



Featured Graduate: Ruby Ruby Whalen, DNP, MSN, RN, NC-BC

My nursing career began over 30 years ago in Canada when I graduated from a diploma program. Since then, my love for learning and nursing has brought me to continue with my formal education and obtain an MSN and DNP, both which focused on nursing education. Throughout this time, I have utilized integrative therapies, including energy-based modalities, aromatherapy, and mindfulness to benefit myself, patients, and colleagues. I joined the American Holistic Nurses Association (ANHA) in the early 1990's and have learned so much about practicing as a holistic nurse. Nurse well-being and professional development are my passions, and I have presented on these topics at national and international nursing conferences.

In 2012, I assumed the role of a hospital-based educator. After years away from the in-patient setting, I was surprised to discover the prevalence of burnout and compassion fatigue among bedside nurses. I began to use integrative approaches to help nurses. In 2016 I discovered nurse coaching and Wisdom of the Whole. This was life changing. It provided me with the knowledge and tools I needed in my desire to enhance the lives of nurses. I completed the coaching program and became a board-certified nurse coach in 2017. Since then, I have also completed Wisdom of the Whole's Sharing Circle facilitator training and found it immensely helpful in supporting nurses during the pandemic.

As a hospital-based nurse educator, I used my training as a coach to teach nurses tools to manage stress and improve their well-being. I also provided private coaching sessions, sharing circles, and workshops to nurses across their career continuum. When I enrolled in a DNP program in 2020, I took a deep dive into nurse coaching as a resource to support direct care nurses. My DNP project evaluated the effectiveness of a pilot program consisting of a toolkit of short techniques and support by a nurse coach on burnout, self-compassion, and professional quality of life in direct care nurses. Quantitative data indicated the program was effective in decreasing burnout and post-secondary stress and improving self-compassion. However, qualitative data showed the true value of how nurse coaches can benefit direct care nurses. As the nurses shared their experiences in a sharing circle format, themes that emerged included experiencing the program as a "lifeboat", improved relationships with colleagues and patients, that "all nurses should have this support", improved self-care and self-compassion and experiencing less burnout and stress. Perhaps the best validation was the desire of participants to share it with colleagues and patients, and their hope that such a program should be included in nursing curriculums.

While nurse coaching has been pivotal for me in helping nurses develop self-compassion, resiliency and to rekindle their passion for nursing, perhaps the greatest effect has been its role in my relationship to self. Nurse coaching encourages our own development through self-care and self- reflection. The structures of consciousness used in the Wisdom of the Whole framework provide us with the tools to learn about and support ourselves on all levels of being and knowing.

I recently left the hospital setting to pursue my dreams of teaching nursing students and to build a private practice focusing on nurses and health care clinicians. I am currently developing the project into a program than can be customized for individuals, organizations, and schools.

If you would like to connect with Ruby, you can find her on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram:

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