In June, Dr. Karen Drenkard, chief nurse of the O’Neil Center at GetWellNetwork, and I were the “bookend” presenters of the day. (Bookend presenters are the opening and closing keynote speeches.) The prior day, the bookends were Dr. Diana Mason and Dr. Maryann Fralic. Diana began by talking about what she learned from the Edge Runners, a project of the American Academy of Nursing, and Maryann shared her insights from her years of work in leadership in nursing. Karen shared what she learned from her mentors, and I shared what I learned from the conference and facilitated the participants in sharing what ideas they gained to carry them into tomorrow. My job was easy because so much great content was shared.

However, I want to focus on what Karen shared. She talked about how nurses have influence in many situations, and she referenced several mentors. Although Karen acknowledged that she did not know her personally(!), she noted that Florence Nightingale was an inspiration and that she was ahead of her time in offering ideas that changed how care was provided, including data collection and the use of statistics to provide evidence.

Karen also acknowledged Dr. Margretta Madden Styles for her visionary leadership of the International Council of Nurses, the American Nurses Association, and the American Nurses Credentialing Center. In each of these organizations, Gretta served as president and offered different thinking about what was happening at the time. From Gretta, Karen identified that she learned the power of influence.

Another nurse leader who influenced the profession was Loretta Ford. From Dr. Ford, Karen noted that she learned the point of “standing alone.” Dr. Ford was the dean of nursing at the University of Colorado and helped create the role of nurse practitioner. By supporting the model of nurse practitioners through much resistance and turmoil (a lot of which derived from nurses), Dr. Ford assured the future of an important element of our profession. As this role was “birthed” in continuing education and transitioned to degree-granting status at the graduate level, the face of nursing changed. Although not often popular, Dr. Ford stood alone to lead this part of the nursing profession forward.

Karen shared other stories, but my favorite was the one she told about Gertrude Rodgers. The lesson was one of tenacity. Karen and a colleague were charged with spearheading an unpopular project that would culminate in a presentation to the medical committee of the facility where they worked. They completed the work and a stakeholder analysis, then they presented the proposal to the committee and were soundly defeated in their attempt to make this change. When they reported to Ms. Rodgers that they had failed and were dejected, and that they saw no options to continue the work, Ms. Rodgers had none of it. She suggested that they would just have to keep going back to the medical executive committee until they were successful. They did, and they were!

Tenacity often is described as the characteristic difference between a good leader and a great leader—what a valuable lesson!

Here is the big point of this editorial: we learn from others every day. A lot of it is informal learning, things we grasp in our minds as we are busy doing other things. What a talent to capture those moments and learn from them! Reflecting about how the day went, what learning occurred, what great comments had real meaning—these are examples of what we gain from reflecting about what we do.

Reflections as Content
This “continuing education” has no documentation. You do not submit a report at the end of the week and earn credit, but in the scheme of life, we can attribute a lot to casual learning. We simply must take time to reflect on what influenced us and how we became who we are. What might happen if you set aside 10 minutes at the end of each day to reflect on how you were influenced—and how you influenced others? This is nursing’s time to make huge strides, and we need to take advantage of all the tools at our disposal. I encourage you to put reflection in your toolbox!

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