

Foreword

by *Kathleen Sanford*

I wish this wonderful book had been available when I graduated with my newly minted BSN. If it had been, perhaps my “preceptor,” a very competent nurse, wouldn’t have considered me ready to take on a full patient load after only a week of orientation. This book would have been very handy when, after a few months of practice, I was assigned to precept another novice. Having been through recent trial-and-error learnings myself, I thought I had improved on the process by adding patient care experiences to the two weeks my “preceptee” spent with me. I made sure she knew how to insert a Foley catheter, put in an IV, place an NG tube, and change a tracheostomy dressing. These were all procedures I had been sadly inept at doing at the time my preceptor said I was ready to take my place on the RN schedule.

Precepting was a fairly new concept in those years. It was just being defined in the literature, and nurses used the term loosely, as my early experiences illustrate. The cursory introductions many of us received to new roles and new jobs could scarcely be described as true initiations to the work and workplace, much less preceptorships. Some of us confused precepting with processes as different as orienting and mentoring for decades. Now, we have a more sophisticated understanding of these terms, and today’s preceptors are much better prepared, largely thanks to the first edition of this book, which received two *American Journal of Nursing* Book of the Year Awards in 2012.

In this second edition, Beth Ulrich and her contributing colleagues have compiled a comprehensive compendium about the science and art of precepting. They cover the various roles of a preceptor in depth while also addressing the needs of preceptees, managers, and organizations. They address crucial topics such as resilience, compassion fatigue, mindfulness, just culture, and critical thinking. The new edition includes information on using new instructional technologies and a chapter about precepting advanced practice registered nurses. I can’t think of anything they’ve left out about how to help nurses bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and the realities of practice.

The success of these changes is vitally important. The year I started my nursing career, Marlene Kramer’s book *Reality Shock: Why Nurses Leave Nursing* was published. Among other things, she spelled out the merit of preceptorships to mitigate the reality shock that new nurses experience. Forty-four years later, preceptorships are needed more than ever. Working with hospital patients is becoming more complex at a time when an unprecedented number of expert nurses are retiring. As a result, we have a less experienced healthcare workforce, including a greater percentage of novice nurses, with a critical need for precepting.

That's why I'm grateful for this book. Nurses need help to successfully navigate change, whether they are moving from a student to a nurse role or from a nurse to a new specialty position. Patients need competent, caring, and confident nurses. To meet these needs, preceptors must be proficient in a variety of teaching, coaching, role-modeling, and leadership skills. This complete guide ensures that they will be.

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Foreword

by *Gwen Sherwood*

The work of nursing is physically and emotionally intense, made more challenging during periods of transition. We all have times when we benefit from an experienced preceptor — whether as a new graduate entering practice, an experienced staff nurse changing clinical areas, or a clinician transitioning to academia. Transitions involve a careful balance of role models, relationships, and reflection — three R's that are at the core of this signature second edition of *Mastering Precepting: A Nurse's Handbook for Success*.

Preceptors have a major role in nursing education. The special skills required have often been overlooked; not all great clinicians are effective preceptors. Teaching involves craft, and effective precepting involves both art and science. Like good teaching or good nursing care, good precepting is a carefully developed expertise that develops over time. This updated, expanded second edition is a comprehensive guide to the apprenticeship learning model that can apply to nurse educators, managers, and staff nurses.

A preceptor can ease transitions anytime roles and performance expectations change. Adjusting to a new role or clinical area presents challenges in demonstrating new competencies, learning the social milieu, and finding one's place in the new group. Having an experienced role model, the first key of an effective preceptor, helps smooth the adaptation process. Preceptors support the pillars of education by guiding the preceptee in learning to do, know, be, and work/live as a productive team member. This critical book recognizes the art and science of excellent precepting to help learners bridge the worlds of nursing education and practice.

The preceptor role is similar to that of a mentor; however, selection of preceptors is based on their accomplishment of competencies. Often overlooked is the imperative to provide preceptors for novice faculty transitioning from clinical areas to academia. The demands of understanding the politics of the academic environment, comprehending academic promotion and tenure, and establishing an area of scholarship — while demonstrating excellence in teaching — contribute to high turnover and faculty shortages. One strength of this book is its broad spectrum in applying the art of precepting. It provides a double model for schools of nursing by both helping faculty adapt and developing preceptors for their students.

The relationship between preceptor and learner (preceptee) is the second key to an effective precepting experience. Learning by “doing,” or experiential learning, is a valued pedagogy for service professions. Learning by doing is a systematic, supervised process based on evidence-based standards of excellence in which learners demonstrate their applicable knowledge, skills, and attitudes. To learn by doing involves careful coaching, facilitation, mentoring, guidance, and supervision

from a skilled practitioner; thus, it is relationship-dependent. Preceptors must master the art of observation, assessment, and feedback while building a relationship of support and encouragement. Communication of the learner's development must be clearly delineated in the initial learning contract – whether it is with the nurse manager for a new employee or graduate or with a faculty member for student learners.

Good preceptors not only guide skill acquisition based on the science of nursing – they also practice the art of nursing by helping learners reflect on their experiences. Reflection, the third key to effective precepting, is the process of examining the meaning and objectively looking at varying perspectives to make sense of an event within the context of empirical knowledge. Reflecting to learn from one's experience is the basis of Patricia Benner's book *From Novice to Expert* (1984) that is used in many professional practice models. Preceptors are frontline guides who observe learners' developing competencies and thus have a key role in evaluation and assessment. Reflecting on their experiences helps preceptees identify areas of improvement and establishes the practice of lifelong learning.

Reflection also contributes to satisfaction through self-recognition of progress. Developing relationships and learning new roles amid the demands of caregiving is challenging; through systematic reflection, preceptees learn to balance ideal responses with reality and continually improve their work. An expert preceptor engages the learner in critical dialogue to explore outcomes and serves as coach, guide, and mentor in recognizing alternative perspectives and ways of performing.

These three R's – role models, relationships, and reflection – illustrate the competencies for mastering precepting. Authored by an experienced educator, scholar, and clinician who has lived the model for effective precepting, this book describes preceptor orientation, qualifications, and skills and details the assessment and evaluation process. *Mastering Precepting* will benefit all nursing education programs – transition to practice, new employee orientation in clinical settings, academic programs for learners in capstone courses, and advanced practice clinical experiences.

–Gwen Sherwood, PhD, RN, FAAN, ANEF

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Reference

Benner, P. (1984). *From novice to expert: Excellence and power in clinical nursing practice*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley Publishing.