



SELF-CARE TIPS FOR NURSES

A HOLISTIC NURSING GUIDE TO
TAKING CARE OF ONESELF

INCORPORATING AROMATHERAPY INTO YOUR DAILY LIFE

Understand the healing properties of essential oils

Ancient cultures from all over the world have used various forms of aromatherapy ranging from the burning of incense to extracting oils from various plants, herbs and flowers. These ancestors understood the aromas and healing properties of essential oils.

Generally, aromatherapy can be applied in three ways: direct application to the skin, inhalation, and internal consumption. In all three scenarios, the properties of the essential oils, which constitute “aromatherapy”, travel through the body and eventually to the brain, where they have both physiological and psychological effects.

We can also look at aromatherapy from a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) point of view. Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) and grapefruit (*Citrus paradisi*), two very common essential oils used in aromatherapy, are good examples. Lavender is spicy and sweet, has a cooling nature, and affects the lung, liver, and pericardium. Two of the major functions of lavender are promoting the [smooth flow of liver qi](#) and calming the shen. Grapefruit is spicy and bitter, has a slightly warming nature and affects the lung, stomach and gallbladder. Major functions of grapefruit include regulating the flow of liver qi and breaking up qi, food, and phlegm stagnation. With their positive influence on qi, just using these two essential oils would be a good start to incorporating aromatherapy into your daily life.

Here's how to use aromatherapy:

1 **DIFFUSERS:** You can buy special plug-in diffusers designed to slowly release essential oils based on your desired strength (from light to heavy scent). You can also use a small oil or scented wax tealight burner that does virtually the same thing without needing electricity or batteries.

- 2** **ACUPRESSURE POINTS:** You can place drops of essential oils on [acupressure points](#) prior to massaging. If you choose this technique, it is extremely important that you dilute certain essential oils before doing so as some oils can burn the skin. Lavender is an example of an essential oil that is safe to place on the skin directly.
- 3** **SPACE SPRAY:** You can make an aromatherapy spray by placing drops of essential oils in a bottle (preferably dark colored glass) filled with spring water. You can choose one essential oil or create a blend based on the individual makeup of each essential oil and the desired therapeutic outcome. For a one ounce bottle, eight to ten drops of essential oils is sufficient.
- 4** **EYE PILLOW:** Many eye pillows come infused with aromatherapy oils. However, if you do not have one of these, you can easily make one by lightly spraying essential oils on a folded Kleenex tissue and placing the tissue on your eyes. Instructions for making an aromatherapy spray are given above.
- 5** **COTTON BALL:** Place a few drops of an essential oil or blend on a cotton ball and place it on your chest, near your face, while lying down. You can take a cotton ball with you to smell throughout the day.

These five methods are just a few ways in which you can incorporate aromatherapy into your daily life. With hundreds of essential oils, each having their own properties and specific actions on the body, the application of aromatherapy is almost endless!



LAVENDER

In Chinese medicine terms, lavender is spicy and sweet, has a cooling nature and affects the Lung, Liver, and Pericardium. One of the main functions of lavender is to provide a sense of calm, and it can help you sleep easier and more deeply.



GRAPEFRUIT

Grapefruit is spicy and has a slightly warming nature. Citrus scents in general are wonderful stress relievers and also promote a feeling of happiness and optimism. This works due to its aroma and because the scent stimulates certain hormones which have uplifting effects on the brain.

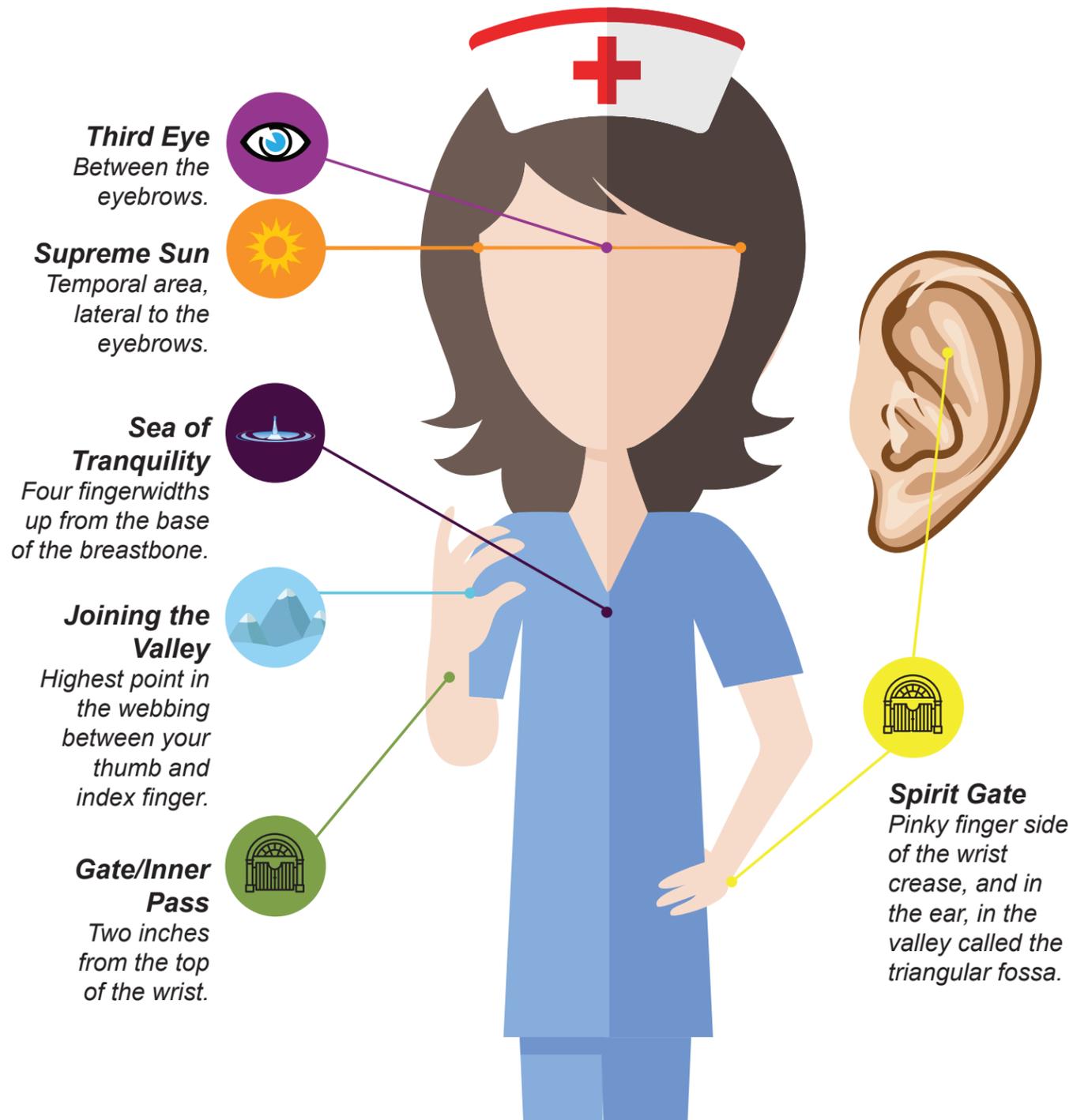


SANDALWOOD

Sandalwood is slightly musky. This scent will help you release nervous tension and focus on the task at hand. Sandalwood has also been known to help with digestion issues, insomnia, anxiety, coughs, and sore throats.

ACUPRESSURE FOR COMMON AILMENTS

Stimulate your body's natural abilities to cure itself



The ancient Chinese healing art of acupressure is similar to acupuncture, but instead of applying needles to certain points on the body, the technique uses finger pressure on these points. Like acupuncture, applying pressure to specific points of the body draws on the body's natural abilities to cure itself. The pressure promotes blood flow, releases muscular tension, and engages the body's own life force to soothe and heal. Acupressure can relieve tension, aches and pains, arthritis, even menstrual cramps. It can also help relieve the symptoms of insomnia, depression, toothache, dizziness, digestive disorders, nausea, morning, and motion sickness.

Traditional Chinese Medicine has mapped out points of meridian pathways on the human body. These points, mapped out and proven by Western science using electrical devices, carry energy called chi. Some points relate to a specific body part, others are more general. When these points are stimulated by hand and finger massage, they encourage the body to combat illness. Basically, the many pressure points that exist along the meridians act as "valves" for the flow of qi. Acupressure opens these valves to restore the flow of qi and balance the body's natural energy. Much like a regular massage, acupressure massage uses the finger or thumb, and sometimes a blunt object. Motions are quick and circular and applied with a medium amount of pressure. Massages last between five and 15 minutes.

STRESSED?	IRRITATED?	HEADACHE?	ANXIOUS?	NEED SLEEP?
Spirit Gate 	Third Eye 	Joining the Valley 	Spirit Gate 	Sea of Tranquility
+	+	+	+	+
Supreme Sun 	Sea of Tranquility 	Supreme Sun 	Third Eye 	Gate/Inner Pass
	+	+	+	
	Joining the Valley 	Third Eye 	Sea of Tranquility 	

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MEDITATION AND YOGA

Finding a calm place within us

Meditation and [yoga](#) are highly effective techniques for relaxing the body and clearing the mind. 1500 years ago, a sage named Patañjali, who was working from far older sources, compiled the 196 sutras, or aphorisms, that form the basis of Ashtanga Yoga. Among these was this simple but transcendental saying that has survived the centuries:



Yoga is the effort to still the thought and feeling waves of the mind.

This “effort” comes from finding a calm place within us. A place where the body is relaxed, the mind is quiet, and the attention is focused neither in the past nor the future, but in the immediate moment. To reach this calm and relaxed place, you don't need be sitting cross-legged with your eyes closed, or hanging upside down on a tree limb. You can meditate just about anywhere in any position. You can meditate on nature, your breath, a mantra (a mystical syllable or poem), sensations in your body, even the wind rustling through leaves or a babbling brook. Meditation involves focusing the mind and deadening the incessant chatter and clutter of the outside world.

Seated Meditation

Meditation is like a breath of fresh air for your mind. To breathe properly, it helps to practice what most people have forgotten--to breathe from your stomach. You will take in more oxygen this way. Find a comfortable place to lie or sit. Place your hands on your stomach and inhale slowly. Breathe in for a count of four; breathe out for a count of six. Breathe deeper, keeping exhales two counts longer than inhales. Do not hyperventilate. Breathe slowly and evenly, and become conscious of the breath coming in and out as you breathe through your nose.

Walking Meditation

You can also meditate at a walking pace. Make sure each step is timed to coincide with your rate of breathing. Look straight ahead, feel the shifting of your body's weight as you deliberately take each step. With every step and breath, you should begin to clear your mind of extraneous thoughts. Practice walking this way for 10 to 15 minutes a day.

“Body Wave” Meditation

You can easily practice this highly versatile meditation technique virtually anywhere, anytime. The “body wave” method is especially relaxing when you're stressed out at work. It can also be the precursor to a good night's sleep before bedtime. Imagine a wave of energy moving across your body from your feet through each body part to your scalp. Breathe deeply as this wave moves across skin and muscle. Empty your mind of extraneous thoughts and feelings. Do this for several minutes each day.

See the next page for a variation on this meditation.

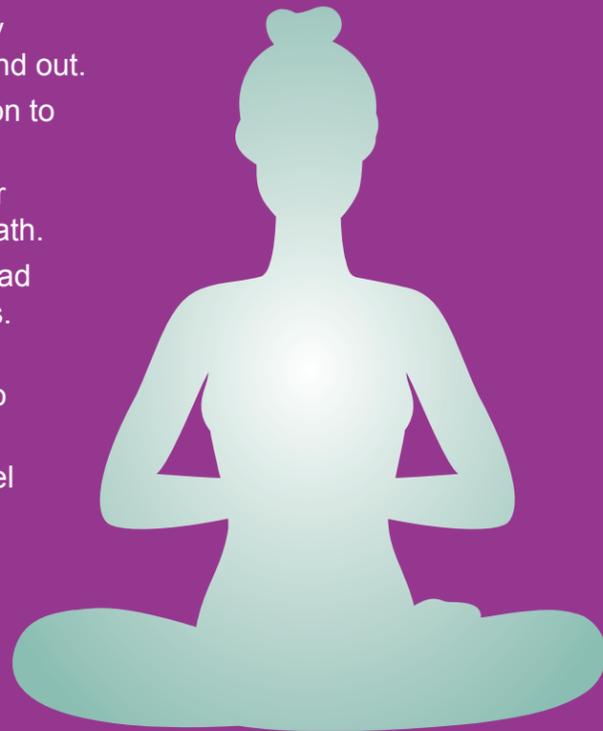


Body Scan Meditation

This will guide you in turning your attention to various parts of your body in order to notice where you are holding tension. This technique can be used for self-awareness and relaxation.

- To start, find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. Most people prefer to lie down for this exercise.
- Uncross your arms and legs...let them be supported by the ground or the chair or the floor. Close your eyes, if you wish.
- Notice your breath coming in and out of your body.
- Feel it enter through your nose or mouth, move past your airways, and fill your lungs. Then feel it moving out of your body. Take a few moments to focus on your breath flowing in and out.
- Now bring your attention to your toes. Continue taking deep, slow breaths. Wiggle your toes slightly and focus your attention there.
- Now bring your attention to the soles of your feet. Continue to breathe deeply.
- Now bring your attention to your calves. How do they feel?
- Bring your attention to your knees and move them gently.
- Bring your attention to your thighs. Tense your thigh muscles and then relax them as you continue to breathe deeply.
- Now bring your attention to your buttocks, squeeze them together, and relax. Are you holding tension there?
- Now bring your attention to your low back. Notice any pain or tightness there. Breathe deeply through this area and let the muscles relax.
- Now bring your attention to your stomach. Pay attention to its movement as you breathe in and out.
- Bring your attention to your chest. Pay attention to its movement as you breathe in and out.
- Bring your attention to your shoulders. Feel for any tension there and release it with your breath.
- Bring your attention to your neck. Roll your head gently from side to side and relax the muscles.
- Now bring your attention to your face. Feel for any tension in your facial muscles and let it go as you continue to breathe.
- Bring your attention to your head and hair. Feel the air moving around it.

Continue breathing and release all of your body's tension. Feel your feet connected to the earth. Notice your relaxed state and carry it with you for the rest of your day.



Source: University of Minnesota Center for Spirituality & Healing

Yoga Basics

Once you have mastered these basic breathing and meditation techniques, you may want to practice some basic yoga. The key to a successful exercise session is the attitude--that means a small ego and a big heart. Be sure to wear loose fitting clothes or a stretch suit, and use a mat, blanket, and pillow.

One of the best ways to learn yoga is to take a class from an experienced practitioner. They can show you the various physical poses and exercises--such as sitting, standing twists, supine, and inverted poses--as well as proper warm up and wind down exercises. Yoga can also [improve your posture](#). Get started now with some of these basic poses.

TREE POSE	DOWNWARD DOG	WARRIOR II	CHILD'S POSE	BRIDGE
<p>Benefits: Increases balance, focus, memory, and concentration.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bend the right knee, shifting all of your weight into the left leg. Turn the right knee to the right wall resting the heel against the left leg. 2. Slowly slide the right foot up the left leg, only as high up as you can maintain your balance. When you are balanced here, slowly bring the palms together, prayer position in front of the heart. If you are very balanced here, try the next stage by inhaling the arms over the head. 3. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths. 	<p>Benefits: Stimulates the brain and nervous system; improving memory and concentration.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bend in half forward, tuck the toes under, press into the hands and begin to lift the hips up towards the ceiling. 2. Keeping palms shoulder width apart, spread the fingers wide with the middle finger facing forward. Press out through the fingers and edges of the hands. 3. Using straight (but not locked) arms, press the hips back and up. 4. Keep feet hip's width apart with the toes facing forward. Press the heels into the floor, feeling a stretch in the back of the legs. 5. Let the head and neck hang freely from the shoulders. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths. 	<p>Benefits: Develops concentration, balance and groundedness.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Step the feet wide apart, with the arms out to the side. The feet should be under the wrists, facing forward and parallel. 2. Turn the right toes to the right wall and bend the right knee directly over the right ankle. 3. Turn the hips and the shoulders towards the front and reach out through the finger tips, reaching towards the side walls. Turn and look at the right middle finger. 4. Sink the hips down towards the floor, and reach the crown of the head up to lengthen the spine. Relax the shoulders down and back, pressing the chest forward. 5. Breathe and hold for 3-6 breaths. 	<p>Benefits: Calms the body, mind and spirit.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lower the hips to the heels and forehead to the floor. Have the knees together or if more comfortable, spread the knees slightly apart. 2. The arms can be overhead with the palms on the floor, the palms or fists can be stacked under the forehead, or the arms can be alongside the body with the palms up. 3. Breathe and hold for 4-12 breaths. 	<p>Benefits: Lengthens and strengthens the spine, energizes the body, and stimulates the endocrine and nervous systems.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lying on your back, bend both knees and place the feet flat on the floor hip width apart. Slide the arms alongside the body with the palms facing down. The fingertips should be lightly touching the heels. 2. Lift the hips up, rolling the spine off the floor. Lightly squeeze the knees together to keep the knees hip width apart. 3. Press down into the arms and shoulders to lift the chest up and to lift the hips higher. 4. Breathe and hold for 4-8 breaths.

Pose Descriptions from YogaBasics.com

MAINTAINING YOUR ENERGY WHILE ENHANCING YOUR PATIENTS'

The better your 'energetic hygiene', the better you feel

Let's talk about the next level of self-care that accompanies any form of healing: energy.

As a nurse, you are well-versed in your healing techniques. You've learned self-care procedures, how to protect your body from fatigue, what postures to adopt during long shifts, and how to communicate effectively with your patients. But are you [preserving your own energy](#) and creating healthy boundaries between yourself and your patients?

Do you ever feel mentally, physically, and emotionally drained at the end of a shift?

Are there patients you work with that are particularly negative to be around?

Do you feel like you carry your patients' emotions home with you?

Each of these scenarios is natural for a nurse to feel from time to time, but there is a way to prevent feeling like this often. With mindful energy techniques, you can best serve your patients without sacrificing your own well-being.

Donna Eden writes in her book *Energy Medicine: Balancing Your Body's Energies for Optimal Health, Joy, and Vitality* (Tarcher, 2009), "by focusing on your body as a living system of energy, you begin to realize that the technology for powerful energy interventions is already inherent in your hands and in your being". Whether you know it or not, you are already working with energy. In his book *Your Hands Can Heal You* (Atria, 2004), Master Stephen Co writes about "energetic hygiene", defining it as "the practice of keeping your energy body as clean and charged up as possible". It can only benefit you to become mindful of your own energy and boundaries.

The better your 'energetic hygiene', the better you feel—and the more refreshed and 'charged' you'll become. By creating an energetic boundary between yourself and each patient, you are not only protecting yourself from becoming easily drained—you will also become fully engaged, delivering the best care possible.

The single most important thing you can do to [maintain a healthy energy balance](#) is to be mindful of your energy as well as the patient's. Become aware of how you feel before and after each treatment: are those your own emotions or your patient's that you're feeling? Do you feel uplifted or withdrawn? How much of an effect does each patient have on you and is it an effect you're comfortable with?

Take a look below for an easy-to-use practice to promote your wellbeing. Being grounded refers to being present in the current moment. Once you're grounded, you are more in control of your space and energy. You'll be more aware of emotional ties to patients and situations and you will also be fully present, working in the moment with your full energetic capability.

Grounding

Try this before each shift (and feel free to do it more often than that!):

- Remove your shoes, if possible.
- Sit in a chair with the soles of your feet firmly on the ground (no crossed legs).
- Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and continue to focus on your breathing.
- Notice how your feet feel on the ground. Feel the ground on your soles.
- Take note of how your body feels in the chair: what do you feel on your legs, your back, and your arms?
- Now that you are conscious of your body sitting in the chair, imagine a line of light flowing through the top of your head all the way down your spine.
- Imagine the line of light continuing through the base of your spine into the Earth.
- Once you have it firmly in mind that the line is traveling through your body and into the ground, take a moment to imagine it traveling deep down, all the way to the Earth's center.
- Once you can see in your mind's eye that it's reached the Earth's center, imagine that the line grows to be the full width of your hips.
- Imagine this line is a cord and it is strong and anchored, taut with the Earth.
- Return your focus to your breathing.
- Slowly wiggle your toes and your fingers.
- Open your eyes—you are fully present!

You can also use your "grounding cord" to release negative emotions back into the Earth. After completing the steps above, imagine any unwanted feelings or energies flowing through the cord into the Earth and out of your body. Simply let them go.

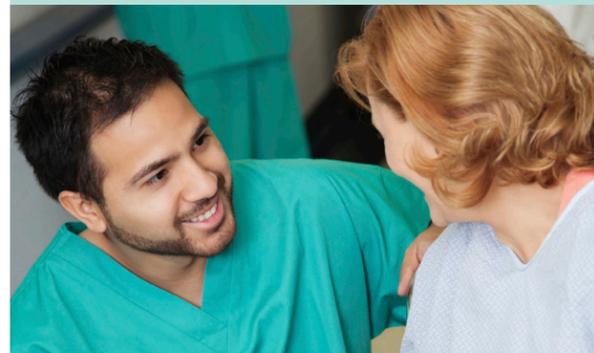
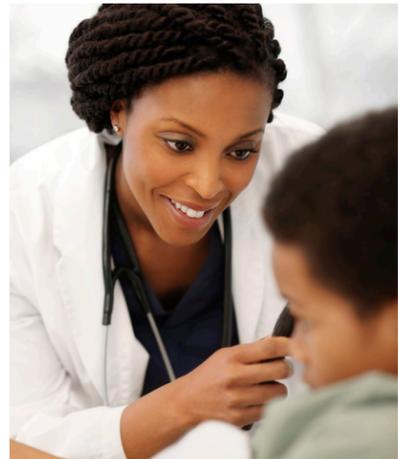
Remember: energy flows where attention goes. You so often give your attention to patients—don't forget to attend to your own needs as well!

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What our graduates are saying:



Becoming a registered nurse in my 44th year took a huge leap of faith. Continuing my education to become a holistic nurse came naturally. Knowledge is precious. Pass it on.

- Kathleen



With a business and family to take of, education takes on a new dimension. Time becomes more precious, and educational requirements are no longer the main goal so much as the wish to learn more--more about the people we serve, more about who we are in this lifetime, about our purpose and skills. If this is what you too seek, then there is no better place to start than here at PCOM: opening doors you never knew you had!

- Jessica

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