

POSITION STATEMENT

NURSE WELL-BEING

Written by the members of the ANA-Michigan Nursing Practice and Nursing & Health Policy Committees

“The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth.” -Provision 5 of the Code of Ethics for Nurses.

When flying, flight attendants’ instructions include putting your mask on first before assisting others.

This analogy offers a valuable lesson: Nurses must care for themselves before caring for humanity. While nurses tend to the needs of others, often their own self-care and well-being can be compromised. Nurses, according to the ANA (2017) “must be safeguarded, and that ill-health should not be an inevitable by-product of dedicated nursing practice”. Addressing this issue is of critical importance and it raises awareness for organizations who hire nurses, policy makers, and nurses alike to prioritize self-care and well-being practices.

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE:

ANA-Michigan believes that nurses care for others with compassion and selflessness (Hofmeyer, 2020). In a culture of care that promotes long hours, heavy physical and mental labor, continuous levels of stress and conflict, nurses are subjected to abuse, moral challenges, fatigue (physical and mental), and burnout. Nurses tend to neglect self-care when they are caring for others. ANA-Michigan understands that the quality of care delivered to others by nurses is directly linked to their level of self-care and well-being. ANA-Michigan believes that it is a collective responsibility of the nurse, health care organization, policy maker, and society as whole to address and support the needs of the nurse to care for themselves. Putting our own “masks” on first is a crucial element of self-care, and it is the ANA-MI position that self-care for nurses is a necessity and not a luxury.

Self-Care and Well-Being is a Nursing Responsibility:
In alignment with the ANA Scopes and Standards of Nursing Practice 4th Edition, the importance of Nurse Self-Care and Well-Being is addressed:

1. Ethics: Engages in self-care and self-reflection practices to support, and preserve personal health, well-being, and integrity (p.90).
 2. Mindfulness: Recognizing the relationship between resilience and burnout to understand how patterns affect the nurse and how the nurse responds to these patterns. Through the act of self-compassion and deep awareness, nurses can strengthen helpful patterns and reshape unhelpful ones. (p. 66).
 3. Workplace Safety: Assuring there is an adequate pipeline of nurses to support levels of care, development of competencies, and inclusion of nurses in “rapid improvements and care delivery innovation is critical in addressing physical and psychologically safe work environments” (p. 64).
 4. Structural Competency: Prioritizing social justice and health equity in organizational and political policy to address social determinants of health such as wages, enforcement of safety standards, and differentials in power supports the nurse’s ability to achieve autonomy and self-determination regarding self-care and well-being practices (p. 62).
- I. The Importance of Nurse Self-Care and Well-Being:
1. Impact on Workforce: With over 1 million nurses expected to retire between 2020 and 2030 self-care and well-being of nurses has a direct impact on retention and providing high-quality patient care (Wakefield, et al., 2021).
 2. Impact on the Health Care System: Nurses and other Health Care Providers are responsible for role modeling healthy practices. Without access to tools and resources to attend to their own self-care and well-being, the nurses’ physical and mental response to high-stress care environments perpetuates illness and disease, adding to the negative impact on today’s health care system. Developing policy that supports a person-centered approach because “self carers and care givers are at the Centre of the framework that is focused on health and

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well-being” (Narashimahn, et al., 2019).

3. Impact on Patient Safety and Quality of Care: Nurses experience a rate of burnout higher than any other health care professional. Burnout impacts the nurse’s ability to make clear judgments and decisions in practice directly impacting the level of patient safety leading to increased errors and suboptimal levels of care (Ryu & Shim, 2021).
4. Impact on Nurses: Nurses, like all patients and communities they care for, have a right to good physical and mental health. There is a fundamental moral responsibility for the support and promotion of this well-being between the nurse, the health care organization, policy makers, and society. Nurses’ well-being “is central to provision of health care and to the viability of the health care system” (Munroe & Hope, 2022).

II. Strategies for Promoting Nurse Self-Care and Well-Being:

1. Education:

- a. Integration of nurse self-care and well-being practices into nursing curriculum. The complexities of the patients, workload, and dealing with a national nursing shortage make learning how to manage stress a pivotal component to creating healthy working environments.
- b. Development of continuing education programs to teach about self-care and well-being practices that include stress and time management, communication and conflict management, development of resiliency, and awareness strategies for physical and mental health response.

The ANA Code of Ethics states in provision 5 “... nurses should eat a healthy diet, exercise, get sufficient rest, maintain family and personal relationships, engage in adequate leisure and recreational activities, and attend to spiritual or religious needs.” ANA-Michigan has a webpage dedicated to self-care that has comprehensive tips for self-care and it can be found at <https://ana-michigan.org/Nurse-Well-Being-Resources>.

2. Policy:

- a. Development of health care organization policies that prioritize self-care and well-being expectations for nurses and meeting social determinants of health responsibilities to promote access and equity in self-care and well-being tools and resources. Policies that ban bullying, incivility and harassment (Mihdawi et al., 2020).
- b. Development of policies and legislation that regulate staffing requirements, minimize mandatory overtime, and promote self-care and well-being practices within health care organizations.

3. Resources:

- a. Mental Health: Provide free and easy access to confidential mental health resources such as counselling services (virtual and in-person), event debriefing services, and mental health days.
- b. Relaxation resources: Provide free and easy access to exercise equipment and locations, meditation and prayer rooms, yoga and exercise classes, art classes, and massage therapy.
- c. Retention: Ensure nurses remain undisturbed on days off work and ensure policies are supportive of no mandatory overtime. Implement job sharing programs, flexible scheduling programs, and allow for shorter work hour options.
- d. Environment: Prioritize nurse well-being through reduced workloads for precepting and training, mentoring programs, peer support programs, and undisturbed break periods.

4. Leadership:

- a. Develop leadership training programs that prioritize nurse self-care and well-being
- b. Develop incentives for nurse leaders to promote and support nurse self-care and well-being.
- c. Include prioritization of self-care and well-being practices in evaluation criteria.
- d. Provide resources for front line leadership to engage in

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- and support nurse self-care and well-being practices.
- e. In alignment with evidence-based practice develop and prioritize organizational goals measuring self-care and well-being outcomes in nursing.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR NURSES: CREATE A SELF-CARE PLAN

To develop a self-care plan, the most effective method is to utilize what nurses do: the nursing process.

Assessment: To take inventory of self-care activities, nurses can conduct an assessment. This involves nurses taking an honest look at wellness dimensions proposed by Ruben (2015) and is an active process of making choices to enhance wellness (see Table 1). The needs assessment should include any self-care deficits, priorities, and activities that bring joy and excitement. A review of current self-care practices, including an in-depth review of whether the self-care practices are beneficial or ineffective, should also be incorporated.

Table 1: Aspects of wellness based on Ruben (2015)

Wellness Dimension	Nursing action
Emotion	Cope effectively with life & create relationships to improve health
Social	Develop a sense of connection, belonging, and well-developed support system
Spirit	Expand sense of purpose & meaning in life
Occupation & Intellect	Satisfaction and enrichment is derived from work while being creative to expand knowledge
Physical	Recognize need for physical activity, diet, sleep & nutrition

Diagnosis: Following a comprehensive assessment, the next step is to focus on areas for self-care growth while identifying applicable self-care activities.

Plan: Here, nurses can develop and design individualized self-care plans personalized to their specific areas of improvement. It should be noted that both short and long-term goals are helpful when considering varying self-care activities.

Implement: When implementing self-care plans, dedication is needed, along with self-compassion. Seeking assistance from peers, colleagues, and family/friends can improve adherence to their personalized self-care plans.

Evaluate: When assessing if the self-care plan is effective, nurses should review and readjust interventions regularly and modify them if needed. If the interventions are more of a hindrance, modification is needed to achieve beneficial results.

III. Conclusion:

Nurses are the foundation of today's health care system. Nurses should care as much for themselves as they do their patients. Evidence identifies that nurse self-care and well-being are of primary importance; these issues can have a significant impact on the health care system, patient care outcomes and nurses themselves. The evidence is clear that nurse self-care and well-being is a shared responsibility between the nurse, the health care organization, policy makers, and society as whole. Self-care is not an extravagance, it is essential for all nurses. Nurses are taught that we must care "for ourselves so we can care for others" (Hofmeyer, et. al., 2020). It is time to put this into practice.

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