White Paper: Holistic Nurse Coaching

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Abstract

This white paper examines the relevance of a Holistic Nurse Coaching model to current national discussions concerning development of health and wellness coaches. Readers are introduced to coaching from the perspective of Holistic Nursing. Holistic Nurse Coaching is presented as a model of coaching practice that is designed to fully engage clients in self care and the management of individual health care practices and outcomes. A definition and overview of Holistic Nurse Coaching is provided. The evolution of Holistic Nurse Coaching is discussed. The role of the American Holistic Nurses Association in determining scope and standards of practice for Holistic Nurse Coaches is presented.
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A growing emphasis on health and wellness coaching is timely with the focus on health care reform. Holistic Nurse Coaches are an essential element in addressing the reforms being instituted to improve the nation’s health. The new focus on wellness and health management will require the guidance of a profession that has always adapted to change (Luck, 2010) and which is rooted in a holistic philosophy that promotes the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities, and the planet. A clear and critical need and opportunity exists to engage nurses and others in all sectors of health care to move towards healing and wholeness as part of all health care practice.

A Holistic Nurse Coach model of care addresses the need and desire of so many health care providers and others to move away from a focus on disease management and towards ways to more effectively assist clients in living healthy, fulfilled, and productive lives that are compatible with and informed by the client’s personal values, choices, and preferences. Health and wellness coaches from many backgrounds are needed to launch and implement a new approach to health care. As nurses collaborate with those who are developing the role, standards, and scope of practice for health and wellness coaches, it is important to recognize that coaching is a professional nursing competency within the scope of practice of professional nursing and many nurses have already incorporated coaching into their professional nursing practice.
Definition of Holistic Nursing

Holistic Nursing is defined as nursing practice that addresses healing of the whole person. Holistic Nursing is committed to the promotion of health and wellness in individuals, communities, and the environment. It is a person-centered approach that includes holism, healing, and transpersonal caring as its core concepts. Holistic Nursing practice emphasizes self-care, intentionality, presence, mindfulness, and therapeutic use of self (American Holistic Nurses Association/American Nurses Association, 2007) as foundational practices for professional nursing practice.

Holistic nurses work to create healthy work environments for self and others. Holistic nurses are committed to the development of humanistic practices and policies in healthcare settings and elsewhere. Holistic nurses realize the importance of self-care. They value themselves and mobilize the necessary resources to care for themselves (American Holistic Nurses Association/American Nurses Association, 2007). Self-care is an active process that involves attending to one’s own well-being in a manner that replenishes, supports, and energizes. Holistic nurses are committed to lifelong learning. Personal and professional development is a continuous process for the holistic nurse.

Definition of Holistic Nurse Coaching

Holistic Nurse Coaching is defined as skilled, purposeful, results-oriented, and structured relationship-centered interactions with clients provided by Registered Nurses for the purpose of promoting the health and well-being of the whole person. Holistic Nurse Coaching is grounded in the principles and core values of Holistic Nursing. Holistic Nursing philosophy, as
applied to both self and client in a coaching interaction, emerges from an awareness that effective change evolves from within before it can be manifested externally.

Effective Holistic Nurse Coaching interactions involve the ability to create a coaching partnership, build a safe space and be sensitive to client issues of trust and vulnerability (Schaub & Schaub, 2009) as a basic foundation for further exploration, structure a coaching session, explore client readiness for coaching, facilitate achievement of the client’s desired goals, and co-create a means of determining and evaluating desired outcomes and goals.

**Overview of Holistic Nurse Coaching**

Licensed professional registered nurses who are Holistic Nurse Coaches work from an established foundation of professional standards and practice (American Holistic Nurses Association/American Nurses Association, 2007). Holistic Nurse Coaches utilize a variety of evidence informed coaching skills and interventions learned and practiced in approved Holistic Nurse Coach training programs and elsewhere. They have a deep understanding of the nature of a professional relationship and a broad range of healthcare knowledge, experience, and skill that is brought into their work as health and wellness coaches.

Holistic Nurse Coaches bring an integrative perspective to coaching. A holistic framework created and developed by numerous nurse scholars provides a model for working for the whole person. The inclusive perspective of Holistic Nurse Coaches recognizes the biological, psychological, social/cultural, transpersonal and energetic components of individuals. This perspective leaves space for openness and “not knowing” (Dossey, 2008) - the gateway to where new knowledge resides. Erickson views this broad outlook as “integrative
knowing,” “a bringing together of multiple ways-of-knowing, integrating and creating new knowledge” (2010, p. 65). Many nurse coaches utilize a holistic, integral model of coaching that includes structures of consciousness as a way to frame coaching interactions (Bark, 2010).

Behavioral change theories, including the Transtheoretical Stages of Change Model, the Health Belief Model, and Motivational Interviewing have been adopted by many nurse coaches. Concepts and strategies within these theoretical approaches are applied to evidence informed coaching to promote self-efficacy and to uncover resistance and identify barriers to change. Appreciative Inquiry is a model of change that focuses on client strengths to create a more positive future. Unitary Appreciative Inquiry (Cowling, 2001) is a related approach utilized by nurses to know the wholeness and uniqueness of each person as a context for change.

Holistic Nurse Coaches work with individuals and with groups. Holistic Nurse Coaches are staff nurses, case managers, advanced practice nurses, nurse faculty, nurse researchers and educators, and nurse managers and nurse administrators who have added Holistic Nurse Coaching skills to their work. For some, coaching is their primary role. Holistic Nurse Coaches include nurse entrepreneurs who have developed successful and thriving businesses.

Evolution of Holistic Nurse Coaching

Coaching has developed within the context of significant cultural changes emphasizing diversity and inclusion, personal growth and self-exploration, and new approaches to Holistic Nursing practice and conducting business that value people. Those who have studied the development of coaching acknowledge the emergence of coaching from several independent
sources at the same time. In many ways coaching is an interactive social phenomenon that involves a process and style of communication that is based on enhancing the best in others.

Coaching has been influenced by humanistic psychology whereby clients are viewed as having an inherent goodness and ability to know what is best for them. Another strong influence on coaching has been the business world where an emphasis on leadership and organizational development has led to a focus on outcomes, collaboration and accountability. A proliferation of coaching models and programs to prepare coaches has developed in the 25-30 year history of coaching.

Nursing has always utilized knowledge from a wide variety of sources to achieve the best possible outcomes for clients. Coaching has emerged within nursing as one way to structure client interactions in a manner that enhances client-nurse partnerships. Based on the awareness that coaching is a separate and distinct competency, it is not to be confused with teaching, consulting, or directing others towards predetermined goals established by the nurse or others; thus, an innovative and creative Holistic Nurse Coach model of care has evolved. Nursing has taken the lead in establishing a holistic model of coaching – one designed to fully engage clients in self care and the management of health care practices and outcomes.

American Holistic Nurses Association

The American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA), with 30 years of history in promoting holistic health, has appointed a task force (see Appendix A) to propose a scope and standards of practice for Holistic Nurse Coaches that will serve as the initial step in development of a certification process for Holistic Nurse Coaches. The task force plans to submit a proposed
Scope and Standards of Practice for Holistic Nurse Coaches to AHNA by the end of 2010. The proposed Scope and Standards of Practice for Holistic Nurse Coaches will be based upon the Scope and Standards of Practice for Holistic Nursing (American Holistic Nurses Association/American Nurses Association, 2007). It will emphasize the core values and ethics of holistic nursing (See Appendix B) as the basis of nurse coaching.

Summary

Holistic Nurse Coaches are an essential element in addressing the reforms being instituted to improve the nation’s health. The American Holistic Nurses Association is leading the way in creating and implementing standards for Holistic Nurse Coaches based upon a holistic model of coaching that preserves a focus on the whole person. In collaboration with others, AHNA is committed to address the clear and critical need and opportunity to engage nurses and others in all sectors of health care to move towards healing and wholeness as part of all health care practice.
Appendix A

AHNA Holistic Nurse Coach Task Force Members

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Appendix B

Position on Holistic Nursing Ethics

**Code of Ethics for Holistic Nurses**

We believe that the fundamental responsibilities of the nurse are to promote health, facilitate healing, and alleviate suffering. The need for nursing is universal. Inherent in nursing is the respect for life, dignity, and the rights of all persons. Nursing care is given a context mindful of the holistic nature of humans, understanding the body-mind-emotion-spirit. Nursing care is unrestricted by considerations of nationality, race, creed, color, age, sex, sexual preference, politics, or social status. Given that nurses practice in culturally diverse settings, professional nurses must have an understanding of the cultural background of clients in order to provide culturally appropriate interventions.

Nurses render services to clients who can be individuals, families, groups, or communities. The client is an active participant in health care and should be included in all nursing care planning decisions.

To provide services to others, each nurse has a responsibility towards the client, coworkers, nursing practice, the profession of nursing, society, and the environment.

**Nurses and Self**

The nurse has a responsibility to model health care behaviors. Holistic nurses strive to achieve harmony in their own lives and assist others striving to do the same.

**Nurses and the Client**

The nurse's primary responsibility is to the client needing nursing care. The nurse strives to see the client as whole and provides care that is professionally appropriate and culturally consonant. The nurse holds in confidence all information obtained in professional practice and uses professional judgment in disclosing such information. The nurse enters into a relationship with the client that is guided by mutual respect and a desire for growth and development.

**Nurse and Co-workers**

The nurse maintains cooperative relationships with co-workers in nursing and other fields. Nurses have a responsibility to nurture each other and to assist nurses to work as a team in the interest of client care. If a client's care is endangered by a coworker, the nurse must take appropriate action on behalf of the client.

**Nurses and Nursing Practice**

The nurse carries personal responsibility for practice and for maintaining continued competence. Nurses have the right to use all appropriate nursing interventions and have the obligation to determine the efficacy and safety of all nursing actions. Wherever applicable, nurses use research findings in directing practice.
Nurses and the Profession
The nurse plays a role in determining and implementing desirable standards of nursing practice and education and research. Holistic nurses may assume a leadership position to guide the profession towards a holistic philosophy of practice. Nurses support nursing research and the development of holistically oriented nursing theories. The nurse participates in establishing and maintaining equitable social and economic working conditions in nursing.

Nurses and Society
The nurse, along with other citizens, has the responsibility for initiating and supporting actions to meet the health and social needs of the public.

Nurses and the Environment
Nurses strive to create a client environment to be one of peace, harmony, and nurturance so that healing may take place. The nurse considers the health of the ecosystem in relation to the need for health, safety, and peace of all persons.

Revised and re-approved by AHNA, 2007
References


