

The Mindful Nurse

Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work

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PRESS RELEASE

In the Healthcare Battlefield, Nurses Work In the Foxholes. Is there a Way to Survive and Thrive?

Licensed psychotherapist, author and publisher Carmel Sheridan knows that no matter where nurses live and work, they struggle with similar issues: compassion fatigue, depression, substance abuse, poor boundary setting, neglected self-care, and high stress levels. "I've lived in the U.S. and Ireland, and many of the participants in my stress-management groups are nurses spanning every specialty. Nurses have particularly high levels of stress and burnout." Often dubbed "the invisible patients," nurses endure emotionally grueling and physically draining shifts, often with little support.

Book Description

The Mindful Nurse offers solutions. This guidebook is filled with powerful resources and wisdom that will help nurses to:

- nurture others without depleting themselves
- overcome compassion fatigue and burnout
- decrease their frustration levels
- decrease their mistakes through attention management
- respond (not react) to crises
- improve patient care while reducing patient risk
- enhance their relationships while decreasing their stress levels
- restore their love for their profession

Endorsements

"This book should be a part of every nurse's education."

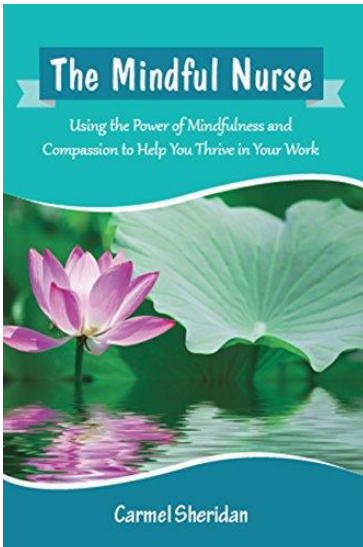
-Bernie Siegel, MD, Author of *A Book of Miracles* and *The Art of Healing*

"Within the wisdom of this book are solutions. The suggested self-care, guidance, and techniques will raise the quality of nursing care and patient satisfaction."

-Carole Ann Drick, PhD, RN, AHN-BC; President, American Holistic Nurses Association

"A much-needed, well-written, and full-of-wisdom guide to help care for the caregiver. I imagine a quiet revolution in hospitals as nurses begin to embody mindfulness and compassion, transforming their own lives and the lives of everyone they touch."

-Diana Winston, Director of Mindfulness Education, UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center, CA



About Carmel

Carmel Sheridan, MA, MSc, is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice. She has two master's degrees in psychology and is the author of two books:

Failure-Free Activities for the Alzheimer's Patient, and *Reminiscence: Uncovering a Lifetime of Memories*. A long-time meditator, she teaches mindfulness and compassion-based practices to healthcare professionals, including nurses, to promote resilience, focus, self-care, and well-being. You can find Carmel on her website at www.nursingmindfully.com and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TheMindfulNurse.



To schedule an interview or for more information, please email info@nursingmindfully.com.
The Mindful Nurse is available on Amazon in print and Kindle versions, and wherever books are sold.

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BOOK DETAILS

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BOOK TESTIMONIALS

This book should be a part of every nurse's education. As healthcare providers, we need to know ourselves and that we have needs, too. These needs can be met through mindfulness and compassion so that not curing a disease does not make us failures.

Bernie Siegel, MD
Author of *A Book of Miracles* and *The Art of Healing*

Every staff nurse reading this book will say, "YES! This is nursing!"
Every nurse often asks the question, "How can I manage that situation better?"
Within the wisdom of this book are solutions. The suggested self-care, guidance, and techniques will raise the quality of nursing care and patient satisfaction.

Carole Ann Drick, PhD, RN, AHN-BC
President, American Holistic Nurses Association,
Author of *End of Life: Nursing Solutions for Death with Dignity*

Mindfulness is all the rage right now, and if you do not understand it and don't know what it can do for you and your personal and professional life, then this book will help. It guides you through the who, what, why, and how of the practice of mindfulness—all through the eyes of an author who relates it to nurses' everyday lives and tasks. Carmel shows how it can improve your own life and the care you give to patients. The turns of phrase and concepts supporting the practice of mindfulness are delicious—I most loved the idea that self-compassion was an "antiseptic" and "anti-inflammatory" for those moments when you beat yourself up or blame others when things go wrong. There are lots of practical elements to help you start practicing mindfulness, from the moment you pick up the book, to encourage you to make mindfulness a daily part of your life so that you can enjoy living more.

Jenni Middleton
Editor, Nursing Times

Carmel brings her experience of working with healthcare professionals together with her understanding of mindfulness practice to share a wealth of practical resources. All this is in service of supporting nurses to develop essential self-care skills. The result is a book that could make a great contribution to nursing school curricula around the globe.

Sharon Salzberg,
Author of *Loving kindness and Real Happiness*

The Mindful Nurse

Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work

An incredibly valuable tool for all nurses, whether beginning their career, reaching the point of burnout, or somewhere in between. If you are wondering where your love of the job has gone, here are achievable exercises to reconnect with that. The love is still potentially there but often lost under the stress and exhaustion that is all too common in the nursing profession. This book offers practical tools for nurses who want to serve but also to nurture themselves.

Bronnie Ware

Author of *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*

This excellent book provides a guide for nurses and health care providers on how to incorporate mindfulness practices into their work routine and everyday life. Written in a very engaging and accessible style, it offers practical guidance on applying a range of very feasible yet powerful practices that can enhance mental health and wellbeing and reduce stress and burnout. This is a very valuable addition to the current literature on mindfulness training and health promotion in the workplace.

Margaret M. Barry, PhD

Professor of Health Promotion and Public Health,
World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Health
Promotion Research, NUI Galway, Ireland.

Drawing on recent groundbreaking research in the field of neuroscience, Sheridan offers an extremely readable and insightful guidebook to help nurses cultivate resilience and therapeutic presence and revitalize their practice. An excellent resource for nurses in both clinical and educational settings.

Janice M Zeller, PhD, RN, FAAN

Professor and Graduate Program Director,
North Park University School of Nursing

A much-needed, well-written, and full-of-wisdom guide to help care for the caregiver. Nurses and other healing professionals will benefit immensely from these clear and helpful mindfulness tools and practices. I imagine a quiet revolution in hospitals as nurses begin to embody mindfulness and compassion, transforming their own lives and the lives of everyone they touch.

Diana Winston

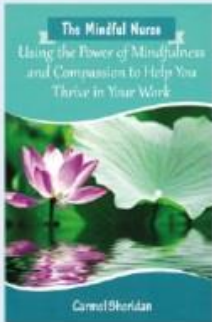
Director of Mindfulness Education,
UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center
Author of *Fully Present: The Science, Art, and Practice of Mindfulness*

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BOOK REVIEWS

Nursing Standard



The Mindful Nurse



This is an excellent text for nurses at any stage of their career. It takes the reader through

mindful and compassionate practice step by step with the opportunity to explore individual practice at each stage.

There are plenty of examples of how mindfulness and compassionate practice can help nurses to improve their skills. Each chapter introduces ways to practice mindfulness every day, including breathing, walking, sitting, team working and leadership.

The real value of this book is in the opportunity to adapt the skills to the reader's individual practice. Nurses can enhance their learning using online resources and reflective practice.

This text offers a diverse range of skills and information including the evidence base for mindful and compassionate practice.

I would recommend the book to all nurses who want to be able to develop their own practice.

Carmel Sheridan | Rivertime Press | 372pp | £19.95
ISBN: 9780993324529

Reviewed by Marjorie Ghisoni, lecturer in mental health nursing, Bangor University

Nursing Times

Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work

'This is a book aimed specifically at nurses but applicable across the breadth of different roles within nursing'

What was it like?

Mindfulness, or the state of being aware on the present moment, is becoming more widely recognised and utilised amongst health professionals. It is reported to increase well-being and the ability to be more compassionate. Given today's climate and increase in pressure for nurses, it makes this book feel like a welcome addition.

It is a well-written book with a good structure. It comprises of four main sections over 21 chapters: Embracing Mindfulness, Mindfulness and the Body, The Essence of Mindfulness and Mindfulness for Better Performance. There is a good flow from section to section although some sections felt a little repetitive, however, that may be more about re-confirming key principles throughout?

What were the highlights?

The highlights were both its applicability and practicality. Within this book, mindfulness is applied specifically to nursing practice, so the plentiful examples include dealing with handovers, conversations with patients and returning to work after a back injury amongst others and demonstrate how mindfulness can be applied to many situations.

The practicality comes from the inclusion of many exercises. As well as reflective type exercises, there are also breathing and physical movement exercises. The book also makes reference to current research and includes evidence based tools for self-assessment.

Strengths and weaknesses?

The book is easy to read. It is broken into small sections, which are interspersed with thinking points, tables, cartoons and figures to keep the readers' interest.

The book does originate from the USA, so some of the language, terminology and examples do not always feel apt for a UK based audience, although these are not insurmountable.

Who should read it?

This is a book aimed specifically at nurses but applicable across the breadth of different roles within nursing (and likely, other health professionals). Examples are included from many different aspects of nursing. The practice of mindfulness may not be for everyone, but there is probably something that most of us can pick up on to get us through busy days in work and at home.

Reviewer: Lynne Partington, project coordinator and specialist advisor, The End of Life Partnership, Cheshire

The Mindful Nurse

Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work

Book Review from Canadian Journal of Nursing Informatics, June Kaminsky, Editor in Chief

I am delighted to offer this review of the new book, *The Mindful Nurse – Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to help you thrive in your work* by Irish author, Carmel Sheridan. This book is both rich and timely: it comes to the publishing circuit at a time when many nurses are struggling with the demands of the health care system while still trying to provide high-quality, safe patient care. It also comes at a time when mindfulness is becoming socially recognized as a meaningful practice for a balanced lifestyle.

After reviewing the book, I strongly suggest that every nurse across the globe purchase a copy, and that every school of nursing make this book part of their required reading. My reasons are two fold: not only does this book help nurses provide cutting-edge, patient-centred care, but it also provides strategies for self-care and personal enrichment at the same time. Very few books offer such rich and meaningful rewards!

To introduce the author, her biography profile provides the following description:

“Carmel Sheridan is a psychotherapist, mindfulness trainer and supervisor in private practice. She is the author of *The Mindful Nurse*, *Failure-Free Activities for the Alzheimer’s Patient*, and *Reminiscence: Uncovering A Lifetime of Memories*. A long-time meditator, Carmel teaches mindfulness and compassion-based practices to healthcare professionals, including nurses, with a focus on self-compassion to promote resilience, focus, self-care, and wellbeing. She also teaches the eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program in workplaces, in the community, as well as online. Carmel regularly takes time out from teaching to attend retreats around the world. Contact her at carmel@nursingmindfully.com”

This 374-paged book was published by Rivertime Press (2016) and is available in paperback or ebook formats (via Kindle, compatible with all devices through their app).

The book is laid out logically in four key parts, and each part builds on the last.

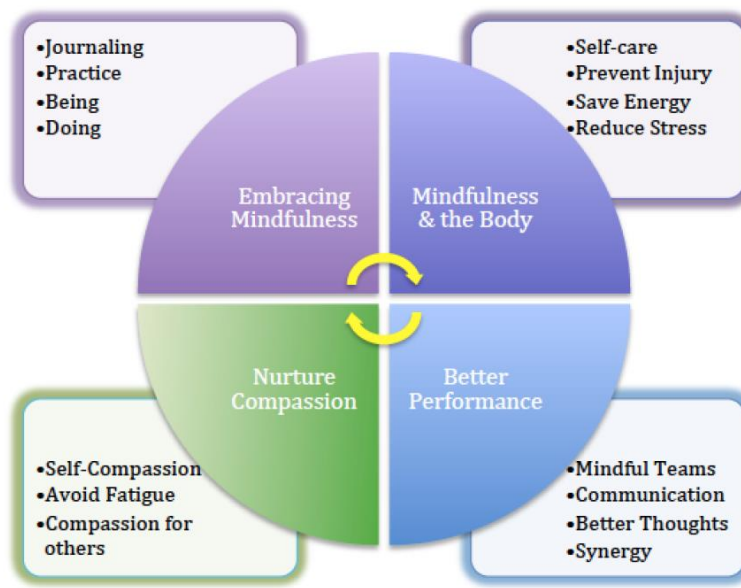


Figure 1: A summary of The Mindful Nurse Main Sections

The Mindful Nurse

Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work

PART I Embracing Mindfulness

Part one introduces the theory to show you why and how to embrace mindfulness. This first section defines what mindfulness is, how it works, and why it is important for nurses to make it a part of their professional and personal lives.

“Mindfulness is a way of being that promotes a return to the present moment, its practice cultivates awareness. It is also a self-care practice to help you avoid that slippery slope into burnout, strengthening your ability to slow down, concentrate, and pay attention to what matters most. Scientifically proven to have many health benefits, mindfulness anchors you in the present, freeing your busy mind to focus on the here and now. Although it requires persistence and patience, mindfulness is an investment well worth your time. With regular practice, you’ll see changes in your attitude toward work, your relationships, and even your lifestyle” (p. 19).

Chapter 1: What Is Mindfulness?

Chapter 2: Doing and Being

Chapter 3: Everyday Mindfulness

Chapter 4: Reaping the Benefits of Mindfulness Practice

I was impressed with the way the author used a mindfulness approach to organize the book and how she encouraged readers to adopt a mindful approach themselves as they work through the book. Nurses are supported to take their time as they move through the content: to work the exercises and reflections into their daily routines so that the practice actually does become part of their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual itinerary. The exercises provided are also excellent tools to use with nursing students. All nurse educators constantly look for ways to help students to learn to nurse with compassion, with positive regard, and relational engagement with their clients.

Mindfulness could indeed be the missing link, in this regard.

This first section also helps to set the stage for the workday with a section on mindful driving to help nurses arrive at work in a less stressful way, and mindful eating so that they reap the most benefit from breaks and return to work replenished nutritionally and psychologically.

PART II Mindfulness and the Body

Part two delves into the physiology of mindfulness and how it can benefit in managing stress, pain, preventing injuries, and providing their bodies with energy and fortitude as nurses move through their workday. Specific formal mindfulness exercises are presented, powerful techniques that actually work to help nurses to deal with the stresses and demands of work with clarity, strength, calm and a sense of serene control. Several techniques are shared in this section that can be readily applied during the workday to nourish oneself that in turn gives a nurse more energy to do their work well and truly connect with their patients without burning themselves out. These techniques are also very useful for nurses who are parents. Using them in their family life could also work wonders in improving their ability to enjoy their busy lives, take time with their kids, and work on raising a resilient and compassion brood.

Chapter 5: Mindful Self-Care

Chapter 6: Inhabiting Your Body

Chapter 7: Preventing Injury the Mindful Way

Chapter 8: Coping Mindfully with Pain

Chapter 9: Coping with Stress the Mindful Way

Chapter 10: Mindful Movement

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PART III Compassion-The Essence of Mindfulness

Caring and compassion have been the heart of nursing since the beginning of the profession. Part Three marries the notion of compassion with the art of mindfulness. Sheridan shows how compassion is integral to mindful nursing practice and gives strategies for dealing with compassion fatigue and ways to cultivate self-compassion in tandem with compassion for patients and their families and for peers.

“Recent research strongly suggests a connection between mindfulness and compassion. By fostering focus and emotional control, mindfulness not only enables greater awareness of another person’s experience but also leads to more compassionate action” (p. 173). These four chapters are invaluable tools in educating nursing students as well. It is a real challenge to mirror and cultivate compassion in students. Sheridan offers techniques that can be used in the classroom and in the clinical area to help students develop bona fide compassion and learn how to apply self-compassion as well, and protect themselves from compassion fatigue.

Chapter 11: Understanding Compassion

Chapter 12: The Constant Giver: Compassion Fatigue

Chapter 13: Cultivating Self-Compassion

Chapter 14: Strengthening Compassion

PART IV Mindfulness For Better Performance

Finally, Part Four provides several techniques for improving nursing performance in the practice setting and beyond. This section begins with an excellent chapter on how to observe and work with one’s thoughts, to recognize unhelpful thinking patterns, and what to do about them in a self-compassionate and aware way. Chapter 16 introduces valuable tips and techniques nurses can use to foster mindful teamwork.

“Synergy is the flow and harmony people experience by working in synch with one another. A well-coordinated team works better than one with members who are indifferent or at odds with each other. Undoubtedly, a group that is intelligent and dynamic enough to respond to pressure in an environment, as a unit can be more productive and efficient. An on-the-ball company of nurses is like a well-run ship or successful sports team: its sum is greater than its parts” (p. 249). Communication, preventing medication and other serious errors, and working with ward routines are all carefully presented in later chapters, in ways that can genuinely transform potentially dysfunctional workspaces.

Chapter 15: Working with Thoughts

Chapter 16: Mindful Teamwork

Chapter 17: Mindful Communication

Chapter 18: Working with Distractions, Preventing Errors

Chapter 19: The Mindful Handover Report

Chapter 20: The Challenge of Advancing Technology

Chapter 21: Bringing Mindfulness and Compassion to your Healthcare Facility

This book is chock full of meaningful tools and advice that every nurse can benefit from. For example, “Set the intention to give your patient your full attention during each interaction. Unhook from the busyness of your day, come off autopilot, and take a moment to become grounded. Mindful presence does not take more time. Instead, it adds value – it makes every moment count.” This is a book worth reading and living. I encourage every nurse to add it to his or her essential library, but not to collect dust. Open it, savour it, apply it, and learn to live it! The results could be staggering if every nurse became a mindful nurse!!



NEWS | FASHION | BEAUTY | HEALTH | LIFE

MARY O'CONNOR

Learning how to cultivate self compassion

Mention compassion and what words spring to mind? Thoughtfulness, decency, kindness, a caring nature and a willingness to help others.

We usually think of compassion in terms of other people and rarely apply it to ourselves. Yet self compassion is important for our emotional wellbeing and growth. It involves demonstrating the same qualities of caring, kindness and understanding to ourselves when we are having a difficult time, not judging ourselves harshly for any perceived shortcomings or when we make mistakes, comforting and caring for ourselves and most of all, valuing ourselves for the unique people we are.

Carmel Sheridan, a Galway based psychotherapist, mindfulness trainer and author of "The Mindful Nurse: Using the power of mindfulness and compassion to help you thrive in your work", describes self compassion as the capacity for healthy nurturing of the self.

"Just as compassion is the willingness to acknowledge and be moved by the suffering of others, self-compassion extends this acceptance and care to you. After all, just like on an airplane, if you don't put on your oxygen mask first then you won't be able to help anyone else."

She asks people to look inside themselves and see how much self-compassion they possess. If you are unsure ask yourself a few telling questions. "Picture yourself tripping up at work, for instance," she suggests. "Let's say you arrived late, failed to get everything done, or said the wrong thing. Do you attack yourself for every little imperfection? You might say to yourself, 'How could I have been so stupid?' or 'Why can't I accomplish as much as others?' Or maybe you continue to blame yourself even after you have been forgiven by others. Do you constantly berate yourself for not being perfect or for not having all the right answers all the time? These judgments cycle through your mind and stir up stress. In an attempt to halt the pain you berate yourself and your stress increases. Although the thoughts and feelings are uncomfortable you continue to condemn yourself long after the event creating even more stress for yourself."

Self-critical

When we fling insults at ourselves our inner critic takes over, she says. This quickly ramps up our anxiety levels and activates the flight or fight response. "Distracted and self-critical you think about what happened tossing it around in your mind and going over it again and again. Lost in reactivity you lose sight of the need to treat yourself kindly. Because you are both the attacker and the attacked your body floods with the stress hormone cortisol. Over time this flood causes mental and physical damage and impairs your health, your sleep, your ability to think clearly and your ability to function competently at work."

Ms Sheridan, who previously worked as a publisher and author in California and published a book about Alzheimer's disease which was made into a film in 2002 called "Forget me Never" starring Martin Sheen and Mia Farrow, says when things go wrong it is important to step outside the "pull of self-judgment" and practice self compassion instead.

"Rather than berating yourself when you slip up be gentle. Speak kindly to yourself and



Self compassion is the capacity for healthy nurturing of the self, says psychotherapist and author Carmel Sheridan. Photo:- Mike Shaughnessy.

accept what has happened. This doesn't mean that you let yourself off the hook. Instead, it's the opposite. When you are self-compassionate you are more likely to own up to what happened. Turning towards your distress with compassion helps you to let go of defensiveness. Rather than judging yourself you can now acknowledge difficult feelings such as guilt and shame. This frees up energy so that you can look for helpful solutions to your dilemma and focus on how to avoid repeating what went wrong."

She outlines that self compassion helps you recognise and soothe your painful thoughts and emotions.

"When you identify and relate to your emotions with kindness rather than harshness you tap into your biological caregiving system. Self-compassion is yours to tap into at any moment when you acknowledge that your nature is inherently good and that you deserve a generous dose of self-value and self-gratitude."

She refers to Dr Kirsten Neff, a psychologist at the University of Texas, who outlines that self-compassion consists of three things:-

Self-kindness. Relating warmly and kindly to ourselves rather than being self-critical whenever we are faced with our own

shortcomings or encounter difficulties

Common humanity. Remembering that suffering and failure are part of our shared human experience rather than unique to us as individuals.

Mindfulness. Meeting our difficult feelings in a balanced way so we do not over identify with them.

Research indicates that practicing self compassion improves wellbeing, life satisfaction, resilience, and a sense of connection with others, according to Carmel Sheridan.

The first step in becoming more self compassionate is to notice when you are being self critical or reactive.

"Your body reacts when you are self critical. When you catch yourself in the act of finding fault with yourself shift your attention instead to your body. You might notice your shallow breathing, warm face or clenched stomach. Once you become aware of reactivity you can set the intention to release it, letting go of the bodily tension and hostile thoughts and extending kindness to yourself instead."

She offers the following suggestions from Dr Neff to help people build self compassion:-

Steps to self compassion

1. Practice mindful self compassion when life is not going well. Maybe you are late for work or just had an argument with a colleague. Rather than reacting to the situation take a self compassion break. As a way of connecting with the difficult experience make a comforting physical gesture to yourself, for example, placing

your hand over your heart. Sense yourself opening up to compassion and send kindness to the hurt inside. Kindness in the form of physical gestures can have a soothing effect on your body. It does not matter what the gesture is as long as it resonates with you and you find it comforting.

Speak kindly to yourself. When you find yourself in the grip of strong feelings of distress or self-judgment you may find yourself thinking, "I'm hopeless" or other condemning comments. However, thinking like this only makes you feel worse. Instead, substitute kind phrases to help calm your distress. Choose phrases that resonate with you, such as those listed below and memorise them, repeating them silently whenever you need compassion.

This is a moment of suffering (Here mindfulness helps you acknowledge what is happening).

Suffering is part of life. (This helps you remember your common humanity, you are by no means alone in your suffering).


May I be kind to myself in this moment (This phrase helps you respond compassionately rather than berate yourself?).

• Carmel Sheridan's book entitled "The Mindful Nurse: Using the power of mindfulness and compassion to help you thrive in your work" costs €25 and is available from Charlie Byrne's bookshop, Cornstore Mall, Middle Street but can be ordered from all bookshops. It also available online from Amazon.com (€9.50).

The Mindful Nurse

Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work

DERRY PEOPLE **FRIDAY EDITION**

Part of the North-West News Group 

DONEGAL NEWS

FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 2016

Tackling stress faced by healthcare workers

BY CATHERINE COOK

A NEW book by Kilmacrennan woman Carmel Sheridan is hoping to address some of the stress issues being faced by healthcare professionals.

The Nurse's Guide to Cultivating Mindfulness and Compassion is the first book of its kind to outline how these practices can help those working in the field of health care to protect themselves both mentally and physically.

Speaking to the Donegal News, Ms Sheridan, a psychotherapist and trainer, said that she felt compelled to write the book after becoming aware of increasing levels of stress among her clients who are healthcare workers.

"I have been teaching mindfulness for quite a few years and during that time I have seen a pattern emerge in

that more and more healthcare professionals are enrolling. It is also something that I noticed in my private psychotherapy practise."

She added: "I became aware there are increasing levels of stress that all kinds of healthcare workers, including nurses, doctors and social workers, are having to deal with. Mindfulness has so much to offer for managing stress and preventing burn out.

Commenting on the reasons for such an increase in stress levels in the sector, Ms Sheridan stated: "A lot of it has to do with the pressure in the healthcare system be it short-staffing, changing roles or too much being demanded of one person.

"In my own role as a psychotherapist, we receive a lot of support, the focus is very much on self-care but that is something that other healthcare professionals don't have access to."

Since the book was launched on



Carmel Sheridan

International Nurses Day last month, Ms Sheridan has been receiving very encouraging feedback from those who are putting her methods into practice.

It has also been receiving international attention from professionals in the UK and America.

"I feel that the book really has international relevance. There are three million nurses in the USA,

400,000 in the UK and 40,000 in Ireland. Many of the anecdotes contained within the book are not just confined to Ireland."

The other relevant issue which is addressed in the book is that of compassion, Ms Sheridan explained.

"There is a real strength involved in working as a healthcare professional and as a result, people burn out.

They show too much compassion without establishing boundaries for themselves, and as a result they absorb all the pain that others are experiencing."

According to Ms Sheridan, techniques in the Nurse's Guide will also help to improve the physical health of those who read it.

"Nursing as a profession leaves them exposed to many health risks, such as musculo-skeletal injuries and slips and falls. These often happen when we are not being mindful."

Although based in Galway for the

past 16 years, Ms Sheridan returns to her native Donegal regularly. She said the county always helps her to refocus.

"I was home two weeks ago and went for a walk at Ards Friary. There is something about the Donegal landscape that is just so conducive to becoming present. It allows you to slow down and is very different from living in a city."

The book describes how to nurture others without depleting yourself, overcome compassion fatigue and burnout, decrease frustration and job overwhelm, reduce mistakes through managing attention and respond rather than react to crises.

In addition to her nursingmindfully.com website, Ms Sheridan has recently established a facebook page to help relevant professionals and in the coming weeks will be posting a ten day mindfulness challenge to introduce her techniques.

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THIS NURSE WONDERS

Mindful Gratitude: This Blog in a Book

Author, Amanda Anderson

Two years and two weeks ago, I published the blog post, “The Poetry of the IV,” on this site. In it, I reflected upon the thoughts I was having while placing IVs during shifts in the cardiac cath lab where I worked at the time.

Shortly after the post went live, an author from Ireland named Carmel Sheridan contacted me to see if she might excerpt it in her forthcoming book, a primer about nursing mindfully. After some dialogue, I agreed. Since then, she’d update me on the book’s progress from time to time.

Today, I received an unexpected package from Ireland in the afternoon mail. In it, I found an autographed copy of Carmel’s book, *The Mindful Nurse: Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work*, along with a beautiful card from Carmel.

As I searched for my excerpt, I enjoyed what I saw. Just this morning, I had strained to think of ways to conjure up mindfulness in the many moments that I found myself feeling impatient; while filling up the watering can to water my plants, waiting for the shower to get warm, standing in line at the store. I was sure I had learned something about finding beauty in these moments, but couldn’t conjure it. As I read her book just now, I saw that many similar moments for mindfulness were outlined alongside practical strategies, and ones to maintain mindfulness in far more complex scenarios, too.

Perhaps my struggle for mindfulness in the mundane today is not much different than the premise I wrote of in this excerpted blog post – I had been inserting many IVs at that point in my career – almost too many. The rote nature of the intake & recovery area of the cath lab that I worked in was getting me itchy. I

liked my colleagues and the new kind of setting, but I missed the intricacies of the ICU that I knew so well.

Being mindful with IVs helped me refocus and enjoy my patients and my work – not the skill or task, so to speak, but the connections I was able to work at creating with my patients while inserting them. By seeing past the work and into its elements, I found beauty where I might’ve only felt boredom or frustration.

I am happy to see the paragraph about these connections on one of the pages in Carmel’s book. Looking back, learning to use IVs (and any other skill or task, for that matter) as a moment for laughter, conversation, silent assessment, became one of the most important lessons in mindfulness that my bedside practice has yet to teach me:

Now, IVs are a chance to chat – to talk with patients about where they live, what they do, how they feel. It’s amazing how easy the moments become – even when I miss or blow a vein – if I focus on talking with people. I enjoy myself, the pressure lifts, and I assess through our conversation. Patients bare deep wounds amidst these tiny moments.

Feels great to hold this book in my hands and see my name in it within the chapter, on the reference lists, and in the index. I started this blog as a way to vent as a new graduate – as healing for myself. To think of its contents resting in the hands of others as they read, teach, workshop and grow is a privilege and encouragement.

Check out Carmel’s book, folks – great stuff. You can find it on Amazon, or here:
www.nursingmindfully.com

The Mindful Nurse

Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work

How to practice mindful nursing

An excerpt from *The Mindful Nurse: Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive In Your Work*.

Do you ever feel panic at the end of a long weekend or vacation, wondering where the time went? Do your days, weeks, and months blend into one another, each day bringing you more of the same?

At work, you move through a series of tasks so that patient care runs smoothly—you assess your patients, change drips, review test results. However, you may be on autopilot the entire time, lost in doing and unaware of the present in which you are being.

Perhaps you have spent entire shifts in doing mode and missed out on connecting with yourself and your patients? That's not to say that doing is a bad place to be. On the contrary, doing mode is an important part of everyday life—it helps you plan your day, finish the tasks you started, and pay attention to detail. In the same way, doing mode helps you manage your daily routine from driving in traffic to shopping for dinner to paying bills. But once you complete your tasks, it is important to switch out of doing mode and simply be in the moment.

Think of it this way: doing would be your mode if you were planning a romantic anniversary dinner. You would choose the restaurant, get directions, and drive there. Once you arrived, though, you would want to enjoy your meal and the time with your loved one. That is when you would switch to being mode. Obviously, it is important to be able to switch off doing mode after its job is done and enjoy life. Imagine if you were to spend your romantic dinner checking traffic patterns for the drive home!

All nurses are familiar with doing mode. Your training emphasizes it, and in a profession that is task-driven, being busy is valued. Yet, when you are constantly in doing mode, your monkey mind leaps from one thought to the next, you forget about the moment you're in, and after a while, your feelings control you. Unable to switch out of doing mode, and hijacked by whatever thought or emotion pops up, you end up merely going through the motions.

Operating this way makes you lose touch with what is going on right there in the moment. For example, if your mind is on other things when you drink your coffee, you don't really taste it. If you spend your break reviewing lab results, you've not enjoyed your moment in the present to re-group and re-charge.

What details are you missing when you are always doing? How about the smiles and hellos from visitors and colleagues, the beautiful flower arrangement at the nurses' station, the great sunrise out the window, or the opportunity to say "thanks" to the person who opens the door?

If you're stuck in doing mode when you meet your first patient, you miss the opportunity to make a real connection. The present sails past and never comes back. That moment is lost forever.

Autopilot

In your eagerness to get things done, you can become so absorbed in your thoughts that you don't notice what is going on inside or around you. Have you ever missed your stop on the bus because you were daydreaming? Or put your keys in the fridge while talking on the phone? Have you ever entered the medication room and stared at the shelves, unable to remember what you went in there for or what you needed? Or maybe you started up your computer to check a lab value but couldn't remember what value you were looking for or why.

Rather than focusing on the task at hand, you are on "autopilot," absentmindedly going through the motions. If you're "autopiloting" a lot, sooner or later, you will trip up and make mistakes.



The Mindful Nurse

Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work

On autopilot, you focus on the result rather than giving full attention to the task at hand. That said, autopilot is not always a bad thing. In fact, it's important. The brain's ability to switch into this mode allows you to complete complex tasks like driving or using a computer without thinking about all the detailed actions involved. Thus, being on autopilot allows you to avoid expending unnecessary energy on routine things. However, sometimes you forget to come out of autopilot and fixate instead on the next urgent task on your to-do list. Research has shown that the average person spends 47% of the time on autopilot. If you're trapped on constant autopilot, you will likely feel exhausted and dissatisfied with life. Remember to take an occasional break from doing to help you connect with yourself and others and recharge your batteries.

Mindful presence

In the course of your workday, you may be on autopilot while you're with your patient, preoccupied by your never-ending workload and urgent to-do lists. Although your time together may be limited, how can you spend the precious time you do have together in a heartfelt way where your patient feels your caring presence?

Consider this:

Imagine that you're in conversation with a patient. You're completely present during the interaction. The patient feels a genuine connection with you. Because you have been mindful during the conversation, the person feels you are really listening. They trust what you say. They feel comfortable, content, and at ease in your presence. Can you sense how mindful presence can enrich your work as a nurse?

Try this:

Mindful presence

Before you enter a patient's room, scan your body for sensations.

Perhaps your jaw is clenched or your shoulders are tense.

Notice any sense of feeling rushed or anxious, and acknowledge these feelings without trying to get rid of them.

Take some mindful breaths, letting your tension and busyness dissolve on the exhale.

As you get ready to meet your patient, set the intention to be fully present.

Knock on the door and establish eye contact as you enter the patient's room.

Introduce yourself warmly and make a connection.

Chat together for a moment or two before moving on to the assessment or placing your fingers on the computer keyboard.

Whenever you notice your attention has wandered, gently bring it back to your patient and the task at hand.

Set the intention to give your patient your full attention during each interaction. Unhook from the busyness of your day, come off autopilot, and take a moment to become grounded.

Mindful presence doesn't take more time. Instead, it adds value—it makes every moment count.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



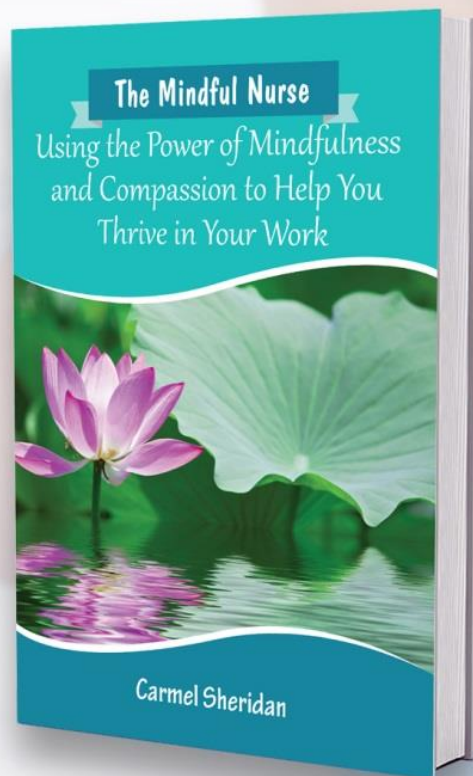
Carmel Sheridan, MA, MSc, is a licensed psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice. She has two master's degrees in psychology and is author of two books: *Failure-Free Activities for the Alzheimer's Patient*, and *Reminiscence: Uncovering a Lifetime of Memories*. A long-time meditator, Carmel teaches mindfulness and compassion-based practices to healthcare professionals, including nurses, with a focus on self-compassion to promote resilience, focus, self-care, and well-being. She also teaches the eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program in workplaces, in the community, as well as online. Carmel regularly takes time out from teaching to attend retreats around the world. Contact her at carmel@nursingmindfully.com, <http://www.facebook.com/TheMindfulNurse> and www.twitter.com/nursemindfully.

Visit Carmel's author page on Amazon at <http://amzn.to/2kzurvZ>.

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Using the Power of Mindfulness and Compassion to Help You Thrive in Your Work

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A much-needed, well-written, and full-of-wisdom guide to help care for the caregiver. Nurses and other healing professionals will benefit immensely from these clear and helpful mindfulness tools and practices. I imagine a quiet revolution in hospitals as nurses begin to embody mindfulness and compassion, transforming their own lives and the lives of everyone they touch.

Diana Winston

Director of Mindfulness Education,
UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center
Author of Fully Present: The Science, Art, and Practice of Mindfulness

Every staff nurse reading this book will say, "YES! This is nursing!" Every nurse often asks the question, "How can I manage that situation better?" Within the wisdom of this book are solutions. The suggested self-care, guidance, and techniques will raise the quality of nursing care and patient satisfaction. Being calm in stressful situations and being able to internalize this is a powerful awareness. It's time to rebalance the technological systems now in place with compassion and kindness in clearer focus.

Carole Ann Drick, PhD, RN, AHN-BC

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Author of Mother Stories: Through Our Mothers' Death and Dying

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