

## **Got Inspiration? It's the Power of "Why"!**

By Rich Bluni, RN, author of international bestseller *Inspired Nurse*  
and *Inspired Nurse Journal*

**Nurses are smart, intuitive and skilled professionals.** As nurses we are very good at "how" we do our job. I've never met a nurse that said, "Gee. I don't know "how" to be a nurse today!". There is also a lot out there for us to do to broaden our "how". There are conferences, classes, in-services and all manner of educational experiences that can teach us all about "how". We need "how". We love "how". What I am concerned about, for all of us, is this: do we spend enough time on our "why"? I think that may be an overlooked aspect of our work. Have you ever felt burnt out? Stressed? Uninspired? Lacking passion for nursing? If so did you think to yourself; "I feel empty. My love for healthcare has dwindled. I am burnt out. I know what I'll do! I'll go sign up for a class on I.V. drip calculations, that will inspire my spirit!" Of course not. As awesome as that class may be, it will improve your "how" but not your "why".

**"I've been feeling like this for so long, it's all I know"** A nurse said this to me at a conference where I was a speaker. She had tears in her eyes. She has been a nurse for over 22 years. So I asked her; "What are you doing differently this year, that you didn't do last year to work on this?" She thought and smiled and said; "I'm doing the same things. I work hard. I study. I take classes. I'm getting my MSN. I show up on time. I care about my patients and my team but even doing all that, I still feel like I'm just burnt." I asked her if she knew who Einstein was, knowing that she did, she smiled and nodded. I asked her if she thought he was probably a smart guy, and she said; "Of course!" I asked her if she knew Einstein's definition of insanity. She didn't. I told her. Einstein's definition of insanity: Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting to get a different result. The light bulb went on. What she was doing wasn't working. It was time to change. She was good at "how", she needed to pump up the "why". Where are you with "why"?

**What's the 'Why'?** The "why" is your passion for healthcare, for nursing. It is that deep understanding that your greatest power lies in understanding that when you are clear, crystal clear, on why you are doing this sacred work, you will feel as passionate and inspired as you did the first day you started. You may ask yourself, in a moment of despair or frustration what I call "The Question." And that is; "Why am I doing this?" You ask this when you've worked so hard and a patient can't be saved. When you've given all you have and another healthcare peer reacts in a hurtful way. When you poured your heart out for a patient and their family is unkind. You stop. You have a: "The day the nurse stood still." moment. You don't cry. You don't scream. You just stop. You are too calm. You just feel kind of empty and you ask, somewhere deep down in your soul; "Why am I doing this?". That is that soul of a nurse crying out for self care. For healing. For inspiration. Pay heed to this. Your "why" is calling you. Read on. Here's what you can start to do.

**If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got.** I want you to try one of these next few exercises, I call them “Spiritual Stretches” in my book, *Inspired Nurse*. Do one and see how it feels. Stick with it for a week. Don't stop it but instead add another one, do that for a week and so on. By the time you're done you will be doing these exercises all the time. My hope is life will change. Your “why” will be there to serve you. You may have to do things you've not done before. That's ok. You're a nurse. You are fearless.

1. **“Be grateful”.** This statement is so powerful that it can be overlooked. It's only two words. But so is “nuclear bomb”! Don't be fooled by the brevity. Be grateful. It's that simple. Every day, you have two things to accomplish. The first is to write down (use a journal, a pad, sticky notes, just don't use your hand because you wash them so often!), three things that you are grateful for about your work each day. Make sure you can keep a running list as this will be something that you will want to keep going for some time. If you're so down that it's hard for you to come up with anything positive about work start at the basics, like, indoor plumbing! I'm being facetious but you get the point. Each day add to this list. The second thing to start on the next week (while keeping the gratitude list going) is to notice and acknowledge the people for whom and to whom you're grateful at work. The coworker who always jumps in to help, the unit secretary who runs your labs for you when you're swamped, that teaching assistant who begins the class for you when you're running late, the food service employee who always remembers your lunch order and wishes you to have a great day. Each day you are to extend your gratitude to someone. Give them a thank you note, go up and tell them, give them a hug, send a note to their supervisor praising their awesome attitude. You're smart, you'll come up with your own ways, but no matter what, extend gratitude.
2. **Work on you harder than you work on “work”.** When is the last time you set goals for yourself? When is the last time you gave your self an hour or two and said, “I need to know who I am and where I am going!” Nurses are so busy being caregivers, to our patients, our students, our peers, our employees and yes, our friends, communities and families, that we rarely “care for self”. We like the idea of “care” it's that “self” part that drives us nuts! Try this: Set aside an hour or so on a day off, when you're commuting on the train or bus or whenever you can find it. Get out a journal or pad and on separate pages, and a few pages apart if needed, write one of these words at the top of each page: Mind, Body, Spirit, Love (relationships) and Prosperity (finances/money). Now under each title come up with three things, specific to that aspect, that you can do or change or read about or experience that would impact that part of your being. So for example. Under Health you may say “walk a mile every day” or “eat more green veggies” or “drink eight glasses of water each day”. Come up with only three things that are doable every day and then do those three things every day for a week. So that's 15 things every day. They don't have to be huge things. They can't be. But you must do them every day and then change them as needed. It is that easy. Yes,

I said easy. It is easy to make changes in your life and be more in touch with your “why”. Oh. One more thing... It’s also easy *not to*.

Generally speaking what is the difference between an “owner” and a “renter”? Think about a rental car that you use for a few days. You’re a nice person. You’re responsible. You wouldn’t purposely damage the car, but would you change the oil? Rotate the tires? Get it painted? While I’m sure Hertz would be grateful, my bet is that you wouldn’t. Have you ever bought a new car? Remember your very first car? Did you wash and wax it? Park it far away from other cars, at first anyway, so that it wouldn’t get dented? Why? Because it is yours and because you want it to last. Make sense? What about you? Your spirit, your inspiration? Are you waiting for someone to come around and rescue you or fix how you feel? Don’t. You have to own this. You want your inspiration to last. It is yours. Try using gratitude as I’ve outlined. Take on daily actions that address some of the most important aspects of your life.

Why not try something that you’ve not tried before? You have nothing to lose and so much inspiration to gain.