

# A Spiritual and Energetically-Based Model Supporting the Practice of **Healing Touch**

By Lucia Thornton, RN, MSN, AHN-BC

The Model of Whole-Person Caring™ (WPC) is a spiritual, holistic and interdisciplinary model that serves as a guide for healthcare personnel and offers healing touch practitioners a framework for practice. This model is derived from theorists in the fields of nursing, physics, and systems theory and was developed to assist healthcare organizations in creating a healing and nurturing environment for consumers and healthcare personnel. It provides a common frame of reference so that people from various disciplines and also various cultural backgrounds can work together to provide quality care and compassionate service. Moreover, it redefines who we are in a way that supports the practice of Healing Touch in hospitals and healthcare organizations.

## REDEFINING WHO WE ARE

Defining who we are is the first step in establishing a model of care. The Model of Whole-Person Caring™ uses nurse theorists Florence Nightingale, Martha Rogers and Jean Watson to redefine who we are. Florence Nightingale stated, “We are a reflection of the divine with physical, metaphysical, and intellectual attributes.” Martha Rogers saw each person as an “irreducible, indivisible, pandimensional energy field that is open

and infinite in nature, and inseparable from the environment.” Jean Watson, a contemporary nurse theorist, states, “We are sacred beings [and] we must regard ourselves and others with deepest respect, dignity, mystery, and awe.”

The definition for “person” within the context of the WPC Model is an amalgamation of these concepts and states that each person is: “An energy field that is infinite and spiritual in essence and in continual mutual process with the environment. Each person manifests unique physical, mental, emotional, and social patterns that are interrelated, inseparable, and continually evolving.”

## CONCEPT OF WHOLE-PERSON

The metaphor of a diamond is used to describe who we are. In the Model of Whole-Person Caring the Energy Field is considered to be the first field of the “manifest” universe. It is from this field that all of material existence emerges. Each of us comes from this field and at this primordial level all of existence is “one.”

The first manifestation of who we are and the foundation of our being is our Spiritual Self. Unlike other models that view the spiritual as an “aspect” of our being this model purports that the “foundation” of our being is Spiritual. As Teilhard de Chardin has said, “We are not physical beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a physical experience.”

Arising from this Spiritual foundation is the Spiritual Self which is the essence of who we are. Some may refer to this essence as our Soul. This Self, with a capital “S” cannot be seen in the diagram but is hidden beneath our various aspects and is our closest experience and is inseparable from the divine and infinite energy field. This Self is clothed in the various aspects of our existence: our physical, emotional, social/relational and mental selves. Like a diamond each of these aspects is interrelated and inseparable.

When we begin to access and acknowledge our Spiritual Self then this spiritual essence becomes integrated into each of the facets of our lives and gently transforms us. We begin to realize



and understand the sacred and infinite nature of our being and move toward Self-realization.

### KEY CONCEPTS AND BENEFITS

These key concepts serve as the foundation of the model and the associated programs that have been developed to promote healing at both an individual and organizational level:

- Sacredness of being.
- Self-care and self-healing.
- Optimal health and well-being.
- Therapeutic partnering.
- Transformational leadership.
- Caring as sacred practice.

The implementation of the model in hospitals has resulted in improved patient/client satisfaction, increased employee satisfaction and retention, increased health and vitality of participants, improvement in workplace morale, enhanced communication and teamwork, and considerable cost savings for hospitals. The Model has received numerous awards including the Norman Cousins Award, Professional Excellence in Healthcare Leadership Award, Innovation in the Workplace Award, and recognition from the Nursing Executive Center of the Advisory Board and the Samueli Institute.

### SUPPORTING THE PRACTICE OF HEALING TOUCH

What is exciting about this model is that it is the first and only interdisciplinary model that acknowledges who we are as “fields of energy.” As such, it serves as a very useful framework for the practice of energy-based therapies. The current bio-medical model cannot explain the phenomena associated with energy healing since it is limited to bio-mechanical laws. This model provides a framework for explaining energy healing and supports the practice of energy-based therapies as credible and essential in the healthcare setting.

The model stands on the shoulders of Florence Nightingale, Martha Rogers and Jean Watson - highly regarded nurse theorists whose concepts have been repeatedly supported by numerous masters theses and doctoral dissertations. In addition, being interdisciplinary, the Model creates a common ground of practice for all healers – whether practicing as nurses, physicians, lay-people, administrators, therapists, educators etc. Therapeutic partnerships exist among all caregivers and clients and each member is regarded with mutual respect, value, courtesy and compassion.

Caring is regarded as “sacred practice” and both the client and the practitioner are enriched when actions arise from caring and unconditional love. As we begin to see existence as “sacred,” the way we treat ourselves and each other dramatically changes. Our interactions, work and relationships begin to arise from a place of deep regard and reverence. This is when true healing begins to occur.

For more information and articles related to the Model of Whole-Person Caring™ go to: [www.LuciaThornton.com](http://www.LuciaThornton.com)

About the author:



Lucia Thornton, RN, MSN, AHN-BC is immediate Past-President of AHNA and has been involved in nursing, holistic healing and health care for more than 30 years. For the past 15 years, Lucia has been involved in developing and teaching programs to help nurses and other healthcare workers create healthier and more wholesome ways of being. She developed the Model of Whole-Person Caring™ to provide a holistic, spiritually-based, interdisciplinary framework for individual and organizational change. Her work in transforming hospitals into “healing environments” has received national, state and local recognition. Lucia can be contacted at:

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