

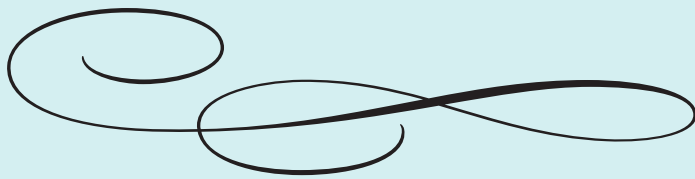
A sunburst graphic with several rays of light in shades of pink and teal emanating from the top center of the page.

Inspired

NURSE



RICH BLUNI, RN
FOREWORD BY QUINT STUDER



INTRODUCTION

PART I: THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

Most nurses, when we first begin our journey, could hardly feel more inspired. Being a nurse is the very *definition* of inspiring. After all, our work saves lives. It helps sick people heal. Nurses are present at those sacred moments when patients leave this world and those joyful moments when new life enters it. We ease pain. We help patients and the people who love them get through some of the toughest challenges they will ever face.

It's a privilege to touch lives in such profound ways.

That's what most of us are thinking on our first day at the hospital or medical practice or home healthcare agency. And it's true. There *is* something special, something life-affirming and awe inspiring, about being a nurse.

Problem is, it's not always easy to sustain that feeling. Roadblocks rise up under your feet and deplete the energy that once fueled your

Inspiration fuels passion. Passion encourages action. Action changes the world.

PART II: THE DAY I ASKED “THE QUESTION”

Why am I doing this? That’s The Question. Sooner or later, all nurses ask it.

It’s good to ask questions. It is, after all, what smart people do.

I remember when I asked The Question for the first time. I was in my late twenties and working in a busy Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. In my time there, I held the hands of many dying children and their parents. I saw valiant struggles, brave battles, and heartbreaking losses. It was, and remains, the toughest job I have ever had. The team members I worked alongside were, and are still, my heroes. I may not have been the best among them, but I was among the best for sure.

What led me to question my life’s path was a little girl. She was brought to us clinging to life. Her mother’s boyfriend had beaten her mercilessly for the simple transgression of eating his French fries. She was small, frail, and helpless. Her mother was in jail. I do not recall any family, only the kind lawyer who was her court-appointed guardian.

The court agreed to remove her from life support. She was deemed brain-dead. I had only recently become a dad, so this felt different from the other children who had come before. It hit closer to home.

As we began the process of disconnecting her and administering medications, we all looked knowingly at each other, communicating in that

silent way nurses do when they have worked together for awhile. We all knew that she deserved to be surrounded by love in these last moments.

I wrapped a blanket around her, lifted her from the bed, cradled her in my arms, and sat down in a rocking chair. We closed the curtain around the bed. The physician, a wonderful young woman who also recently became a parent, and several of the other nurses all gathered around. Quietly. Respectfully. I don't know why I did it, but I began singing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." It was the song I sang to my infant son to lull him to sleep.

I doubt anyone had ever sung this little girl a song, or rocked her to sleep. Certainly not her unknown father. Certainly not the animal that did this to her. The old cigarette burn marks, bruises, and scars spread out all over her small body told a different story, not of lullabies but of nightmares. I sang to her. Quietly. Respectfully. I don't remember if the others sang along. I think they might have. I cried. They cried. Her heartrate slowed, her breathing slowed. She died in my arms.

We all touched her as if to give to her that which she never had. She was not the first child I saw leave this world and she would not be the last, but I remember her. Having a four-year-old die in your arms is tough. It was then that I asked The Question for the first time: *Why am I doing this?*

Have you asked that question? I am sure that you have. Probably a few hundred times if your career has been long enough. I could never come up with the answer until I began working with Studer Group®. Quint Studer, the founder of Studer Group, summed it up for me in a few simple words: *Purpose, Worthwhile Work and Making a Difference.* That is why we do this. That is why I did this.

I work as a coach and a speaker with Studer Group now. I no longer hold the hands of dying children or ride in the back of ambulances or pray at the bedside with scared families or loved ones. My work has changed, but my love for those who still teach nurses, work at the bedside, or lead those that do, remains.

I hear their stories everywhere I travel. They are passionate, these nurses. They give so much. They are nurses twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This book is for them, for you. I pray that it will touch you, make you smile, and maybe inspire you. I hope you read on.



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CHAPTER

19

INSPIRATION DESTINATION: MAKE A WHY-I'M-GRATEFUL-FOR- BEING-A-NURSE LIST

THE RED NOTEBOOK

I procrastinate. Sometimes, I procrastinate so much that it takes me a little while to get around to procrastinating. I also have Attention Deficit Disorder so I need help staying organized. (I'm pretty sure I had ADD as a kid. But they didn't call it ADD back then. They called it "detention.")

Actually, I do actually get a lot done for someone as distracted as I am, but it helps me to make lists. At least I thought it did. I read recently that lists are actually a *bad* idea for people who are prone to procrastinating, because the procrastinator spends her/his time writing the lists instead of doing the stuff on the lists, thus, procrastinating even more.

I was a little upset when I read that because I thought I found a good way to get organized. Well, I'm not actually sure if the article totally puts down lists because I got a little distracted when I was reading the article and I didn't actually read the entire thing—just the first part. But I tore it out of the magazine and I do plan on reading it in a little while

when I get around to it. I actually added reading the article to my list of things I need to get done. Maybe I'll learn something. You never know where knowledge will come from.

(See what I mean? Now, on with the story!)

Ron was a successful businessman with a close-knit family. He was also a fit guy who worked out every day, which is what brought him into my life. One morning, while jogging, he was hit by a car and suffered several traumatic injuries.

I met Ron and his family during his road to recovery while he was undergoing rehabilitation. His wife sought me out to assist them with some legal papers while I was a director of risk management. His wife told me that Ron had partial paralysis of the right side of his body, had difficulty speaking, and could not yet walk without assistance.

When I went to Ron's room I expected to see a man at the low point of his life. To my surprise, he greeted me, extended his left hand, and said jokingly, "I don't like my right hand to know what my left hand is doing."

Frankly, I had expected someone a little less energetic and a little more depressed. Heck, I would've been.

As I went through all of the paperwork with them, he continued to tease and joke around. When we got to discussing some decisions about healthcare surrogates he joked, "I think my wife was the one driving the car that hit me. She was pretty mad at me for leaving the toilet seat up that morning. I don't know if I want her in charge of pulling the plug!" They both had a good laugh at that.

Ron's wife had to go pick up their six-year-old son from school, so I offered to sit with him for a few minutes. We got to talking about life and I had to ask him a question. "Ron, I hope you don't mind my asking you this, but how are you managing to stay so positive through all of this?"

He motioned to his side table where I noticed a red notebook. "Open that," he said. I did and I began to read.

Inside was a list and it covered dozens of pages. He told me that he had dictated some of it, but being a lefty he was able to write some as well.

"This is my list of reasons to keep going," Ron said. "I have a lot going against me right now. I haven't had a paycheck in two months. I may never regain some of my physical abilities and even some mental ones. My memory is not the same and they told me that they don't know what I will get back

"But if I live there, in that 'place of can't,' if I lay here thinking about that, what good is that going to do me?" he continued. "So, instead, my wife and I decided to list all of the reasons that I should go on—all the things that I am grateful for."

I couldn't believe how long the list was. "Go on," he said. "Read them."

There were so many items on the list. Ron had started each page with, "I am very grateful for..." and then on each line wrote a gratitude sentence. For example:

"That I was jogging the morning I was hit rather than biking with Jake (his little boy) riding in the child seat."

“That I had purchased long-term disability insurance.”

“That my wife is beautiful.”

“Chocolate cake.”

It went on and on. He listed things great and small, serious and silly. He was grateful for his surgeons. He was grateful that he set the timer on his sprinklers two days before his accident so his wife wouldn't have to. He was grateful for a private room in rehabilitation. He was grateful that his business partner ordered catered meals to be sent to his home for his wife and son so they wouldn't have to worry about grocery shopping and cooking.

“If I keep my mind focused on what I am grateful for, I won't allow my thoughts to drift to all that I am worried about,” he explained. “I can't afford that. I need to heal myself for my family. They need me. My friends need me. My customers need me. I can't be there for them and 'Mr. Regret' at the same time. I only have room for gratitude. Not regret.”

His wife soon returned with their son who gave his dad a big hug. “Guess what, Daddy?” the boy said, holding up a piece of paper. “I got all my spelling words right!”

“Wow!” exclaimed Ron. “Hey, Rich, grab my list—that's another one to add!”

We wrote it down. His wife also told him to add that she found a front row parking spot, so the list grew by two items even in the few minutes I was there.

After we said our good-byes, I took the long way back to my office. I had some thinking to do. This experience really caused me to do some introspection. Where did I focus my thoughts? Just that morning I had a personal meltdown because I found a nail in my tire and had to stop on my way to work to get it plugged. Was that really such a big deal?

Also, my wonderful son was healthy, I was healthy, my wife was healthy, I could use my arms and legs and my memory was great, and I had a great job...yet I was whining about a nail, while someone like Ron was facing down a lifetime of struggle by looking for the good and filling his mind with gratitude.

I was, once again, in awe of what the folks I encountered in my nursing career could teach me. There are such great lessons out there, aren't there? I had never thought of using a list for such a thing.

Sure, you could use a list to remind you to pick up a loaf of bread, but I never thought you could use a list to pick up your spirits. I made a list that night. It felt good.

From time to time, when I feel like I am in need of elevation, I make a gratitude list. I always think of Ron. Sometimes when you least expect to learn something, you do.

**INSPIRATION DESTINATION:
MAKE A WHY-I'M-GRATEFUL-FOR-BEING-A-
NURSE LIST.**

SPIRITUAL STRETCH #1: We use lists a lot. The purpose of a list, to most people, is to write or type out things that we need to get or to get done so that we can stay on task and also so we can remember things.

Often, lists make things very tangible. When you list out what you want to get done, for example, you may find that you've added too much to the day and you need to cut back. When you can "see" something in front of your eyes, it helps you to understand it better. You can make more progress and map out a plan. Maybe it can be the same for gratitude and inspiration.

Today you will make your destination for inspiration about *gratitude*. You've probably heard about gratitude lists before. Well, now is the time to make one. And I want you to give it a different spin. I want you to focus on what you are most grateful for as it relates to being a nurse.

What do you love about being a nurse? What are the best parts? What keeps you going? What does a good day look like? Start off the list by writing, "As a nurse I am very grateful for..." and then go at it.

There is nothing too big or too small. It might be that you love wearing "pajamas" to work, as one friend noted referring to her scrubs, rather than having to fuss over uncomfortable suits and skirts. It might be that you save lives, help people, relieve pain. Be general and be specific.

Your destination is to realize that you have much to be inspired about *already* in your nursing life. It is right in front of you.

You do worthwhile work as a nurse. Sure, your days can be long and the work can be hard, but you have a job. Some can only wish for the job security that many in nursing enjoy. Find gratitude. Focus on it. Be relentless in your pursuit of that which you are grateful for. Flood your mind and your journal with words of gratitude. This creates a "grateful plateful" upon which your inspiration will feed.

Sometimes when we feel like our passion has dipped or we feel discouraged, it is easy to focus on the nail in the tire. But think this way: You have three tires that don't have a nail. You didn't blow a tire going seventy miles per hour and wreck your car. Be grateful for that.

Gratitude will lead you to inspiration. Inspiration will increase your gratitude. It is a beautiful circle.

Walk the path paved with words of written thanks. It will lead you to places you have only dreamed about.

SPIRITUAL STRETCH #2: Do you sometimes feel that if you talk about what you are grateful for it will be taken from you, or perhaps that it will make you sound "full of yourself"? Some of us may have been raised that way. We are actually afraid of gratitude! Isn't that mindboggling?

Challenge yourself here to break through that fear. This is about being grateful for the good in your nursing life, not about you having more power or being smarter or making more money than "another nurse." So there is no "conceit" involved. Practice being fearlessly grateful for what you do, see, hear, and experience as a nurse

CHAPTER

21

INSPIRATION DESTINATION: CREATE AFFIRMATIONS AND USE THEM TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE

THE PICTURE ON THE REFRIGERATOR

One day, my wife and I went to a friend's house to pick him up for a birthday party. He was still getting ready, so we made ourselves at home. My wife wandered into the kitchen and she called me to come in there. She wanted me to see something.

On his refrigerator were a dozen or so neatly written sentences. Some were quotes. Others were sentences written as if he were speaking to himself. One said, "I am fit and in shape. I am healthy and strong. My body is a blessing."

There was also a picture on the refrigerator. It looked like maybe it could be my friend's older brother—a much heavier older brother.

As we were looking at the notes and the picture, my friend came into the kitchen. "Oh, I see you found some of my affirmations," he said. "I have them everywhere—in my bathroom, in my car, pretty much everywhere. I know it may seem weird but it really helps me."

I found this fascinating. I was about to ask him more about the affirmations when my wife said, “Who is this guy in the picture? He looks like you, but I didn’t know you had a brother.”

“Oh no, that is me. Well, it *was* me, about 160 pounds ago!”

We were astonished. My friend couldn’t have been more than 150 pounds. It seemed he had lost half his previous body weight! It was amazing.

“How did you lose all of that weight?” I asked.

He invited us to sit down. He was quiet for a second, and then he began to tell his story:

“I was always an unhealthy and overweight kid. My dad was very abusive and would tease me about being overweight. The more he did, the more I ate. My mom left him when I was still young, but the words that he used still lived in my head. They became my words.

“I hated being unhealthy. I hated feeling bad about myself. No matter what I tried—diets, pills, personal trainers—it would only work for awhile and then I would fall into the same patterns.

“It was more than just watching what I ate. I also got myself into major debt. I used shopping to feel better. I would buy things that I neither needed nor could afford. I bought expensive gifts for ‘friends’ in the hopes that they would like me. It was sad, but I didn’t know any better.

“I keep the picture of my former self on the refrigerator to remind me of who I once was. I remember where I was when that picture was taken. It was at a party. There was someone there I had a major crush on. As my friend took the picture, a guy who was standing with my ‘crush’ yelled out, ‘You better use the wide lens!’

“Everyone started laughing. It was a painful moment. Once again the cruel words that people can use crept into my head. It wasn’t about just being overweight, as I believe there is beauty in people of all shapes and sizes. It was about allowing myself to be ‘abused’ and about abusing myself as well. See, I had internalized what others said about me and it became my own self-talk.

“On that day I decided that while I couldn’t control the cruelty of others and I had no power over how others would speak to me, I *did* have power and control of what I let in and what I let out. So the next day I was in a bookstore and I came across a book about affirmations. They are simply phrases that you say to yourself to affirm good things like, ‘I have much abundance in my life and I am grateful for it’ or ‘I am a lovable person and I attract love into my life.’ Things like that.

“I began using them and it started me on a very different road. Through speaking differently and ‘coaching’ myself with positive and motivating words, I began to have different pictures in my head. I began seeing and believing that I was meant to be happy and healthy, and I have not turned back since.

“Affirmations are simply conversations with yourself. They allow better, positive, and affirming words to take over space in your

head. I am not saying that I simply had to start talking to myself—don't get me wrong. But what I learned was, no matter how hard I exercised, no matter how strict I was with my diet, I still *believed* that I was an overweight and unhealthy person so nothing worked for long. Even when I would lose some weight, I still heard 'voices' in my head telling me I was ugly or useless or that I would never amount to anything.

"It sounds a bit crazy, but when I took control over what words my mind heard, it changed my soul as well. I felt better.

"The words created images in my mind. The images inspired me to achieve my goals. I began seeing progress and I got more fired up to keep going. Within a year or so, I got healthier and the weight came off. I stopped spending and I worked overtime and got an extra job to get out of debt.

"It all changed for me when I changed how I spoke to myself and made a conscious effort to comfort that little kid that still lives inside me that never heard words of praise or support. I had to be the one to do it."

He paused and looked seriously at our stunned faces. "Did I just ramble on and bore you?"

Neither my wife nor I spoke. We both stood up and gave our friend a big hug. Needless to say, there were quite a few notes stuck up on my walls that next week. I was inspired.

What an amazing story! Here was a man who came from a horrible upbringing, who had been physically and emotionally abused, and who

somehow found the tools to climb out of that. His healing was augmented by reading, counseling, and a lot of introspection.

Affirmations were one of the tools that led him toward success and joy. He still uses them today. Just so you know: Yes, the weight is still off. Yes, he is out of debt, healthy, and in a great relationship.

Yes, he still has the picture on the refrigerator. It's now in a magnetic frame that reads, "I love you." That's the ultimate affirmation.

INSPIRATION DESTINATION: CREATE AFFIRMATIONS AND USE THEM TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

SPIRITUAL STRETCH #1: Have you noticed that what you tell yourself often happens? You spill your coffee on your shirt in the morning and you say aloud, "Great, this is how my day is going to go, I can just feel it." Then you back out and run over your garbage pail, which dents your car. You get out of your car and say to yourself, "Nice! I knew this day would stink. Can't wait for the next disaster!" Then you get to work and realize you left your wallet at home and you don't have any lunch money, to which you exclaim to all who are near and far, "My life stinks!" On and on it goes.

Do you have days like that? Now, don't think for a second that I am saying that it is only what you say to yourself that is the cause of all of these calamities, but can you see even a slight connection? What you say affects how you feel, which affects how your life goes.

While this is similar to what we talked about in the Inspiration Destination that focused on words (Chapter 20), I want you to be more

proactive here. This is about using affirmations. I define affirmations as purposeful self-talk in which you affirm a positive outlook or outcome for your life. When you do this on a regular basis, it feeds your mind.

Here's a basic how-to for affirmations.

- Get some index cards. If they are too boring, use your computer to make some fancier “cards” on which you will print your affirmations. Sticky notes work, too. You want your affirmations to be written and placed in such a way that you have easy access to them and can “use” them at least daily.
- Think about what you want to change or improve in your life. This can be personal or nursing-related, but as you are on the journey for inspiration in your nursing life, make at least a few affirmations specific to that. You may want to feel healthier, more confident, more in touch with Spirit. You may want to be more caring, improve your work or personal relationships, or have an overall more positive outlook. What do you want to affect for the better? How can you be more inspired? Make a list. Think it over. There's no wrong or right here.
- After you have settled on your list of that which you want to change or improve, think about how you can state the affirmations. For example, let's say on your list you wrote that you want to have more peace in your work life. You could write the following affirmation: “I am peaceful. I am surrounded by peace. Peace flows through me. There is peace in all that I do, all that I hear, all that I say, and in all whom I meet. I am peaceful today.” State this in the positive and use “I” phrases like “I am.” I prefer to state them as if they are true or have happened already, rather than stating that they are going to be

true at a later time like “I hope.” That has worked for me. Keep your affirmations short, positive, and easy to remember. Write a few drafts. Get comfortable with them. You will know it when it works.

- Write your affirmations on your index cards or sticky notes. Remember, these affirmations are for you to read each day so think about how you can make them accessible. I know someone who painted hers on a small canvas and hung it in her bathroom. It looks good and it allows her to read them each morning as she gets ready. You can make more than one of the same affirmation so that one goes in your purse or wallet, one goes on your bathroom mirror, and one goes in your briefcase. You can make them scroll across your computer screen or pop up on your cell phone when you turn it on.
- When you say these affirmations, it is most effective to say them aloud. At some point they will be memorized. When you read them, say them, and hear yourself say them, you are activating many of your senses. This makes them come alive for you.
- Feel and see what you are saying. That is, make these words real. If you are speaking about peace, then see peace in your mind and feel peace in your body. If you are speaking about health, then feel healthy. See and feel yourself feeling good, strong, confident, in shape, or whatever “healthy” means to you. It is one of the most powerful experiences that you can have to align your words, your mind, and your senses.
- Make this a habit. If you live alone, give yourself permission to talk to yourself. If you live with others, ask their indulgence and speak freely, or if you choose, take time to be alone. If you feel anyone might make fun of you, keep that out of your experience. This is for

you. You are talking to you. Feed your inspiration with healthy words that affirm that which you believe would enhance your journey.

- Make this a part of your day. Each day. This is like being on an inspirational exercise program. The more you do it, the better the outcome. Do your affirmations in your car, in the shower, during your walks to the pharmacy, or when you jog, walk, bike, or do exercise.
- Feel “good” when you say them. Clear your mind. Feed it with the powerful positive images that you wish to achieve be they health, love, or abundance.

As we discussed when we talked about words earlier, there is great power in the words that we choose to speak to others. We also hear what we say. Those words affect our moods and our thoughts. I would venture to say that, even more, the words we speak directly to ourselves can be life-changing and inspirational.

Add affirmations to your inspiration journey. Having these daily conversations with “you” will help you grow your inspiration from the inside out.

SPIRITUAL STRETCH #2: Take your study of affirmations to the next level. There are many, many resources out there. Go online and read about them or buy a book about affirmations. Journal about the things you would like to make affirmations about. If you are in school, maybe write a paper about affirmations. Have fun with this. Enjoy having some affirming conversations with yourself. You will be inspired by what you experience.

If you've enjoyed your glimpse at Inspired Nurse, here's how you can order the actual book!

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every step of the way.**

Remember your first day as a nurse? You thought, *What a privilege to do this work!*

It's true. Few other professions afford the opportunity to impact lives on such a profound level, not only physically but emotionally and spiritually as well. Yet the same qualities that make nursing so deeply rewarding can also make it a challenge, over time, to sustain your energy and passion. *Inspired Nurse* helps us maintain and recapture those elusive qualities.

In this thought-provoking workbook, Rich Bluni, RN, reminds nurses and all healthcare employees why we chose this profession. He provides a wealth of action-oriented "spiritual stretches" that help us more fully integrate the gifts of nursing—joy, wonder, gratitude, insight, and grief—into our daily lives. His personal stories illuminate those sacred moments we all experience. *Inspired Nurse* is a welcome validation that when we stay engaged and committed, we're more likely to provide extraordinary patient care...in terms of both clinical outcomes and human compassion.



Rich Bluni, RN, is a national speaker and coach for Studer Group®, but the title of which he is proudest is "Nurse." An RN since 1993, he chose the profession after seeing the tremendous impact nurses had on his father after he was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

"I saw the great and small things nurses accomplished in their day and realized that there was no higher calling, for me, than to become a nurse," he says.

Rich has worked in Adolescent Oncology, Pediatric ICU, and Trauma ICU departments as well as serving as a Pedi flight and transport nurse. A Licensed Healthcare Risk Manager, he has served as ED Nursing Manager and Director of Risk Management and Patient Safety.

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