



# AHNA Beginnings

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## NURSE COACHING





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## It is the Thought that Counts

by CARLA HAY-PERDUE, DNP, APRN, FNP, ANP-BC, NC-BC



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Nurse Coaching is a different new way of looking at patient care. It acknowledges clients as “experts” in their own care and assists them in accessing their internal motivation (Southard et al., 2021). Coaching engages and empowers the client to identify and accomplish their goals. We all have access to inner wisdom and insight that guides us throughout life. The nurse coach listens, without judgment, to allow the person to tap into their internal resources and access that insight.

I learned about the power of thought at an early age. My mother and I lived with my grandmother Winnie through her journey with diabetes. We did not know it, but Winnie encompassed the principles that we now teach.

Winnie was the 75-year-old matriarch of our family. She was the glue that held the family together. She listened, counseled, and coached everyone who needed it as she cooked and baked. She was the queen of hospitality. When any of our family were in town, they all came to visit with Winnie. She hosted Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July, birthdays, and any other holiday celebrations that came up.

One day after Christmas, she noticed she had a sore on her foot that was not healing. Lately, she had been tired but had written it off to too many Christmas activities. Her foot became

very inflamed and painful. She went to the doctor because it was not getting better after several weeks. She had an infection almost to the bone. Winnie weighed 275 pounds, and her blood sugar was 350. The doctor told her that she might lose her foot if she could not get her blood sugar and the infection under control. Winnie was put on insulin twice a day along with an oral medication. She was told to avoid refined carbohydrates and to not eat anything white like bleached flour or rice. At that moment, a whirlwind of thoughts ran through her head:

*I am responsible for my family. I cannot lose my foot. Who does he think he is? No one is cutting my foot off! I do not think I can shoot myself with insulin. What if I get the dose wrong? I must change my way of eating. What about my family? I have so much to do! I do not have time for this! I cannot have diabetes. The test was wrong. It was that half pound of peppermint I ate over Christmas.*

Winnie went home. Her daughter, a home economics teacher, coached her on nutrition. Winnie continued to cook and bake for her family, but something changed for her. She took control of her diabetes. Her diet changed to include meat, vegetables, a little fruit, and one or two servings per day of

whole grains. She stopped eating the beautiful cakes, pies, and cookies that she made for others. She checked her blood sugars regularly and charted them. She noticed they slowly went down. The infection cleared up in her foot, and she altered her shoes so that they did not rub blisters. Within a year, her weight was below 200 pounds, and she was off insulin. She noticed that she had more energy and could do more with her family and grandchild (me).

What was Winnie's secret? It was her thinking. The way she used her thoughts helped her to get control of her diabetes and improve her health. Her thinking also enhanced her ability to follow through with healthy decisions. She could just as easily have thought:

*It is no use. I cannot do this.*

*Look at that apple cake. I wonder if it is any good.*

*It will not hurt to have a little piece.*

*Oh, I am having a sinking spell...there is a Coke in the refrigerator. One will not hurt.*

*That foot will not improve! I am no good.*

*I am too tired to do what I used to.*

Dwelling on these thoughts would have resulted in a bad outcome. Instead, Winnie improved her quality of life and level of enjoyment that lasted for many years. She was aware of the universal truth of the Resilience Principles. Psychologists, counselors, and coaches have recognized this universal truth as the three principles of mind, consciousness, and thought (Banks, 2000). These three principles are the foundation of our felt experience. It is through insight into how the principles work that provide us insight into the fundamental truths of how we perceive our reality.

Winnie found the secret of Universal Mind. It is the energy behind life – the source of all things that is everywhere and ever-present. It is the source of thoughts that bring us insight, wisdom, love, peace, and joy. We are connected to this energy from birth to death, and we get in touch with it through quieting the mind. She found that she was able to quiet her mind through crochet. Anytime she sat down, she had a crochet hook in her hand. The intricate lace patterns were meditative to her and helped her quiet her mind. From this space, she had new thoughts that helped her navigate life.

We each have a personal thought factory that cranks out thoughts 24 hours a day. Some thoughts are happy, some funny, some sad, some angry, or even evil. Every thought has a feeling attached to it. Think of a sad thought, and you will experience a sad feeling. Think a happy thought, and the feeling of joy will appear. We do not control the thoughts that come into our heads. We do control which thoughts we latch onto and which we allow to float on by and disappear. Winnie was able to push through the denial and the thoughts about being unable to inject her insulin. When she did latch on to discouraging thoughts, her family encouraged her to reframe and focus on her goals.

She successfully managed her diabetes by improving her nutrition and her activities. Her success was made possible through her thoughts. Negative thoughts came, but she allowed them to move on, and instead held onto thoughts that she could (and would) succeed.

Consciousness is the awareness of the world through our five senses as interpreted by thought. The ability to hear the birds, see the wildflowers, and notice people and events happening in the surroundings is possible if thoughts are here in the present moment. If lost in thoughts of the past or future, the events of the surroundings are unnoticed.

This paradigm of the three principles (mind, consciousness, and thought) reveals that thought has everything to do with our experience. In other words, thought, coupled with mind and consciousness, is the common denominator of all experience. We will always feel and experience our thinking in the moment because all experience is thought-based. We live in an inside-out world (Blevens & Monroe, 2019), and our awareness makes all the difference – the awareness that our experience of reality comes from our inside thought world.

Through coaching, nurses can help clients identify changes that will improve their lifestyles. Becoming aware that it is our personal thought about life's circumstances that creates our experience, not the circumstance itself – this empowers the client to allow negative thoughts to pass and latch on to the thoughts of peace, joy, and hope for a fantastic future.

## REFERENCES

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**Carla Hay-Perdue**, DNP, APRN, FNP, ANP-BC, NC-BC received her BS and MS in Nursing from Texas Woman's University. She has also completed the Adult/Geriatric Nurse Practitioner and Family Nurse Practitioner programs from the University of Texas at Arlington. Carla co-established the Palo Pinto Rural Health Clinic in Gordon, Texas and worked as the Nurse Practitioner there for 25 years. In 2013, she began the DNP program at Texas Tech Health Sciences Center and completed this program in 2015. During her DNP program, she began pursuing a Nurse Coach Certification. Dr. Hay-Perdue has been a certified Nurse Coach since 2014 and a three principles coach since 2017. She currently works for Palo Pinto General Hospital as a Family Nurse Practitioner, community educator, and nurse coach.

