

Four Practices of Human Healing—based on Jean Watson’s Theory of Caring Science

Watson Caring Science and Caritas Processes:

Four essential personal healing practices—surrender, forgiveness, gratitude, and compassionate service—promote caring for self-healing, which is essential for healing-caring for others. Healing practices are guided by Watson’s 10 Caritas Processes (CPs). Although all 10 CPs guide both caring for self and caring for others, key CPs that promote self-healing include: CP#1—practicing loving kindness, compassion, and equanimity for self and other; CP#2 & #5—being authentically present to self and others, listening to your own and other’s stories, allowing for negative and positive feelings; CP#3—cultivating one’s own spiritual/ reflective/meditative practices that support mind-body-spirit wholeness—beyond ego; CP#10—opening to unknowns and wonder (Watson, 2005, 2008).

- **Surrender:** Surrender is not about defeat or failure. It is a personal positive practice of letting go of ego and control of some situations, letting go of trying to always fix what we cannot or what does not conform to our perspective, letting go of anger, fear, and worry when we feel out of control. Our acceptance of the moment as is, rather than what we wish, is not avoidance or denial of what happened, but a personal choice in how we react. Surrender moves us toward a deeper level of inner peace, frees us of negative stress, and opens us to discovery, new creative insights and possibilities within the situation, and healing. (Watson, 2005, pp. 118-119).
- **Forgiveness:** Holding hurts, grudges, anger, and despair generates deep heart and soul pain and burden that can cause physical, emotional and spiritual stress and unwellness. The practice of forgiveness, of self and others, has a body-mind-spirit healing effect and is necessary in order to practice compassionate loving-kindness care of self and others. Forgiveness starts with self. We first learn by forgiving ourselves, by repatterning old “tapes”/stories from the past. To release and heal, you must love yourself enough to let it go, by first acknowledging the hurt, forgiving yourself or others for causing the pain, and letting it go. The release opens the heart again to loving relationship with yourself and others. Without forgiveness of self and others, there can be no true healing, no authentic love and flow of infinite universal energy into our hearts and lives (Watson, 2005, pp. 115-117).
- **Gratitude:** The personal spiritual practice of daily gratitude for life and all its blessings, even in the midst of pain, despair, turmoil, change and unknowns, assists us in seeing the world in a different positive way. Giving thanks and gratitude helps us see/feel/experience the wonder and majesty of the world in a given moment; and often transforms our altered perception of an experience. In practicing gratitude, we open our heart center and ourselves to new energy. As we release negative thoughts and attachments, reconnect to our spiritual self, we allow greater sense and “access to/with universe/universal Love for healing” (Watson, 2005, pp. 117-118).
- **Compassionate Human Services—Engaged Intentional Caring Practices:** Serving others with compassion and love arises from our own well-being and caritas consciousness, our ability, and commitment/covenant to use our “talents, gifts, and skills” to make a difference in other(s) healing. Such engaged service is not about self-sacrifice, but about mutual growth and flourishing. Compassionate caring for others is mindful and intentional, nonhierarchical and transpersonal. It requires intentional presence; listening to another’s story; safe, trusting relationships and environments; creative problem-solving; and sustaining human dignity. Compassionate human service connects us human-to-human, spirit to spirit, with “a greater sense of purpose beyond ego self,” yet requires each caregiver to consistently attend to their own well-being in order to authentically provide compassionate, engaged human service (Watson, 2005, pp. 119-122).

References:

- Watson, J. (2005). *Caring Science as Sacred Science*. F.A. Davis.
Watson, J. (2008). *Nursing: The Philosophy and Science of Caring*. (Rev. ed.). University Press of Colorado.