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Effective Mentoring of Novice Nurses during a Healthcare Crisis

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Abstract

Novice nurses are entering the workforce at an unprecedented time during a pandemic. Nursing mentorship is important in helping the transition of novice nurses into the nursing profession. The healthcare crisis presented by a pandemic makes this even more integral as new entrants enter the workforce at an unprecedented time. This has now brought to fore the need to critically reflect on how are novice nurses being supported to make the transition into the nursing workforce during a stressful time in healthcare. This paper discusses the nursing mentorship process and applies the theoretical framework of authentic leadership to explore the importance of novice nurses embracing the self to combat the challenges of entering the nursing workforce during a pandemic. This discussion paper promotes authentic leadership as an effective complement to the nursing mentorship process to better help novice nurses' transition into their nursing role during challenging times of a healthcare crisis. Recommendations are given to enhance the nursing mentorship culture by co creating an authentic environment that allows nurse mentors and novice nurses to embrace the self through self-awareness and self-development. Nursing mentorship is integral to the success of novice nurses' transition into their professional role and into the complex healthcare environment at unprecedented times when healthcare providers have to quickly adapt and develop readiness to perform professional roles due to the health crisis and demands created by a global pandemic.

Keywords: Authentic leadership; healthcare crisis; nursing mentorship; pandemic; novice nurses;

Introduction

The pressures of nurses and frontline healthcare workers have never been greater than what we are witnessing today. Now more than ever, nurse leaders must be concerned about attrition and high staff turnover in the face of COVID-19. The current healthcare climate cause us to question how can we support novice nurses entering the workforce at such an unprecedented time. Nursing mentorship has always been integral in helping novice nurses' transition. As such, to address this healthcare crisis, engaging the help of nurse mentors as authentic leaders, who have prior experience nursing through a pandemic may be even more beneficial to help novice nurses navigate this difficult period. It is during these times nurses need to rely on the core of their true self by identifying values and virtues that originally brought them into nursing to cope with the challenges of a healthcare crisis. Authentic leadership is defined as an introspective relational concept of authenticity in being your true self (Gardner, Cogliner, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). The aim of this paper is to explore the role that mentorship guided by the characteristics

of authentic leadership could play in helping novice nurses navigate challenging times and unavoidable risks associated with healthcare, particularly during a pandemic.

Nurse mentors can be defined as the person who is matched with a novice nurse to guide them through the practice development process and/or teaching the organization's policies, procedures, routines and orient them to the lay of the land regarding politics and how to successfully navigate the organization's culture. Novice nurses need the support of mentors when entering the workforce under normal conditions, much more, at such an unprecedented time when the mixed emotions of fear and courage are further heightened due to the very difficult circumstances created by a pandemic. Having experienced authentic nurse mentors -seasoned nurses, who have practiced during healthcare crises before are apt to help novice nurses' transition into health care at this time. For example, nurse mentors who worked during Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

(SARS) in 2003, Avian Influenza in 2008, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome in 2012 (Cervera-Gasch et al., 2020), and Ebola since 2014 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2019) have experience in developing self-care practices, mental toughness, and coping mechanisms to effectively navigate potential personal health risks. These nurse mentors' experiences will enable them to provide support to help novice nurses thrive as they enter the workforce at a challenging time.

For the purposes of this paper, nurse mentors are considered to be authentic leaders embracing the characteristics of authentic leadership. Thus, the theoretical framework of authentic leadership is outlined. The nursing mentorship process is discussed, as well as the benefits of applying authentic leadership to the mentorship process to prevent burnout. Finally, the discussion paper is concluded with recommendations to enhance the nursing mentorship culture guided by authentic leadership.

Nursing Mentorship during a Healthcare Crisis

According to Benner's (1982) Novice to Expert Model there are five stages (novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert) through which a nurse gains competency. The new nurse entering the nursing profession is usually at the competent stage where clinical judgement is rule-bound and rigid because they do not have enough experience to make sense of complex clinical situations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, new nurses are challenged to learn how to practice the art and science of nursing, and must also quickly develop skills in infection prevention and control to stop the spread of COVID-19 to themselves and others. Novice nurses are now tasked to provide care to critically ill patients whose health status may deteriorate quickly. Along with additional pressures associated with high mortality rates of the pandemic, all nurses have to navigate ethical dilemmas of rationing care, discontinuing futile care, or supporting people who are dying without their families. These situations are challenging for seasoned nurses and are likely to be difficult for new nurses. As such, it is vital that these new nurses are supported in their role and authentic nurse mentors who are skilled might be able to help their new nurse mentees navigate these challenges. The benefits of nursing mentorship are many in helping novice nurses hone their skills, role and function in providing care and this is even more vital in this pandemic era (Baldwin, Coyne, Hynes, & Kelly, 2020). The mentorship process has been reported to be effective and efficient in providing learning experiences for mentees who may have various learning needs and allowing for a customize approach to learning (Sandau, Cheng, Pan, Gaillard, & Hammer, 2011), which is crucial for this unprecedented time we are currently facing with the COVID-19 health crisis.

Effective mentors demonstrate special qualities that are synonymous with an authentic leader and these are vital for the mentorship experience to be successful (Figure 1). Race and Skees (2010) emphasized that mentorship in nursing at various levels is geared to developing collegial relationships, improving self-confidence, professional development and lifelong learning. Nursing mentorship is about building the novice as an individual and by extension the profession of nursing, and eventually leading to safe and efficient nursing care as the standards of nursing are role modeled, learned, and upheld.

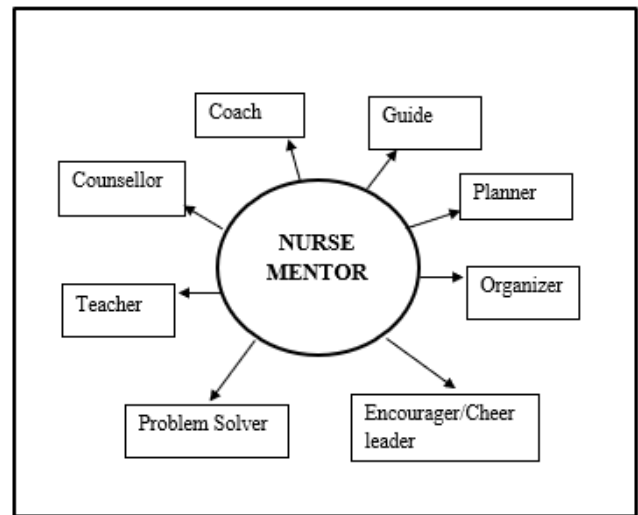


Figure 1: Depicting Required Qualities of a Nurse Mentor for an Ideal & Successful Mentorship as described by Morton-Cooper and Palmer, 2000.

Mentorship Process in Nursing

The process of nursing mentorship has two major functions guided towards career and psychosocial development (see Kram, 1988). These are accomplished through the four phases of mentorship, namely, initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Kram, 1983). The initiation phase may last for up to a year where the nurse mentor and the novice nurse as mentee are getting to know each other, during this phase the novice nurse is identifying ideals in the senior nurse that they would aspire to, and the nurse mentor is identifying the potential of the novice nurse to be successful (Ferguson, 2011). Cultivation is the longest and most intense phase where most of the working and building is done. The nurse mentor coaches, guides, motivates, celebrates successes, identifies teaching and learning moments and ways to improve practice, while praising and prodding the novice nurse along (Jackson, 2020). This assists the novice to identify and hone individual talents and strengths, analyze details, attempt different approaches as the novice grows and embrace his/her uniqueness in practicing nursing (Barton, Gowdy, & Hawthorne, 2005). In the separation phase most of the learning and development would have taken place and the novice nurse is less dependent on the nurse mentor; the dynamics may change to a trusted colleague. Thus, leading to a redefinition of the mentor-mentee relationship, where the relationship may end or take on another form (Kram, 1983).

As the healthcare practice setting changes, the approach to mentoring nurses and facilitating novice nurses' transition into their role has to adapt to meet the changing landscape. Authentic leadership focuses on the core of the self through self-awareness and self-development to bring about resilience and emotional stability (Goleman, 2020). To meet the growing demands of the profession, authentic leadership should be integrated into the nursing mentorship process. Authentic leadership is relational and context adaptable, encouraging individuals to be their true self where caring for the self is constant, thus enabling people to cope through many circumstances and continue to perform (Alilyyani et al., 2018; Bryan & Blackman, 2019). As such, new nurses entering the profession at a

time characterised by high physical and emotional demands should be mentored using the authentic leadership framework.

Theoretical Framework: Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership promotes individuals coming to a point of accepting their experiences and behaving in accordance with their inner thoughts and feelings (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Laschinger et al., 2016). Authentic leadership is guided by four characteristics of self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency as summarized in Table 1. The mentor who role models all four characteristics establishes and solidifies trusting relationships with mentees, who often reciprocates the characteristics to openly share thoughts, feelings, ideas, challenges and opinions with the mentor which is vital during a crisis (Gardner et al, 2011).

Concepts and Characteristics / Descriptors	Summary of Concepts and Characteristics	Associated Researchers
Authentic Leadership	Transparent ethical and moral leadership associated with honesty, integrity and sincerity to promote trust and healthy work environments (Leadership of me [self] and you [follower]).	Avolio & Gardner, 2005
• Self-awareness	Knowing one’s strengths, limitations, values and beliefs and impact on others. Making sense of the world and how it is perceived.	Wong & Cummings, 2009
• Balanced Processing	Objective decision making, considering the opinion of others.	Avolio & Gardner, 2005
• Internalized Moral Perspective	Role modeling high standard of ethical and moral conduct and acting and making decision based on such standards.	Wong & Cummings, 2009
• Relational Transparency	Presenting true self to others by sharing information, thoughts, and feelings. Openly and genuinely engaging with followers.	Laschinger et al., 2016

Perspectives of Authenticity as a Leader and Mentor

Algera, and Lips-Wiersma (2012) stated authenticity is being true in a holistic sense, that is being honest with oneself and in relationships (self-in- relationship), hence creating a healthy balance. Authenticity is viewed from three perspectives of personal, ideal, and social authenticity (Figure 2).

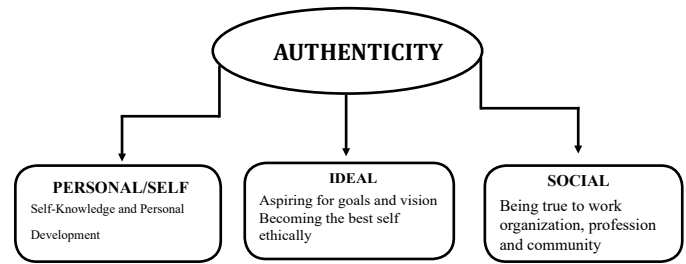


Figure 2: Depicting the perspectives of Authentic leadership as described by Gardner, Coglisser, Davis, and Dickens 2011.

Authenticity is normally exhibited by an authentic individual who is described as optimistic, confident, hopeful, strong, ethical, futuristic, and goal oriented, which equips the individual to overcome challenging times such as a pandemic (Gaddy,Gonzalez, Lathan, & Graham, 2016). Authentic individuals are loyal to their core values and beliefs, exhibiting them in all interactions possible and at every level of the organization (Algera& Lips-Wiersma, 2012). Here, values are described as emerging from one’s virtues, where there is a form of intentionality about developing a particular attitude that is purposefully strengthened and developed throughout all interactions (Ciulla& Forsyth, 2011). Authenticity is evident when an individual is true to self and driven by personal values and convictions, earning them respect, trust and credibility for adhering to their beliefs (Wilson, 2014).

Effective Nursing Mentorship guided by the Characteristics of Authentic Leadership

Collaboration between both the nurse mentor and novice nurse is important for the mentorship process to be successful (Race & Skees, 2010). Positive interpersonal relationship is an integral component for an effective and successful mentorship experience (Chandler, Kram& Yip, 2011). Nurse mentors who embrace authentic leadership during the mentorship process coach novice nurses to engage in self-awareness and self-development, thus bringing about longevity to the success of healthcare institutions, staff, and clients (Wong & Cummings, 2009). Nurse mentors who are authentic leaders desire to serve others through their capacity, being driven by passion, compassion, and heart (Wilson, 2014). Authentic leadership engenders the formation of enduring relationships with others, which are usually of an open and honest exchange and are positive in nature (Mazutis&Slawinski, 2008). Shared and complimentary goals are pursued that usually reflect deeply overlapped values which are agreed on by all parties involved in the relationship (Algera& Lips-Wiersma, 2012). Due to the openness, trust, and intimacy that is brought about by embracing authentic leadership, novice nurses will become comfortable to disclose their true identity and be themselves (Hughes, 2005). As such, in a pandemic era, healthcare leaders need to support nurse mentors in their role by teaching them how to engender authentic leadership, so novice nurses are mentored to embrace the “self” to enhance their career and individuality as a new nurse.

The true expression of beliefs and values are important coping mechanisms when undergoing stress (American Nurses Association, 2017). Authentic leadership gives freedom to express oneself, which is particularly important during the pandemic as healthcare workers

across the globe have been seen praying and engaging in religious practices to find ways to cope with the physical and psychological effects of COVID-19. Authentic nurse mentors aim to help novice nurses to find their true calling as they become connected with their work and personally develop, thus giving a sense of wellbeing and meaning (Laschinger et al., 2016). Authentic nurse mentors would encourage inward reflection, which allows novice nurses to embrace a sense of purpose to remind them why they chose nursing and why they need to stay committed to their decision and passion to provide care.

Authentic leadership focuses on the relationship between the leader and follower, in this case the nurse mentor and novice nurse as mentee, the relationship is seen as one that is shared rather than a separation of individuals (Day, 2011). Hence, both nurse mentor and mentee would develop an understanding of the self, as the mentor embraces his/her identity as an individual and a nurse and further teaches the novice nurse through role modelling (Waite et al., 2014). As authentic leaders, nurse mentors are encouraged to develop and role model to the novice nurse an understanding of the self, knowing core values, strengths and limitations. This level of knowing and understanding will facilitate the practice of self-care and kindness to the self as selfless care is provided during a nerve-racking pandemic.

Self-awareness

For us, authentic leadership is leadership of the self in relationship to others and development of self-awareness. Shirey (2015) pointed out that people who placed emphasis on embracing self-awareness through engaging in reflective practice tend to grow better as an emotionally capable individual. This is vital to face the pressure, fear, and bewildered emotions wrought by COVID-19. Being self-aware, nurse mentors understand how they are viewed by the novice nurse, and are conscious of their strengths and weaknesses, and impact on novice mentees (Shirey, 2015). As such, the nurse mentor role models authentic leadership to the novice nurse by engaging in self-knowledge and introspection to develop as an individual and a nurse (Waite et al., 2014). To become self-aware, nurse mentors and novice nurses as mentee should address important questions such as "who am I?", "what are my values?", "what is my purpose?", "what drives me?", "are my actions consistent with what I value?", "how do my mentees/mentor see me and is this consistent with how I wish to be seen?", "what am I trying to achieve with this mentorship relationship?" (Shirey, 2015, para. 15). Engaging in this process assists the nurse mentor and novice nurse to gain insight into who they are, and more importantly a deep understanding of the self.

The self-awareness that is cultivated in nursing mentorship epitomizes the core of authentic leadership where nurse mentors encourage novice nurses to become authentic and true to the self (Humberd & Rouse, 2016). Naturally nurse mentors and novice nurses should engage in honest sharing of insights and experiences. Authentic leadership is best taught through role modeling, which is the foundation of nursing mentorship (Gardner et al., 2011). Hence, the role modeling and rehearsal of authentic leadership should be done to enhance nursing mentorship in a pandemic era to strengthen

nurses and the profession to ensure continuity of quality nursing care, as both nurse mentors and novice nurses demonstrate self-awareness, self-development and eventually self-care during this difficult period. In becoming self-aware, nurse mentors automatically demonstrate internalized moral perspective which is respected by novice nurses as mentees (Shirey, 2015).

Authentic leadership brings about a heightened self-awareness which would assist the nurse mentor to become more self-confident in teaching mentees how to become an authentic individual and practitioner (Gardener et al., 2011). The cultivation phase of Kram's (1983) nursing mentorship process is synonymous with teaching or role modeling authentic leadership. In this stage the nurse mentor is coaching, guiding, and identifying ways for the novice to grow and embrace their uniqueness as an individual and as a nurse. This is what authentic leadership is about, identifying the self, identifying that uniqueness, and above all embracing it and being true to it in all operations. It is through this process that virtues and values are developed and the novice nurse gains confidence in demonstrating the true self for the greater good of all, based on morality. As the novice nurse sees authenticity role modeled by the nurse mentor, the novice develops confidence in being and placing importance on the self by engaging in self-awareness and self-development. Therefore, the novice nurse has become self-aware and the aim of authentic leadership is that mentors will influence novice nurses to become authentic. The novice nurse seeing authentic leadership effectively role modeled will endeavor to do the same (Humberd & Rouse, 2016).

Resilience

The nursing mentorship culture that embraces authentic leadership is nurturing and fosters resilience by allowing individuals to be themselves without judgement, facilitating inquiry and development of ideas (Parry, 2011). An authentic nurse mentor will collaborate and cocreate a positive and authentic culture to help the novice nurse to flourish in complex care environments as we are experiencing today (Vitello-Cicciu, 2019). During a healthcare crisis many nurses have reported feelings of guilt, such as not being able to do enough, wanting to leave their current non-bedside nursing roles of educator, policy maker, and such to join their colleagues on the frontlines (Brunworth, 2020; Dewart, Corcoran, Thirsk & Petrovic, 2020). Nurses on the frontlines are also expressing varying emotions as it seems enough is not being done as people are dying in droves (Jackson et al., 2020). However, nurse mentors as authentic leaders, can help novice nurses combat this heightened level of stress and negative emotions by relying on resilience facilitated by an authentic leadership culture. Nurse mentors through being an authentic leader calls on resilience by reflecting and connecting with inner values, virtues, and beliefs to embrace and acknowledge their situation and the reality that comes with it and to further teach and encourage the novice nurse, as mentee, to do the same within an authentic culture (Murphy, 2012).

Benefits of embracing the Characteristics of

Authentic Leadership in Nursing Mentorship

Self-Confidence as a Benefit

The process of gaining self-confidence is important as novice nurses embrace the autonomous role of patient advocate, decision maker, and collaborator (Waite et al., 2014). With the expectation of autonomy and advocacy, it is important that nurse mentors teach novice nurses to develop self-knowledge and evaluate their values and personal experiences in the presence of a role model. The process of helping novice nurses to embody the characteristics of authentic leadership will engender self-knowledge and awareness as they learn to align personal values with intentions and actions further contributing to self-confidence (Deveret al., 2015). According to Leigh (2014), nurse mentors who are perceived to demonstrate authentic leadership empower novice nurses to exhibit formal power in their own role.

Role modeling is important to the self-confidence component, as participants in a study reported that the role model (nurse mentor) served as a mirror for professional identity development which impacted on their self-confidence (Kaihlainen, Lakanmaa, & Salminen, 2013). The mentor-mentee relationship further brings about learning new skills, extending oneself and establishing interpersonal efficacy while dispelling fears and doubt (Waite et al., 2014). Nurse mentors who role modelled authentic leadership have been praised for contributing to novice nurses' self-confidence where mentors shared their stories leading to newer nurses experiencing greater connection and relatedness to the more experienced nurses and the profession. The novice nurses further reported enhancement in identifying their own personal values in nursing based on the nurse mentors openly sharing their experiences (Deveret al., 2015). Hence, the novice nurses felt more empowered to embrace their professional role of a nurse including ethical decision making and conflict management.

Relational Transparency – Empathy as a Benefit

Relational transparency deals with the ability to present the true self while interacting with others (Shirey, 2015). It emphasises how open and transparent the nurse mentor is towards the novice nurse in having open communication between each other (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). This is important in the mentorship relationship that is highly dependent on the quality of the interpersonal relationship that exists between the nurse mentor and the novice nurse as mentee and is built on empathy, belief, respect, trust, and transparency (Nickitas, 2014; Wong & Cummings, 2009). Therefore, it is important that nurse mentors consider how genuine they are and how this is perceived by the novice nurse and would the novice nurse want to follow (Shirey, 2015). One study reported that novice nurses who perceived their nurse mentors as transparent, ethical and inclusive felt more engaged and satisfied with their professional practice and work environment (Laschinger & Fida, 2015).

Empathy is important in building the mentor-mentee relationship, and it has been found to be a major predictor of trust within the relationship (Waite et al., 2014). Empathy is seen as the ability of the nurse mentor to demonstrate acceptance and validation of the novice nurse's thoughts and emotions through listening attentively when feelings and thoughts are expressed (Sidelinger and Booth-Butterfield, 2010). It is fair to believe, novice nurses entering the

profession at this time should be given the space to express their feelings during a time of high demand and intense pressure associated with a pandemic. It is essential that nurse mentors recognise the importance of being open and understanding the emotions of novice nurses to enhance the relationship and improve the mentorship process as the novice nurse is empowered to be their best self. A veteran nurse leader in a study summarised the influence of authentic leadership eloquently when she stated, authentic leadership is a way of being, seeing, and knowing with the novice nurse to enhance talent development of all involved in the relationship (Nickitas, 2014).

Preventing Burnout as a Benefit

Authentic leadership promotes balance and being self-aware also protects against burnout and other negative side effects that being an ever-available mentor can bring about. Nurses are known to be caring, kind and compassionate, and as such, are always seeking ways to help others. This may be detrimental to the nurse mentor's personal health and wellbeing which may be ignored (Rose and Lackie, 2014). In embracing the principles of authentic leadership, the nurse mentor is aware of their strengths and limitations and can work within his/her balance while teaching mentees to do the same (Shirey, 2015; Vitello-Cicciuet al., 2014). Hence, developing a protective barrier to combat burnout.

Institutions by extension benefit from creating a culture of authentic leadership. It has been reported that institutions that have nurse mentors demonstrating being their true self contributed to building positive organization culture and employee performance (Alilyyani et al., 2018). An organization that promotes authentic leadership often result in trust and respect among the staff and a healthier work environment, as people are more apt to work in a team (Wong & Cummings, 2009), and effective teams may result in safe and effective patient care. Clearly an ethical work environment that is emotionally safe where nurses, both mentor and mentee, can be themselves without the pressures of the political climate would thwart burnout and may lead to satisfied nurses, eventually impacting on the quality and safety of patient care (Waite et al., 2014). This could further lead to a reduction in attrition as nurse mentors teach novice nurses to develop a sense of awareness and create positive feelings of wellbeing. Thereby, creating an army of experienced nurses who are happy, resilient, and competent in delivering safe patient care even through a pandemic which may eventually impact on the financial operations of the institution due to low staff turnover rates (Laschinger et al., 2016).

Recommendations

Currently, we are experiencing the pandemic and many nurses and mentors are trying to do the best they can given the current situation. However, to be more prepared for a future crisis, nurse leaders and stakeholders could assess the benefits of ongoing training and support systems for mentors to prepare them for mentorship during healthcare crises. Developing programs that "mentor the mentor" (see Jackson, 2020) could be built on to incorporate the characteristics of authentic leadership. This "mentor the mentor" program should teach mentors the attitudes and values needed to support and coach novice nurses for quick and successful transition into their role as a nurse, particularly during a complex and challenging period in healthcare.

An ongoing mentorship training program offered on a quarterly basis would contribute to the development and further enhancement of the nursing mentorship culture. The aim of such a program would be to have nurse mentors learn foundational skills such as reflective practice for introspection and self-awareness, effective communication, emotional intelligence, empathy, and compassion. The supportive attitudes in alignment with the characteristics of authentic leadership can be taught through different channels of online and face-to-face instructional techniques to role play and role model the development of self-knowledge and introspection skills to develop as an individual and a nurse. This would help nurse mentors to be better equipped to embrace the role of authentic leader and mentor (Anderson et al., 2016). A training program may provide benefits to the nurse mentors where they feel more competent and prepared especially with the freedom of embracing “the self” and authenticity, hence, making mentorship a more rewarding process for the mentor and novice nurse. Furthermore, nurse mentors would feel supported and equipped thus enhancing their self-efficacy to mentor (Cusack et al., 2020).

Nurse mentors should also learn to be intentional in developing the characteristics associated with authentic leadership by engaging in reflective practice to develop self-awareness and aid self-development as they grow as a mentor and nurse. In being more specific, nurse mentors could adhere to the recommendations given by Rose and Lackie (2014) and role model listening with intention and attention, build positive and caring relationships that convey support, work on the “self” as a role model and mentor, and since knowledge and expertise grants credibility, aspire to increase knowledge base. Nurse mentors would come to understand the “self” as an individual and as a nurse as they recognise their values, virtues, and unique identity that they bring to the care setting and embrace that. Becoming comfortable with the personhood of the self as a nurse and mentor further equip and empower experienced nurses to mentor novice nurses to become their authentic self and create their own nursing identity niche. All this would be vital in building the nursing profession as nurse mentors become confident in their role as they feel supported to teach, coach, and socialize novice nurses to embrace the uniqueness of the “self” as they transition into the profession of nursing at such an unprecedented time during a healthcare crisis.

Conclusion

Nursing mentorship guided by the characteristics of authentic leadership may be a valid response to the call for improved mentorship for novice nurses who are newly registered, transferred or redeployed due to COVID-19. Recognising that novice nurses naturally enter the workforce with limited clinical judgement and the need to support them to meet the demands of the current complex healthcare landscape is vital. Nurse leaders can provide this support by focusing on the nursing mentorship process. Teaching, empowering, and encouraging nurse mentors to embrace the characteristics of authentic leadership to facilitate the development of the “self” of the novice nurse to combat the challenges of the complex health environment of today is a valid first step. Enhancing the nursing mentorship experience through creating healthy work environments pungent with authentic nurse mentors who possess positive capacities such as trust, hope, optimism, and resilience can help novice nurses to have a smoother transition. However, it

cannot be ignored that authentic leadership’s applicability to nursing mentorship has been limited. Hence, there is a need for further empirical investigation into the applicability of authentic leadership in enhancing nursing mentorship during a healthcare crisis.

Nursing is relational focus, as such, it is important that nurse mentors and novice nurses are armed with good support and coping mechanisms to maintain wellbeing, so they are able to provide optimum patient care during a pandemic. Authentic leadership is relational focus as well, and seeks to help the development of the self through self-awareness and self-development, thus enabling care for the self to handle the challenges associated with a healthcare crisis and to cope with the emotions and pressures of a stressful environment. Thus, bringing about empathy towards patients and colleagues. This is best engendered through the nursing mentorship process, where novice nurses can engage in reflection with the nurse mentor and discuss emotions and fears being experienced while nursing during a pandemic. The nurse mentor in turn is then able to help the novice nurse identify effective coping mechanisms to thrive and prevent burnout and attrition. Thus, improving outcomes as novice nurses become better equipped to deal with the challenges of a healthcare crisis.

In contributing to the field of knowledge, importance should be placed on role modeling authentic leadership to novice nurses through the nursing mentorship process as novice nurses learn to embrace and appreciate their individuality and uniqueness. Mentoring in accordance with the characteristics of authentic leadership enable novice nurses to embrace the self. Authentic leadership facilitates freedom of expression, feelings, beliefs and values which may be beneficial in effectively coping with the current strain being placed on healthcare workers. Freedom to be one’s self is even more vital during this pandemic era as new entrants enter the nursing profession at a time of intense giving and service to save as many lives possible. Empowering novice nurses to embrace the self through engagement in self-awareness and self-development practices may play a role in stemming attrition and high staff turnover.

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