



Coaching and Job Satisfaction for the Nursing Professional

by Pam Williams, ACC

In today's rapidly changing work environment, career development and satisfaction are the responsibility of the individual nurse. A professional coach can provide an unbiased and non-judgmental environment to help an individual examine how their own choices and behaviors impact job satisfaction and can also help identify strategies to improve satisfaction and fulfillment.

Consider Susan, a mature nurse working in a rural area of the country. For many years, Susan had loved her job. She enjoyed interacting with patients and their families, and they frequently acknowledged her for the compassionate care she provided. She appreciated the easy camaraderie she shared with her nursing colleagues.

Because of recent changes in her work environment, however, Susan was beginning to feel like a stranger in a strange land. Many of her colleagues had retired and she found herself surrounded by a team of younger nurses.

Susan was exhausted from working extra shifts because of a nursing shortage at her facility. She was baffled and resentful when her younger colleagues refused to do so.

Susan also found it difficult to learn the new technology that the younger nurses so easily grasped. She felt inadequate because she frequently had to ask her co-workers to explain the technology to her. She could hear the impatience and frustration in their voices.

Susan's stress was so intense that she was beginning to feel physically ill.

Because the only other real job opportunities were more than 30 miles away, Susan felt like she had no choice except to stay. Since there was no magic wand in sight, she turned to a professional coach for help.

The Center for American Nurses is a professional association whose mission is to create healthy work environments through advocacy, education, and research.

Susan and her coach first brainstormed ways to reduce her stress. Susan started a regular exercise program, began listening to her favorite music on her way to and from work and found ways to tickle her funny bone on a regular basis. She started to take a few moments each day to focus on things she was grateful for. Susan also connected more frequently with supportive colleagues and friends.

Once Susan was feeling calmer, she and her coach turned their focus to reframing some of her negative beliefs and attitudes. Instead of berating herself for not quickly grasping new technology, she reminded herself that everyone learns differently. She sought out books, videos and other resources to help her learn. She felt better about asking for help and was very appreciative, thanking her colleagues for taking time out of their busy days to help her.

Susan also realized that there was nothing she could do about the fact that her co-workers didn't volunteer for extra shifts. Her resentment was simply fueling her stress. When she felt the resentment start to rise, she reframed her decision to work extra shifts as a choice and focused on the benefits she derived from that choice. She reminded herself that she too was free to say no to the extra work.

Finally, Susan decided to learn everything she could about generational differences. This new-found knowledge helped her understand their perspective a little better, appreciate the value her new colleagues brought to the workplace, and realize that there were things she could learn from the "youngsters."

While things didn't miraculously change overnight, Susan could definitely see incremental improvements in her job satisfaction because of the actions she took. The coach didn't make Susan's work environment better – Susan did. The coach simply provided Susan with a safe, confidential environment in which she could discuss the challenges, asked thoughtful questions which allowed Susan to shift her own perspective and brainstormed next action steps Susan could take to improve the situation.

A professional coach can be an integral part of a nurse's career support team. The Center for American Nurses has launched a new coaching program designed to help nurses connect with professional coaches familiar with the diverse aspects of a nursing career.

Pam Williams, ACC, is the Chief Innergy Officer and Internationally Certified Coach at Innergized! and is working closely with the Center for American Nurses.

To provide information about the coaching program, we will be offering a series of informational tele-forums on:

- 2/12 1:30 - 2:15 PM Eastern
- 2/18 8:00 - 8:45 AM Eastern
- 2/24 7:00 - 7:45 PM Eastern

To participate in an informational tele-forum, call (218) 844-8230 at the appointed time. The participant access code for these calls is 875498#.

