



NURSING THAT WORKS™



CENTER for American Nurses™
Serving the Needs of Nurses Today & Tomorrow

March 2009

Coaching and Career Change for the Nursing Professional

By Pam Williams, ACC

Nurses struggle with career satisfaction when they find themselves in a position that is not a good match for their unique strengths and skills.

Andrea, a medical-surgical nurse at a large well-respected urban hospital, found it difficult to muster any enthusiasm when it was time to go to work each day. She enjoyed the people she worked with, was paid well and had a great manager, but found no joy in her work. Although she had wanted to be a nurse since she was a little girl, she was questioning her commitment to the profession. To help sort through the confusion she was feeling, Andrea turned to a professional coach.

The coach invited Andrea to think about the times when she felt most engaged in her work as a nurse and asked Andrea to think about her strengths. As Andrea began to answer the questions the coach posed to her, she realized that one of her greatest strengths was teaching, evidenced by her success as a preceptor. She was also a good listener and great at asking questions that probed beneath the surface. She was skilled at organizing her time and prioritizing her work. What made her feel most engaged was really getting to know the people she cared for and interacted with.

Along the way, Andrea realized that she was tired of the physical aspects of day-to-day direct patient care. Increasing acuity and patient loads

meant that she had less and less time to interact with her patients in a meaningful way.

The coach asked her to think about the other things that were important to her as she considered a career transition. As a single mom, job security was at the top of the list. Andrea also knew that moving to another city wasn't an option – she didn't want to uproot her son or move away from her own parents, siblings, and friends.

Armed with this information, Andrea was ready to explore her career options. She did her research and conducted informational interviews with people in positions that seemed interesting to her. At the end of this process, Andrea knew that she wanted to become an educator. She was excited thinking about making a difference for students in the way that her professors had made a difference for her.

She knew that it would be a challenge to get where she wanted to go. She'd need money and time to go back to school for an advanced degree. It seemed a little overwhelming, if not downright impossible. Her coach helped her explore resources, find the courage to ask for help from her family and prepare to have a conversation with her son. Andrea located money for school, scaled back her work hours and learned that her extended family was delighted to help with the logistics of going back to school. Although it took her son a little while to adjust to the changes, he was proud of his mom

and voluntarily took on more responsibility for taking care of the house so she could study.

With a little help from her coach, Andrea found a way to combine her love of nursing with her gift for teaching. Her story isn't finished yet, but she looks forward to her future as a nursing professional with confidence and excitement.

A professional coach can support a nursing professional considering a career change by listening, asking thoughtful questions and helping the nurse evaluate available options. 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. To learn more about the coaching program and see the schedule of career and work-life balance tele-seminars, visit www.centerforamericannursescoaching.org.

Pam Williams, ACC, is a Chief Innergy Officer at Innergized!, Inc. She and her partner, Marci Moore, are working closely with the Center for American Nurses to coordinate the Center's Coaching Program. Marci and Pam presented Take Off the Cape and Soar and provided career coaching at the 2007 LEAD! Individual coaching sessions will be available at LEAD Summit 2009, June 11-13, Orlando, FL.

To learn more about the Center's Coaching Program go to www.CenterforAmericanNurses.org