

Courage and Mindfulness

As a nursing professional in clinical practice, the condition changes and challenges occur. Face the “now” and see your mood, toward yourself and others. No judgement, positive or negative, treat it with mindfulness and handle it with mindfulness.

Put the methodology of courage into practice, break through and conquer difficulty, accumulate self-confidence and self-actualization.





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The study of “courage” was a craze that originated from Japan and later swept across Taiwan in recent years. Chinese translation publications that about the claims of the deceased Austrian psychotherapist Alfred Adler, the founder of the school of individual psychology, with themes such as “The Psychology of Courage”, “The Courage to be Disliked” that stayed on top of the chart for weeks and months. The surprising phenomenon soon caught our interest. We decided to take it upon ourselves to investigate the issue further.

We in the nursing profession are often met with a wide variety of challenges and complications. For example, we struggle to operate independently when we were beginners; we are concerned with our students’ performances when we become clinical instructors; and we need to constantly adapt to new obstacles when we assume new positions or undertake new assignments. When immersed in those stressful moments, how would you think or respond emotionally? How would others treat the scenario? Everyone has their own shares of challenges. The only way forward is to overcome them. That is why we the editorial team of Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital (TTCH) chose to investigate the topic “The Courage to Face Challenges”. We believe that by recognizing our own thoughts and attitude, it would enable us to learn from each other the courage to overcome challenges.

Grow from Our Own Failures

We conducted a survey by sending an electronic questionnaire to all the nursing staff in all six Tzu Chi hospitals, and 1,420 valid questionnaires were returned.

Basic Statistics

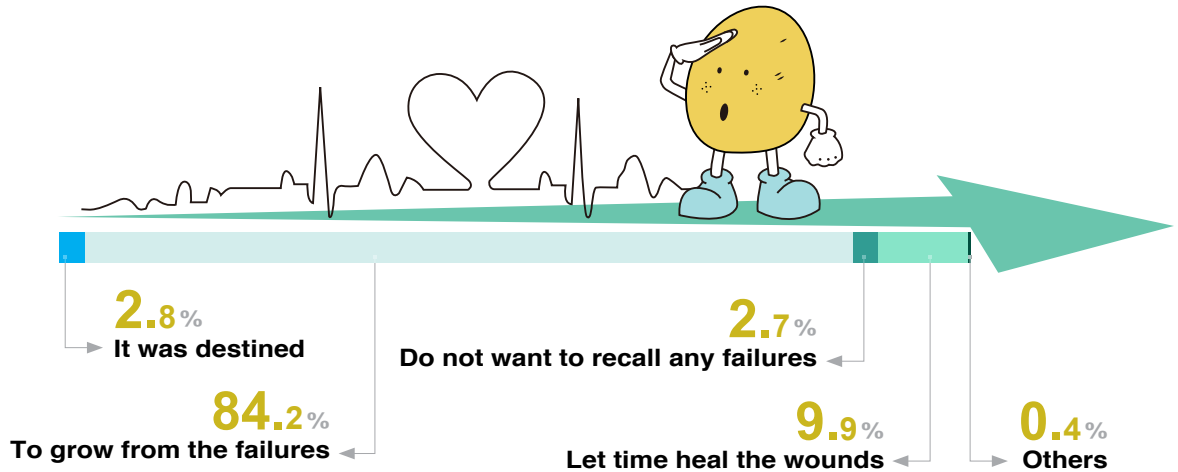
Gender	Number of People	%
Female	1,348	94.9
Male	72	5.1
Total	1,420	100.0
Age	Number of People	%
under 20	72	5.1
21~25	506	35.6
26~30	226	15.9
31~35	219	15.4
36~40	205	14.5
above 40	192	13.5
Total	1,420	100.0

Nursing Level	Number of People	%
N	526	37.0
N1	216	15.2
N2	490	34.5
N3	124	8.8
N4	64	4.5
Total	1,420	100.0
Job Title	Number of People	%
Registered nurse/nurse	1,153	81.2
Deputy head nurse	52	3.7
Head nurse	60	4.2
supervisor	21	1.5
Functional unit/case manager	41	2.9
nurse practitioner/senior RN	93	6.5
Total	1,420	100.0
Department	Number of People	%
Internal Medicine	295	20.8
Surgery	231	16.3
Pediatrics	59	4.2
Obstetrics & Gynecology	61	4.3
Intensive Care & ER	283	19.9
Functional Unit	12	0.9
Kidney Dialysis	50	3.5
Operating Room	93	6.5
Outpatient Clinic	180	12.7
Palliative Care	24	1.7
Administration	36	2.5
Psychiatry	39	2.7
Others	57	4.0
Total	1,420	100.0
Hospital Working Experience	Number of People	%
Within 1 year	274	19.3
1~2 years	215	15.1
2~3 years	178	12.6
3~5 years	185	13.0
5 years and above	568	40.0
Total	1,420	100.0



Q1

Recall any failures or setbacks you have experienced in your line of work. Which of the following matches your interpretation of these experiences? (N = 1,420)



In our first question, we asked our nursing staff to recall their past failures in the workplace. The answer was one-sided: 84.2% chose “to grow from the failures”; and 15.8% chose “let time heal the wounds”, “it was destined to be”, “do not want to recall any failures” or others.

The result is a clear indication that a majority of our nursing staff have the experience and the capability to perceive their failures and setbacks in a positive light.

A Leap out of the Comfort Zone

The second question aimed to investigate the amount of people who possesses the positive mentality to say “yes, I am ready” when receiving new tasks or assignments. The result showed that 40.5% answered “frequently 60-79%”, 29.8% answered “sometimes 40-59%”, and only 17.7% “always 80-100%”. The three positive choices occupied a total of 88%. The results of the first two questions right off the bat was inspiring. Most clinical nursing staff are capable of facing new challenges, assignments, and curve balls at work with a positive mentality, which suggests that a majority of them are in a healthy state of mind.

We nurses, particularly when we are promoted to the supervisor position such as deputy head nurse or head nurse, must find the courage to be disliked and give our juniors a push at the right time, so they can move past the minor angst or unpleasanties that are holding them back.

For example, one of my juniors submitted a case report that was rejected. When I encouraged her to revise her report and have another go, all she wanted was to run away. “I don’t want to submit it again. It will only be rejected again,” she said. According to Adler’s theory, she chose not to submit her case report out of the fear that it would be rejected, however the ultimate intention was to avoid submission, and the possibility of rejection was merely an excuse. So I asked her this, “Do you want your submission accepted? If yes, you better act now!”

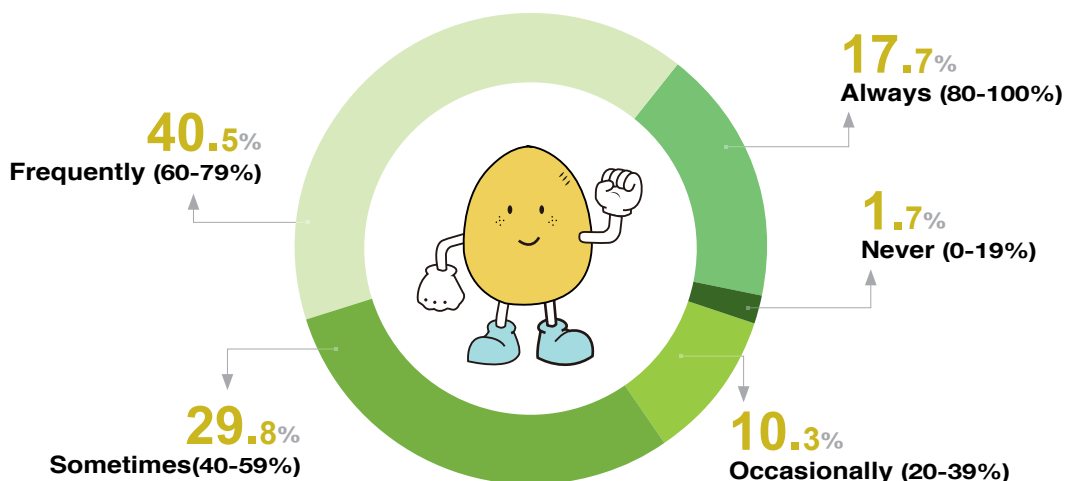
Enhance Psychological Muscle with Self-Reflection

The next question asked the nurses about their emotional responses, or psychological muscles, to self and others when challenges emerge. As result, 70.9% chose “always looking ahead” and scored 3 points and higher, 93% chose “willing to learn” and scored 3 points and higher, 71.3% chose “smile it off”, 79.2% “forcing a change of mind”, and 79.4% “eager for challenge” and scored 3 points and higher. It is evident that more than 70% of the answers scored mid to high in the positive mentality of our nursing staff in the wake of challenges, and more than 90% chose “willing to learn”, indicating that the education of positive mindset is deeply rooted in the nursing staff in clinical work.

TTCH holds a holistic health care competition every year. The hospital encourages every unit to submit their holistic health care exemplars in clinical work for the competition, and to have them (primary nurses in particular) to share on stage their personal

Q2

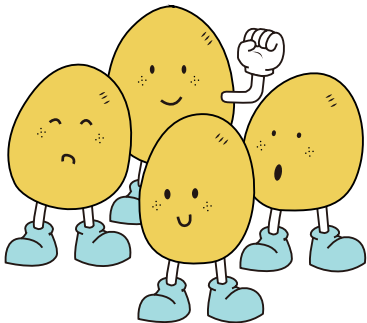
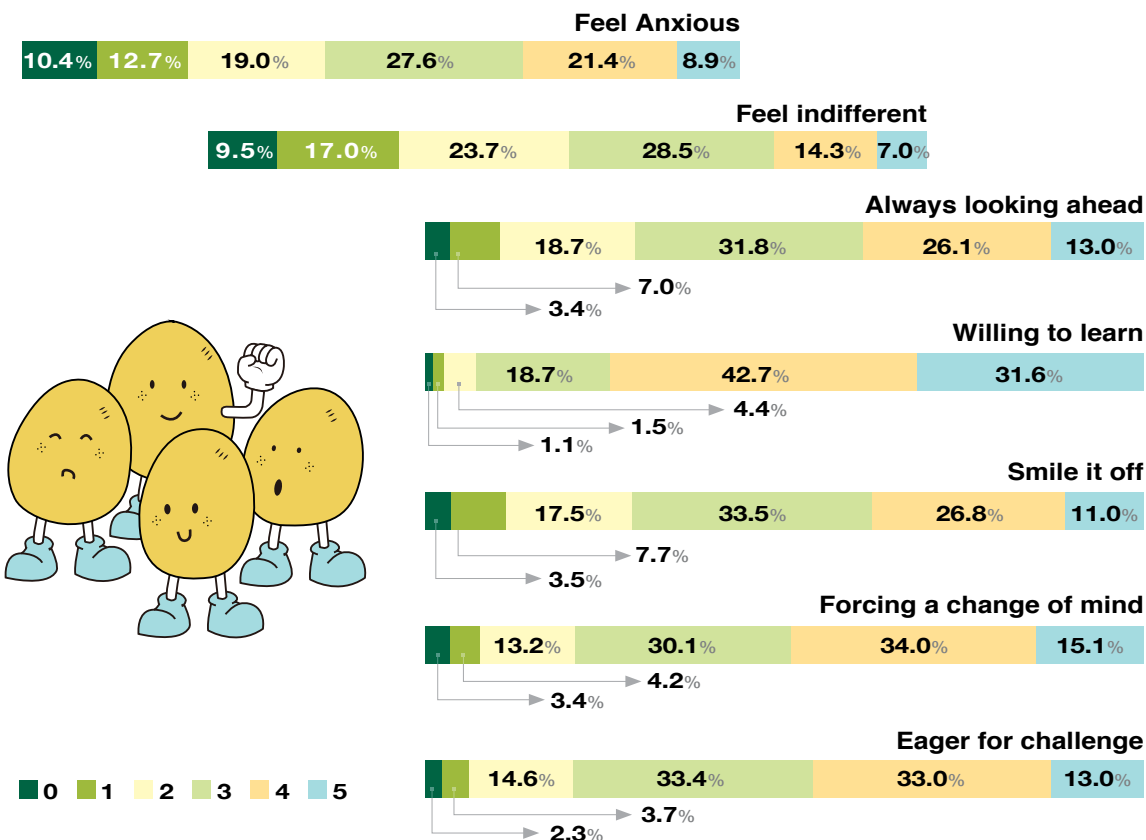
In the past month, what are the frequency of your “yes, I can” response to new or unfamiliar assignments given to you by your head nurse (or higher)? (N = 1,420)





Q3

Recall the challenges you have faced at work in the past month. How would you interpret your mood response or thoughts in regards to yourself? (0 to 5 Scale)(N = 1,420)



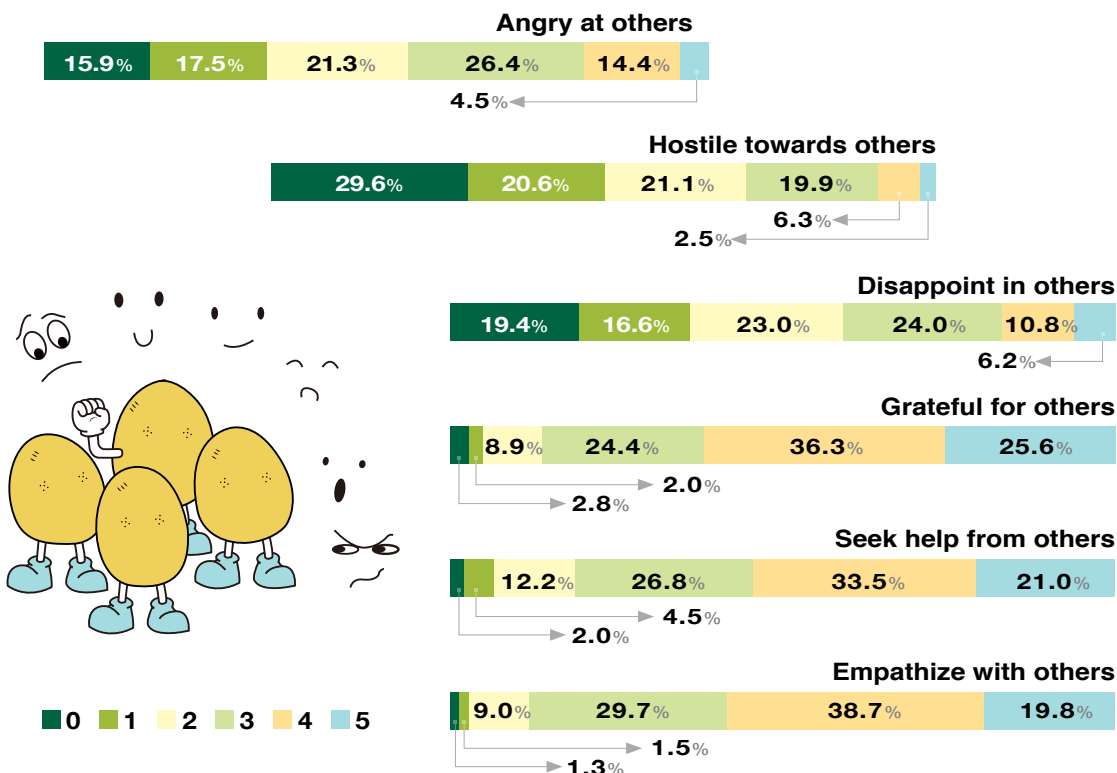
experiences. The competitors are judged by the hospital supervisors and near 200 hospital volunteers. Most juniors get intimidated from the sheer number of the judges and refuse to participate, fearing that their performance are not up to it. From my personal experience of counseling new nurses though, they tend to reject at first, but after they take the stage, it's hard to get them off of it. Perhaps it is because they are talking from experience about people they care for, the emotions are genuine and flows from within. After they leave the stage, regardless of the score, these young nurses are rewarded by the accomplishment of presenting a case report singlehandedly in front of a large audience. By overcoming challenges, people grow more confident in saying "yes, I can". That feeling is fantastic.

On the other hand, nearly 30% of the nursing staff fall under the lower end of the positive mentality spectrum, indicating that either they are less resilient to pressure, or that they are encountering obstacles at work. We would like to remind our supervisors to approach our staff who are struggling at work with guidance and support. Perhaps the resilience training and counseling for nursing staff is a direction we can focus on in the near future.

I have counseled a junior nurse before. She was an optimistic soul who turned anxious all of the sudden, and her signature smile was nowhere to be found. I asked her what happened. She failed to give me a straight answer, just excuses. After some investigation, I realized that her sudden change of mood came from the fact that her shift change with a senior nurse did not go as well as planned. When the senior nurse asked about patients' conditions, she was unable to answer some of them, and the fear that

Q4

Recall the challenges you have faced at work in the past month. How would you interpret your mood response or thoughts in regards to others? (N = 1,420)





she might disappoint her senior was the cause of her anxiety. With that in mind, I taught her some key points to follow during shift exchange, and spoke to the senior nurse on her response to her junior. The anxiety was gone. She was back to her vibrant, optimistic self in no time.

Observe, Introspect, Non-Judgmental

How the nursing staff perceive other people's emotional responses in time of stress, aside from their own anxiety, demonstrate the degree of control they possess over their personal emotions. The result indicated that 65.2% chose "Angry at others" and scored from 1 to 3 points, 61.6% chose "hostile towards others" and scored 1 to 3 points, and 63.6% chose "disappointed in others" and scored 1 to 3 points.

As a matter of fact, acting anxious and or indifferent, or feeling hostile and disappointed toward others in time of stress is only normal. There is no need to self-criticize when these negative emotions arise, but instead employ the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) strategies we talked about in the Dec. 2016 issue, perceive our physiological and psychological states while remaining non-judgmental.

Solving problems, not emotions, is a key ability that everyone in clinical work must possess.

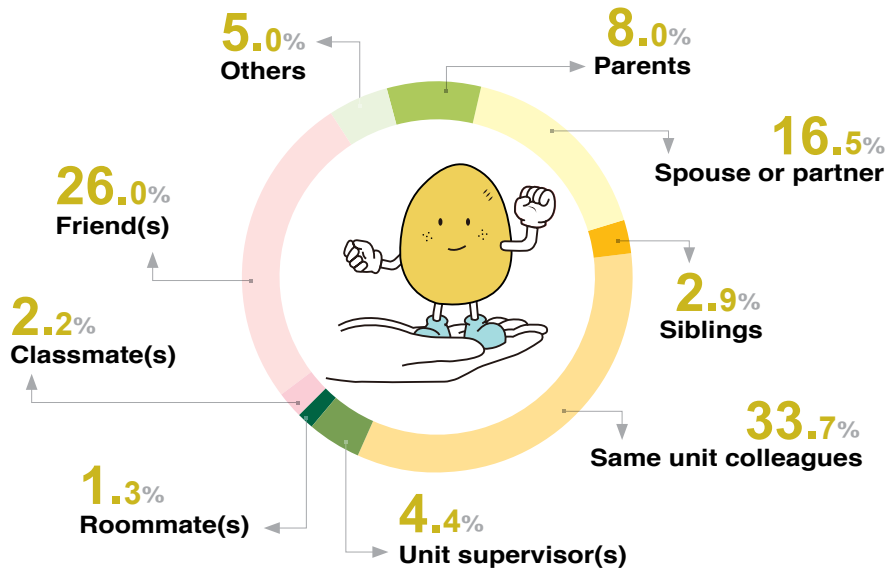
Working Together Doubles Courage

Life is a series of challenges at all levels, whether it is family, partner, work, or interpersonal relationships. If there are someone around to give you a helping hand in times of need, you would not be as helpless in your struggle to overcome whatever it is you are facing. Our last question asked about who are the ones that helped them out of trouble, and the result indicated that "colleagues in the same unit" topped with 33.7%, followed by "friends" with 26.0%, "spouse or partner" 16.5%, and "supervisor" 4.4%. Just as we predicted, support from colleagues in the same unit is the helping hand that lifted others through hard times; coupled with the support from supervisors, about 40% of the nursing staff overcame their predicaments with the aid and support of their fellow coworkers. After all, we speak the same language.

For example, when a special patient with a rather complicated disease is assigned to a junior nurse by a head nurse, the assignment is not just a challenge in the eyes of the young nurse, but also an act of recognition. This is something that I constantly remind the supervisors and seniors in clinical work. When we are instructing our juniors, giving appropriate challenges and companionship would inspire the young ones to overcome their challenges, and in turn gain equivalent level of growth, confidence, and courage as well.

Q5

Recall the challenges you have faced at work in the past month. Who helped you out of the predicament? (N = 1,420)



From my personal experience, nurses tend to advance their education throughout their career not only to improve their professional skills, but to enhance their psychological training and communication skills as well. I believe the Adler craze offer those who are seeking psychological training a viable alternative.

Non-Judgmental Acceptance of Self Is the Way to Happiness

Adler believed that in our life time, we have to confront three forces: societal, love-related, and vocational. He believes that all problems are interpersonal relationship problems, that our fate is determined by our actions, and furthermore, that we must possess the courage to be disliked by others. When we feel trapped by our circumstances, Adler's individual psychology may be able to shed light on an alternate approach to problems in life that arms us with the knowledge to overcome the trouble we face.

The result of this survey echoed our expectation, or rather surpassed our expectation. In other words, the courage index of the nursing staff across six Tzu Chi hospitals are high, and their ability to be mindfulness are strong. Nursing is a career filled with curve balls and changeups. If one shows up in front of you, do not worry, for we are with you.