

# **Caring Theory and Relational Ethics: A Means to Understanding the Discourse in Nursing Practice.**

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## Abstract

Watson's philosophy and science of caring, and Bergum's and Dossetor's relational ethics provide the lens through which moral distress, burnout, and the transition issues facing newly graduated nurses are visualized. Measures that facilitate the recruitment and retention of nurse are urgently needed in the face of a greying profession. I argue that it is the corporatization of health care delivery that is at the heart of nurses' moral distress. Watson's conceptualization of intentionality and caring consciousness; Levinas' ethics of face; Logstrup's ethical demand; Bergum's and Dossetors' ethical themes of mutual respect, engagement, embodiment, and environment; and the literature concerning resiliency provide keys for finding solutions that will support a sustainable health care system founded in caring and healing practices.

The lived experience of both experienced and novice nurses is explored within the metaparadigm of nursing, with consideration being given to the environment (or the context of nursing), the person(s) (or nurses), the health of nurses, and interventions directed towards the rejuvenation of the nursing profession. Based on this inquiry, I surmise that there is a critical need for intentional, connected, caring, and respectful human relationships at all levels of health care delivery. Further, it is argued that all nursing practice is inherently relational and moral in nature. It is crucial that the focus of health care remains on humans, and not an objectification of humanity that is measured, manipulated, and molded to meet predefined benchmarks of success. Readers are challenged to accept individual responsibility and are asked to consider how they and the other should be treated.

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