, RN, MBA, PhD

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and Mentor to Your Nursing Staff

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As President of Leadership Potential International, Inc., Patty Kubus, RN, MBA, PhD, focuses her skills and experience on executive coaching, leadership development, career planning, team building, and cultural change initiatives. She has more than 25 years of experience leading others and consulting, and her clients include many Fortune 500 corporate executives, from directors to C-level leaders. Her experience crosses many industries, including healthcare, academia, hospitality, finance, technology, and pharmaceuticals.



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This book is dedicated to my mother, Esther Hogan Kubus, who dressed me up as a nurse for my first Halloween when I was two-years-old.



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THE PATH TO BECOMING AN AUTHENTIC LEADER

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the reader will be able to:

- Define authentic leadership
- List the five dimensions of authentic leadership
- Explain why self-awareness is a necessary competency for authentic leaders

Nursing leaders, including nurse managers, charge nurses, service directors, nurse executives, educators, and chief nursing officers, are facing pressures like never before. These pressures include quality improvement, retention of staff, research, staff development, financial constraints, safety, communication with team members, short- and long-term planning, new technology, competition, increased patient acuity, and changes to the healthcare delivery system.

With so many demands on nurse leaders, it is understandable that you might find yourself reacting to the most pressing crisis of the day, rather than taking the time to occasionally pull back and reflect on ways to maximize your skills and proactively help your team navigate this complex environment.

This chapter discusses taking the time to look in the mirror and define your authentic leadership style for the enrichment of yourself and all of those around you.

Understanding Authentic Leadership

In today's world, where we see too many self-serving leaders who try to work the system to get their agendas pressed forward for their own fortune and fame, you can become discouraged in your attempt to achieve your goals to make a positive difference in the world.

Time and time again, we see leaders making decisions from a position of greed: from financial meltdowns on Wall Street to the multimillion-dollar golden parachutes and bonuses given to executives who have decimated the lives of their employees, vendors, and communities. What we read in the news is not the way most of us want to live our lives and be remembered.

The need for authentic leaders is greater than ever and we cannot be thwarted by what makes the news.

Authentic leadership is important for several reasons. Authentic leaders are not driven toward self-serving interests. They are motivated by a goal that is not about them but is about the greater good. They have the self-knowledge to understand their gifts (talents) and passions and are committed to empowering others to use their gifts and passions to accomplish a shared goal that will benefit others.

Authentic leaders become powerful by giving power to others and allowing others to use their skills and talents to their fullest potential. As we learned from Abraham Maslow, our loftiest need is self-actualization. Authentic leaders aspire to become self-actualized, and they are committed to helping others satisfy this need in themselves. That's powerful for everyone.

The path to authentic leadership is circuitous, bumpy, and constant. There is no end point to the journey. It is a continuous learning process of discovery, trial, and error. One of the first requirements is a commitment to developing self-awareness. In fact,

many leaders believe that self-awareness is the most important ability for leadership (George, 2007). Without clear self-awareness, you can take the wrong path and end up chasing the “glitter,” thus not holding true to your values. It also makes it difficult to relate well to others and empathize with them when you don’t have a clear understanding of your strengths, weaknesses, and pressure points (George, 2007).

Becoming an authentic leader begins with taking a rigorous inventory of your strengths, limitations, motivations, values, knowledge, and experience. Think about yours right now. It is surprising how many people cannot come up with a list or think of even a few of their own strengths and limitations. How can you accept yourself and develop a plan to grow so you can meet increasing challenges if you don’t even know who you are? How can you follow a path and lead others if you don’t know which path to take?

The problem is that while many people, for a variety of reasons, can become leaders, many tend to bounce from obstacle to obstacle for years, wondering why their heads hurt and what to do about the damage they leave in their wakes. By becoming self-aware, an authentic leader will ensure avoidance of these mistakes. Authentic leaders still encounter obstacles, but they see these situations as feedback that allows them to learn, grow, and help others grow.

Self-Awareness

“You are unique, and if that is not fulfilled, then something has been lost.”

—Martha Graham

It is important to have self-awareness before you can be “other-aware” (Covey, 1994). You can’t listen to and support someone else’s heart and dreams if you are blind to your own. This is the foundation of authentic leadership.

Chapter 1

Start by reflecting on the following:

- Your values
- Your motivations (needs and fears)
- Your strengths
- Your limitations (we all have them)

Values

Identifying and living by our values helps us in many ways. One benefit is that knowing your values makes decision-making easier. When you have clear values, you can filter any decision through them as a first pass. For example, if one of your personal values is health, your values will filter the options on a restaurant menu, which will narrow your choices and save you time.

Living your values helps you build trusting relationships with others because your behavior will be consistent. Most of us like consistency when working with others.

Authentic leaders always value honesty. Let's say you start a new job, and contrary to what the hiring supervisor said in the interview, he actually turns out to be a micro-manager. Trust is breached, since what he said is not congruent with how he acts. How likely are you to be open and honest with this person when you can't trust him? Communication will quickly shut down unless you decide to confront him.

Values identification exercise

If you are not clear on your personal values, take the time to devote an uninterrupted period to focus on a values identification exercise. Get a list of values (you can find a variety online) and go through the list one value at a time. See Figure 1.1 for a sample list you can use. The list of values is not exhaustive. You can find the tool in the downloadable resources section, which contains all the tools in this book (find it at www.hcpro.com/downloads/8984). Download and add any values you want.

FIGURE 1.1 ■ PERSONAL VALUES EXERCISE							
Value	Yes or No	Value	Yes or No	Value	Yes or No	Value	Yes or No
Accomplishment		Accountability		Accuracy		Achievement	
Ambition		Autonomy		Challenge		Collaboration	
Compassion		Competency		Courage		Credibility	
Creativity		Dedication		Dependability		Dignity	
Discipline/order		Diversity		Enjoyment/fun		Efficiency	
Empathy		Equality		Excellence		Excitement	
Family		Freedom		Friendliness		Flexibility	
Generosity		Health		Honesty		Improvement	
Independence		Individuality		Influence		Innovativeness	
Integrity		Learning		Loyalty		Optimism	
Persistence		Quality		Respect		Responsibility	
Risk taking		Security		Service		Spirituality	
Stewardship		Teamwork		Trust		Wealth	
Wisdom							
My values: _____							

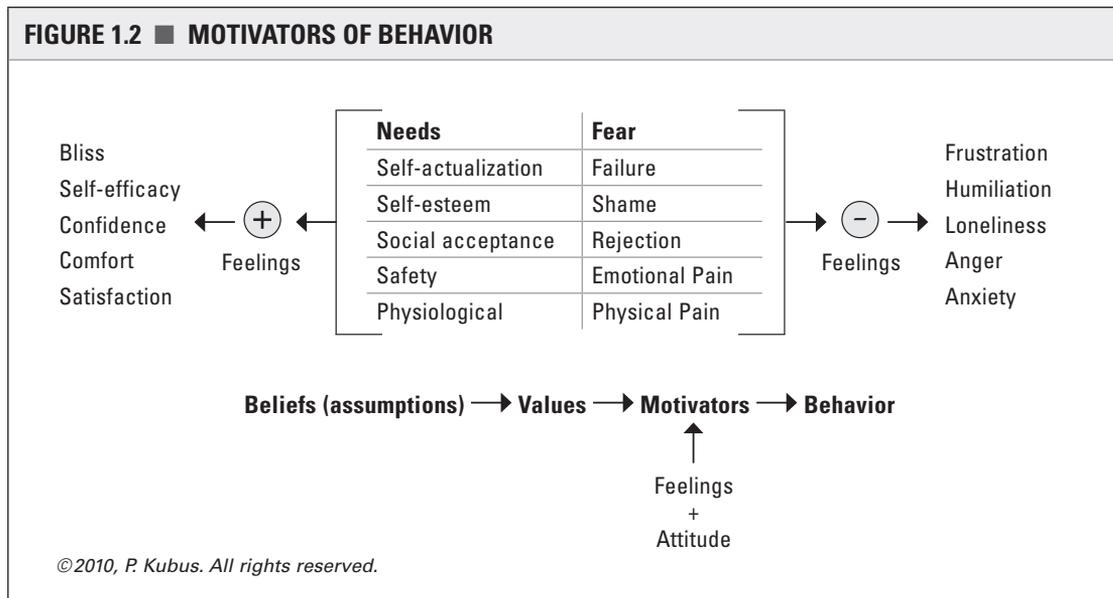
Begin the exercise by crossing off or marking ones that do not resonate with you. Keep crossing them off until you have five to seven personal values that are critical to who you are and to which you always abide. Be very honest with yourself; this exercise is for your eyes only. If you realize that you are not pleased with some of your current values (which are driving your behavior), select only those that make you feel good about yourself.

Write down your final list of values somewhere so that you can refer to them until they become part of you and they drive your decisions and actions.

Motivation

Human motivation is a complex construct. To simplify the idea, motivation boils down to two overarching drivers: unsatisfied needs (per Maslow) and fear.

Motivation drives behavior. If you are motivated to get an unsatisfied need met, your behavior will be directed toward need fulfillment. If you are motivated by fear, your behavior will be directed away from or against that fear. This idea is illustrated by Figure 1.2.



On the left side of the diagram, you see Maslow's hierarchy of needs. To get those needs satisfied, you will be motivated to take the actions necessary. For example, if you are a new nurse manager at a new hospital, one of your needs is to be accepted by your new peer group. Actions you might take to satisfy this need are:

- Setting up individual meetings with each of your new peers to get to know them

- Attending all service meetings with this group
- Seeking advice from them
- Offering your support to them
- Determining how you can help them
- Asking one of them to mentor you
- Attending social functions with this group

What you notice about this list is that all the activities are positive actions toward your goal of being accepted by your new peer group. Acceptance into this group will provide you with feelings of comfort, support, confidence, and camaraderie. These are all positive feelings and they resulted from your actions of moving toward getting a need fulfilled.

Look at the right side of the diagram: fear. Let's stay with the same example, only this time you didn't take any of the actions listed previously and your peers are feeling rejected by you and they stop including you in meetings or conversations. You are now feeling rejected, with accompanying feelings of loneliness and maybe even humiliation. If you are now operating from a fear motive (stress), your behaviors will be either fight (aggression) or, more likely, flight (withdrawal). You start operating on your own and avoiding the group, allowing the void to grow.

Feelings that are generated out of fear include:

- Frustration
- Anger
- Jealousy
- Shame
- Humiliation

Chapter 1

- Greed
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Depression
- Somatic complaints
- Uselessness

The behaviors that are generated from fear will always be fight or flight, attacking or contracting. Some behaviors that result from these feelings include:

- **Fight:** verbal or physical aggression, theft, lying, gossiping, etc.
- **Flight:** withdrawal, escape, addiction, rumination, passive aggression, etc.

Unless you are trying to escape physical harm, these behaviors never lead to anything positive—such as getting your needs met. Their goal is to reduce the fear or pain in a very ineffective way.

“How very little can be done under the spirit of fear.”

—Florence Nightingale

Here’s one final point to consider about motivation: The positive feelings from getting needs met (joy, tranquility, optimism, satisfaction, confidence, self-efficacy, comfort, bliss) lead to positive behaviors for yourself and others. These behaviors include sharing, giving of yourself to others, trusting yourself and others, and caring for yourself and others. These are all expansive behaviors of abundance. These are the behaviors of authentic leaders.

Strengths and limitations

Everyone has some very specific strengths. You should be clear about what those strengths are and continue to build on them. If you are uncertain about some of them, ask others for some feedback.

There are also several behavioral inventories available that can help assist you in identifying your strengths:

- The Birkman Method® (www.birkman.com)
- DISC
- Hogan (www.hoganassessments.com)
- StrengthsFinder (www.strengthsfinder.com)

Some of these inventories require a certified consultant to help you interpret the results correctly. Your human resources (HR) department may be able to help you find someone who can administer and debrief these inventories for you. There also may be professionals in your HR department who are certified.

Another way to identify your strengths and limitations is to get feedback from those around you to verify your self-perceptions. One of your goals should be to focus on your strengths. Too often, we tend to focus on our limitations and forget that we should always be investing in our strengths. Continue to build on your strengths and use them to the fullest.

When you are using your strengths, life is much more exciting. When you are "in flow," you are fully engaged in an interesting activity and time passes quickly. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) puts it aptly in his book *Finding Flow*:

When goals are clear, feedback relevant, and challenges and skills are in balance, attention becomes ordered and fully invested. Because of the total demand on psychic energy, a person in flow is completely focused.

Be aware of times when you are feeling as though you are in flow. What are you doing? It is likely that this activity will be challenging. The skills that are necessary to be good at this challenging activity are likely to be some of your strengths. If you are like most people, you will soon become bored doing tasks that are too easy for you.

CASE STUDY

Flow Scenario 1

Marianne, a pediatric service director, is “in flow” when coaching and developing her managers. She listens to Karen, the cardiac pediatric manager, share an experience about a difficult performance situation she is having with one of her staff. Marianne is competent at understanding human motivation and is able to ask Karen several questions that help her clarify the situation in her own mind. Marianne can guide Karen through several options on how best to confront the staff nurse. Together, they determine the best course of action. Marianne role-plays with Karen what she will say to the staff member. Karen leaves the discussion feeling competent in her own ability to confront the staff nurse.

Marianne’s strengths: *listening, coaching, giving feedback, and empowering others.*

Weaknesses

We all have limitations (or weaknesses) and we need to be clear about what those are. Some limitations could really limit our careers, and steps might need to be taken to mitigate them if they are getting in the way of maximum effectiveness. Limitations are one of many reasons why it is important to have a diverse team to support you. It makes sense to have someone on your team who is really good in an area where you struggle.

Think about an example of two colleagues: one is visionary and strategic whereas the other is operational and detail-oriented. Their strengths are complementary and can be helpful to the other. Having someone on your team who is great in an area where you are not is like adding another lens to your camera.

Strengths/weaknesses identification

Figure 1.3 is a list of qualities that could be either strengths or weaknesses. Identify your top three strengths and your top three areas that need to be developed. Get some feedback from your colleagues, your direct reports, and your manager to verify your list. Alternatively, ask them to fill out this list and return it to you anonymously (if they feel more comfortable).

FIGURE 1.3 ■ PERSONAL VALUES EXERCISE		
Quality	Strength	Weakness
Building strong relationships		
Change management		
Creative thinking		
Critical thinking		
Communication		
Coaching		
Confrontation		
Decision-making		
Delegation		
Detail orientation		
Developing others		
Emotional intelligence		
Execution		
Financial analysis		
Flexibility		
Influencing		
Learning		
Openness to new ideas		
Persuasion		
Planning and organizing		
Professional presence		
Reading the environment		
Self-awareness		
Strategic planning		
Teaching		
Technology		
Team building		
Writing		

To authentically lead others, self-awareness and self-acceptance are critical. You will be able to role model adherence to your values, you will know when you slip into fear behaviors, and you will humbly be open about your strengths as well as your weaknesses. You will know which path you need to take to continue to grow to meet the ever-changing demands of today's complex healthcare arena. You will be able to lead others, and they will be excited to join you on the journey.

"The world is put back by the death of everyone who has to sacrifice the development of his or her peculiar gifts to conventionality."

—Florence Nightingale

LEADERSHIP TIP

Bill George (2003), former CEO of Medtronic, lists five dimensions of authentic leaders. They:

1. **Understand their purpose:** This is the reason they move into leadership roles. Authentic leaders have a purpose to make a positive difference in the world by showing others the way and helping them reach their potential (Greenleaf, 2002).
2. **Practice solid values:** These define one's character and help to build trust with others.
3. **Lead with heart:** Demonstrate caring and compassion for others.
4. **Establish connected relationships:** This is a basic leadership competency. Great leaders admit they cannot do it alone.
5. **Demonstrate self-discipline:** Always adhere to values, which helps build trust (the foundation for any relationship).

Being authentic means that you are real and genuine. This helps others know they can trust you to do what is best for everyone, not just yourself, even when the going gets tough (which it always does.)

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