Chaos Theory In Nursing

What do you do with an environment that is incredibly challenging, where the stakes are high and the staff is overworked and underpaid? This is the recipe for burnout and one of the places its most evident is in the nursing field.

Nursing is ripe for Reorganization. Because the demands, energy and stakes are so high nurses often become cold and callous. A visit to any hospital will find many nurses in a state of Discover. Their Survivor and Reactor are “on call” mobilizing quickly to do their jobs and save lives. Their Lower Mental Thinker manages the charts, prescribes medicine and does differential diagnosis.

Very often that’s where the energy stops, there is little Upper Mental, Soul or Universal Spirit Energetic Intelligence at play in a hospital. But what if it were?

Dr. Elena Capella is an assistant professor and the director of the online, 2-year Master in Nursing program at the University of San Francisco’s School of Nursing and Health Professions. She knows the stresses and rigors of the nursing profession and is looking at ways to change how the nurses are addressing their challenges.

Capella adds in two new dimensions to nursing education. The first is chaos theory. She recognized that a hospital environment is prone to chaos. There are rules, protocols, procedures and guidelines that are useful in directing the flow of what should happen but what do you do when that flow... overflows?

Understanding chaos is a part of the natural order is critical in environments where chaos is likely to happen.

"Chaos theory just says that things are loosely associated," said Capella. "We try and be organized and directed in our approach, we have a lot of science, we have a lot of protocols, we have all this standardization, but you’re dealing with people, and people introduce all sorts of complexities to the picture. There are patients that don’t follow protocols, there are patients that have different backgrounds and understandings, there are miscommunications, there are problems with coordination.

When you start introducing so many different pieces to an environment like healthcare, then it starts to become disorganized and very chaotic."

It is at this point, according to Capella, that you need someone to step in as a reorganization force, someone who can redirect everyone’s attention and energy in an efficient manner -- which is what she is training her nurses to do.
Basically Capella is saying that the system needs a new energy input and a person to step up and act as the dominant oscillator to entrain the rest of the system at a higher level of complexity that is able to meet the presenting demands.

Capella also teaches the nurses to be self-reflective. This helps them to engage the confusing, troubling situations that arise and often with someone’s health on the line. This helps bring Awareness and Acknowledgement to the questions of the day. For a transformation, healing and learning from these quandaries Acceptance, the third “A”, will also be necessary.

Capella’s work is accessing some of the fundamentals of Reorganizational Healing which will help these nurses experience their work differently and help the hospitals become more effective. This is another example of how ROH dovetails perfectly into other professions and areas of life.