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Professional Resilience Through Continuing Education—A Possible Benefit

My continuing education (CE) journey began as an opportunity to spend a day with my mom and became the beginning of my lifelong love for inspiring and informative CE. At the time, my mom was a nurse administrator at a small local hospital, and I was a sophomore in college at home for spring break. I had selected nursing as my major, and my mother wisely thought we should attend this CE day together. As I recall, I was happy about spending time together and having a free lunch, but I was dreading the early conference start time. The keynote speaker for the day was Dr. Elizabeth Kubler Ross. I had vaguely heard of her work on grief and death and dying, but I had no idea how powerful her presentation and the workshops for the day would be for me. On the ride home, I could not stop discussing the key points and the new information I had absorbed at this event. I was energized. As my career progressed, this inability to turn off the discussion after I had left the conference became a hallmark sign of an excellent CE experience.

Moving forward to college graduation and my career as a nurse, I found CE attendance became not only an opportunity to pursue knowledge in practice areas of interest (as it is for all nurses), but it also became an opportunity to network, meet new colleagues, and catch up with friends and colleagues from the past. The meeting topics, although important, became secondary to the chance to have a dialogue with nurses about their perspectives on the issues. I found the dialogue around the table or with the person next to me in auditorium seats to be as enriching as the keynote presentation or the education sessions I had

selected to attend. CE events with my new and previous nurse colleagues from all over the state or country became a source of energy needed for renewal of my commitment to my professional practice. I often left the conference riding or flying home with a colleague, thereby extending the topic dialogue long after the meeting had ended with that feeling of renewal I love.

To date, my years as a nurse are almost equivalent to the years of my mother's nursing career, and I have had so many inspiring CE opportunities in the past 42 years. My career moved to nursing education, one of the many joys of my life. Today, conference attendance or online CE are more important than ever with the rapidly changing health care environment and the complexity of my profession as a nurse and an educator. My CE attendance has moved beyond attending conferences with my nurse colleagues, which I still enjoy, to interprofessional educational opportunities.

I have discovered a great deal of important information from my colleagues in education, medicine, pharmacy, and social work. One example occurred after I attended a workshop in the College of Education where I heard about the methodology of scaffolding from a colleague in education. As you might guess, when I returned, I could not stop discussing how helpful the concepts of scaffolding would be to nursing clinical education. Scaffolding clinical learning then became the primary delivery method for a very intensive 1-year accelerated nursing program. Thank you, colleagues in education, for inviting nursing in and sharing your knowledge.

I have loved learning new innovations and evidence throughout my career. CE attendance has provided an opportunity to learn from experts who share new knowledge and present a unique lens for viewing a problem. The nurse who inspires you with side conversations after a presentation on how to make the topic really work in practice is one of my favorite encounters during a conference. These discussions ignite my brain!

In addition, CE has become very important to my continued excitement for my professional work. I do believe

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that in some small way, CE attendance renews our professional strength. We spend a day away from the work setting, hearing the best evidence presented, chatting with colleagues, having a great lunch or dinner, and networking, and then we return to our work life ready to change the

world of health care. Following a CE event, we are armed with new knowledge and skills, combined with an attitude of “I can do this.” Is it possible that CE attendance also serves as a source for building resilience in a very demanding profession?