

Keeping the Center: *Leadership Resilience Through Shared Learning*

April Novotny, MSN, RN, CEN, Melanie Foltz, MSN, RN, Todd Griner, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, Brandi McDonald, MSN, RN, CMSRN, CNML, Peg Parniawski, MSN, RN, and Carol Palmer, MSN, MBA, RN



In 2015, the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) launched the inaugural Nurse Director Fellowship. The fellowship is a year-long professional development program designed to provide an immersive educational experience for nurse directors. The only program of its kind, the Nurse Director Fellowship strives to support the Institute of Medicine's Future of Nursing report's recommendation to prepare and enable nurses to lead change to advance health. The core curriculum focuses on strengthening leader-

ship, enhancing the ability to lead change, developing innovative strategies for addressing challenges in the health care system, and the need for continued life-long learning to sustain the next generation of successful nurse executives. Experts in health care and other fields, including leadership, influence, and advocacy, offer a robust action learning environment. Diverse, shared learning experiences are utilized to strengthen leadership skills over multiple domains. Throughout sessions, participants are challenged to push boundaries, get out of their comfort zone, and allow themselves to become vulnerable within the group. Through shared learning, they develop leadership resilience to withstand the challenges that lie ahead.

Oxford Dictionary defines cohort as “a group of people banded together.”¹ Developing a group of strangers into a cohort is imperative to create a rich environment where shared learning can thrive. During fellowship sessions, AONE leaders open each morning by asking for a “check-in” phrase and end each day with a “check-out” phrase. This daily ritual helps the team establish an immediate touch point between leaders. Fellows quickly gauge the emotional tenor of the room, and identify shared experience. A simple phrase such as “I am anxious” helps other leaders in the room identify with the sentiment expressed and allow a greater understanding of the emotional viewpoint of their peer. Self-reflection is prompted by the session leaders through open-ended ques-

tions such as “What is your greatest accomplishment in leadership?” or “What is your Achilles heel?” Eventually, this shared communication style evolved into “small circle conversations” where the team addressed difficult leadership topics while maintaining a fairly informal structure, with mentors asking clarifying questions and speaking one at a time. This type of conversation style is prevalent throughout the AONE Fellowship sessions, and creates a circle of trust and mentorship with a team of diverse backgrounds.

ACTION LEARNING: BONDING AND REFLECTING

The framework for the Nurse Director Fellowship is built upon the foundation of action learning.² “Action learning is

an educational process where people work and learn together by tackling real issues and through reflection. Participants in action learning sets learn through exploring and reflecting actual actions and practice rather than through traditional instruction.” (Walia, 2014). The action learning process includes a real problem that is important, critical, and usually complex; a diverse problem-solving team or “set”; a process that promotes curiosity, inquiry, and reflection; a requirement that talk be converted into action and, ultimately, a solution; and a commitment to learning. In many forms of action learning, a coach is included who is responsible for promoting and facilitating learning as well as encouraging the team to be self-managing. In addition, the learning acquired by working on complex, critical, and urgent problems that have no currently acceptable solutions can be applied by individual, teams, and organizations to other situations. The theory of action learning was developed originally by Reg Revans, who applied the method to support organizational and business development, problem solving and leadership improvement.” (Revans, 1982).

Action learning is a continuous process that involves growth and reflection. The environment created through action learning encourages colleague-to-colleague support and is grounded in the relationship between action and reflection. The person experiencing the problem is the one who determines the best solution based on the support and challenges from the “set.”

Key concepts of action learning include:

- Empathy is key in helping a person discover his or her potential
- Empowering one another facilitates action
- Attending the dialogue with clear focus and presence
- Trust and confidentiality are paramount, as sharing aspects of a problem may make you vulnerable
- Taking time to see the whole picture
- Being respectful as to how far you push someone beyond their comfort zone

During the fellowship session, the participants applied the principles of action learning in a small group setting. Initial roles were selected to include: the story teller to present the problem (5 minutes), the “set” asked questions to explore and prompt reflection from the story teller (10 minutes), and the observer managed the debrief and facilitated the group process. Through this process, trust, patience, and understanding were developed. The action learning exercise emphasized the importance of self-reflection as a tool for each of us to use on our own leadership journey.

SALON: INTERACTIONS AND COMMUNICATION

The concept of salon was introduced to the Director Fellowship by Pam Thompson, chief executive officer of AONE. Salons originated in ancient Greece, and became popular in Italy and France as a forum for socialization, gossip, communication, and defining norms in a community. The dedicated time and safe environment for in-depth exploration of a topic allow innovative ideas and advanced thought processes to take root.

The salon session focused on thoughtful questions and asked the following questions:

1. What do you want to learn?
2. What do you want to discuss?
3. What do you dream about, think about, worry about?

The group shared common concerns about nursing workloads, engaging the work force, keeping nurses at the bedside, patient safety, regulatory pressures, and financial stressors in the work place. Personal concerns verbalized focused on achieving political savviness, being authentic, work-life balance, and achieving an executive presence. All of the personal leadership concerns were transformed into future program presentations.

Each salon session requires the use of open-ended questions that provoke a thoughtful response, helping the fellow define the desired outcome. One example offered was to use “How might we...”: “How might we take better care of our patients?” Using this technique frees the director from being the problem solver and helps engage others to be part of the solution.

As health care leaders, focus is often placed on directing the activities of others to achieve common goals. Leadership requires multifaceted attributes: honesty, communication, inspiration, commitment, humor and creativity to name a few. Nursing directors have intense workloads, requiring a variety of skills on any given day to meet the needs of the organization. During salon and action learning exercises, nurses are challenged to slow down and allow time for reflection. Slowing down a frantic work environment requires thoughtful planning. Because the work environment demands a fast pace, trying to slow it down is a radical change. A gift directors receive from the fellowship is time to allow thoughtful reflection on challenging the current conversations at work. Fellows were tasked with scheduling a meeting where team members converse and explore new topics without an agenda, allowing a free flow of ideas to promote innovative thinking among the group. Innovation and revolutionary ideas may falter as unintended consequences of the current structured work environment. Through introspective reflection and the cohesive community of the salon, teams can feel safe to explore ideas and rediscover a passion for nursing.

TOTAL LEADERSHIP: BE AN AUTHENTIC LEADER

Distinguished professor Stew Friedman from the Wharton School of Business led the director fellows in sessions focused on how to lead with impact on all areas of life. The group was challenged to become “scientists in the laboratory of their own lives.” A leader’s most precious asset is their attention, and where their attention is focused should be a purposeful decision. Friedman teaches that there are 4 domains that must be in harmony. The domains include: work/career, home/family, community/society, and self: mind, body, and spirit. Each fellow was charged to take action to find harmony over the course of a lifetime and not in any single moment.³

Several exercises were utilized to develop a plan for a better life, and each member was asked, “What will a day in your life look like in 15 years?” Using the life narrative as an anchor to

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2671637>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2671637>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)