Caring Science, Mindful Practice

IMPLEMENTING WATSON’S HUMAN CARING THEORY

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Caring Science, Mindful Practice
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Jean Watson, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN, is distinguished professor emerita and dean emerita of the College of Nursing at the University of Colorado, Denver. She is founder of the Center for Human Caring in Colorado, a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, and past president of the National League for Nursing. Her current activities include founder and director of Watson Caring Science Institute, a nonprofit international foundation, committed to furthering caring science in the world. Dr. Watson has earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in nursing and psychiatric–mental health nursing with a PhD in educational psychology and counseling. She is a widely published author and recipient of several awards and honors, including an international Kellogg Fellowship in Australia, a Fulbright Research Award in Sweden, and 10 honorary doctoral degrees, including seven honorary international Doctor of Science awards from Sweden, Spain, the United Kingdom, Japan, British Columbia, and Canada. Clinical nurses and academic programs throughout the world use her published works on the philosophy and theory of human caring and the art and science of caring in nursing. Dr. Watson’s caring science/philosophy theory is used to guide new models of caring and healing practices in diverse settings worldwide. At the University of Colorado, Dr. Watson held the title of distinguished professor of nursing, the highest honor accorded its faculty for scholarly work. In 1998–1999 she assumed that nation’s first endowed chair in caring science, based at the University of Colorado. Her work continues through the Watson Caring Science Institute, www.watsoncaringscience.org.
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Kathleen Sitzman, PhD, RN, CNE
Jean Watson, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN
Jean Watson’s work has been my professional refuge and inspiration from the very beginning of my nursing career. Her vision has given me the courage to practice fierce love and open caring no matter what environment or situation I find myself in. This stance has transformed my life and career in ways I could not have imagined at the outset. Jean, I give my love and deepest gratitude to you.

I dedicate this work to my husband Rick, my mom Marge Fox, and my sister Tami Bingham. Your love and caring make me better able to love and care for all.

Kathleen Sitzman
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It is a special privilege to support and endorse this publication, which contributes to the growing scholarship of the Caring Science Library of Springer Publishing Company–Watson Caring Science Institute Series. Further, this is a unique publication, in that it builds upon the impressive personal practices and extensive teaching experience of Dr. Kathleen Sitzman. Dr. Sitzman brings to this writing a background of mindfulness practices, guided by the writing and teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh.

I consider Dr. Sitzman and Thich Nhat Hanh enlightened and informed humans who help us deepen our understanding and the meaning of a “Caring Moment,” “Authentic Presence in the Now,” “Mindfulness,” “Reflective Practice”—all foundational to living out authentic human-to-human caring for self and others and our world.

In this work, Dr. Sitzman assists me in bringing my Human Caring Theory into embodied experiences and learning activities, which engage a first-time learner of this theory. At the same time this work invites anyone into an expanded and deepened practice and understanding of the theory; it draws upon creative learning practices of human caring through images, art, metaphors, and expressive symbols to reveal the theory to anyone familiar or unfamiliar with my writings.

Thus, this book can serve as a guided learning text for any student, practitioner, educator, or administrator needing a graceful and inviting guide to translate and integrate the complexities of the abstract, philosophical–ethical worldview underlying the Human Caring Theory; finding ways to live out into concrete daily self-caring practices.

Renewed attention and intentions are created for contemplation, reflections, and simple “pauses” to move from ego–head–fear mindsets, to love, open heart–centered compassion, accessing sources of inner knowing and interbeing in relation to all of life.

While the theory addresses concepts such as “core” and “trim” to understand the difference between what is lasting and timeless about caring and what is
constantly impermanent and changing, such as skills, tasks, procedures, and even knowledge, Sitzman anchors these distinctions into the simple images—the simplicity of visualizing an orange and the sensuous act of peeling an orange to grasp the lasting juicy part of an orange core and what peels away with time. However, both are essential to have an orange.

Other such mindful invitations are throughout the book, introducing exercises, art activities, and abstracts for each of the Caritas Processes of the theory. The abstracts are from staff nurses, nursing leaders, and new Watson Caring Science Institute Caritas coaches from across the United States, representing changes in health care systems in this country—transformative changes that are happening in the field.

Overall, this work brings Human Caring Theory to life through use of creativity and engagement of the heart and human spirit. It draws upon multiple ways of knowing, being, doing, becoming—“interbeing”—in-the-moment, living out human caring for self and other. This learning process parallels the caring science worldview for use of multiple emancipatory methods for teaching and learning as well as forms of inquiry to explore; to be curious, and to obtain self-knowledge and a disciplined mindful, inner practice, as the true guide to human caring.

Finally, this work reunites science with spirit, physical with metaphysical, profane with sacred, ordinary with extraordinary, and head with heart and soul, for a new level of human consciousness, for the evolution of the discipline of nursing. This work gives an entirely new meaning to the notion of “discipline”—inviting self-practices that radiate caring into the human heart, sustaining Oneness-of-Being/Becoming with Mother Earth, our universe unfolding.

I trust that those who study this theory and engage in this learning will awaken to what is calling them in their heart of hearts. I trust it will help you align self with your soul’s call, to go deeper into your personal/professional inner practices that radiate out into our work and world. May we all awaken our hearts and soul to fully learn and live out authentic human caring for a new world calling out for this paradigm of caring and healing from one world/one heart of humanity.

Jean Watson, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN
I have been practicing and teaching Watson’s Caritas Nursing since 1984, in hospital nursing, home health care, hospice, occupational health, and then in nursing education, administration, and research in higher education. I began studying and practicing mindfulness in the Thich Nhat Hanh tradition in 1990. Watson’s work and Nhat Hanh’s mindfulness practice form the foundations of my life and work.

Nhat Hanh’s mindfulness practices are not specific to any one religious or spiritual tradition and support meaningful introspection and self-awareness. Watson has made clear that personal spiritual practices and cultivation of self-awareness form the underpinnings of genuine Caritas practice. In many years of teaching Watson’s theory to laypeople, nursing students, and nurses, I have found that mindfulness practice and Caritas practice seamlessly harmonize to support deep understanding for learners who are very knowledgeable about Watson’s work and also for those who are unfamiliar. This text is meant to provide clear and simple content to support foundational learning and direct experience related to Watson’s work, opening possibilities for exploring the complexities and promises of caring science into the future.

Kathleen Sitzman, PhD, RN, CNE
When I read this book, it touched my heart and soul like no other nursing textbook has in the past. I was moved on many levels by the authors, Sitzman and Watson, and their collective ability to beautifully, scientifically, and eloquently articulate theory and mindful activities to incorporate caring for self and others within the boundaries of one textbook. This is an amazing contribution to all nurses, and I surely hope it will find its way to becoming a foundational text for all nursing students entering the profession. I cannot help but think it might set the stage for all the difference for patients in the future—like the ripple effects of the pond, described in the book…. This one book may have started as a “pebble” and yet, maybe not in my lifetime but hopefully in the future, the ripples will be felt and seen around the world. Finally an opportunity for students and nurses to glean through a choice of creative activities to apply components of caring theory to nurture one’s mind, body, and soul, which ultimately benefits each nurse’s patients, family, colleagues, and friends.

As a professor emeritus at the College of Nursing, a licensed marriage and family therapist, and an artist, I thoroughly enjoy passing my joy of painting to others. Currently serving as clinical professor/coordinator of special projects at the East Carolina University College of Nursing, I primarily paint in watercolor, but have also won awards in acrylics and oils. Regardless of the medium, I prefer to paint the effect of light on my subjects en plein air. En plein air is a term from the French, which means literally “in the open air.” Painting en plein air also provides sunshine and exercise. By offering “Traveling Studio” classes in collaboration with gallery owners, I have been able to pass my joy of painting onto others as well, many of whom are nurses.
I discovered painting in watercolor as a delightful way to nurture and rejuvenate my body, mind, and spirit during years of career development and caregiving. Each time I developed pneumonia as a result of “burning the candle at both ends,” I began to set aside more time for my creative expressions, which led to increased relaxation and increased immunity to prevent illness.

My paintings have become another means of contributing to the well-being of patients in multiple service roles. I have incorporated art in research studies that include “Expressions of Art in Children of Divorce” and “Stepfamilies: Making It in the New Family.” Renderings have been used for imagery in those experiencing chronic illnesses, in addition to assisting those coping with various causes of grief. Contributions of my art have been given for fundraising activities for Sigma Theta Tau International, in support of student scholarships and other community organizations that support health of the population, and to East Carolina University College of Nursing’s Development Fund. My 2012 solo show “Humble Beginnings” was the invitational Inaugural Exhibition for Art as Avocation at the Laupus Library, showcasing artistic talents from the Division of Health Sciences at East Carolina University.

Expressions of art provide me with much gratitude for the “good life” and beauty that surrounds each of us each day, and provides me with more energy to enjoy the most important roles of my life: wife, mother, grandmother, nurse, therapist, colleague, and friend. It is my hope that nurses will use this as a foundational textbook for practicing caring science while serving the same or other important roles in their lives.

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SECTION I

Introduction to the Caritas and Enhancing Use Through Mindfulness
Chapter 1

Use of Mindfulness to Cultivate Understanding of Watson’s Theory of Caring
Prelude to Watson’s Theory of Human Caring and Thich Nhat Hanh’s Mindfulness Practice

Nurse theorists, over time, have presented various aspects of nursing practice through many different lenses, and the notion of caring is usually included in some form, either implicitly or explicitly. Most nurses and laypeople routinely associate caring with nursing. Because of this, professional caring is often vaguely assumed rather than specifically examined and purposefully enacted. Jean Watson’s Theory of Human Caring provides a foundation to carefully examine and purposefully enact caring in nursing.

As a nursing student, and then a new nurse, I found that the realities of nursing education and then professional practice sometimes blunted my ability to fully and wholistically care for myself and others. Watson’s work has been a revelation and a comfort. It provides an outlet to immerse myself in the study of caring deliberatively, productively, wholistically, and completely in nursing and in life. I have been studying, practicing, and teaching Watson’s Theory of Human Caring for 27 years, since I discovered Watson’s *Nursing: Human Science and Human Care: A Theory of Nursing* (Watson, 1985/1988). I have shared the following quote often with nursing colleagues and nursing students because it enduringly provides the basis for my understanding of Watson’s work: “Care and love are the most universal, the most tremendous and the most mysterious of cosmic forces: they comprise the primal universal psychic energy...Caring is the essence of nursing and the most central and unifying focus for nursing practice” (Watson, 1985/1988, pp. 32–33). Students and colleagues often react with wide-eyed disbelief about my straightforward assertion that there is a need to consciously, deliberately, and viscerally *care and love* while practicing nursing in all its forms. I entered nursing for the opportunity to care and to love, and I will do this unashamedly. Caring for and loving myself and others permeates my professional and personal life. It is a lifestyle and a commitment. Watson’s work supports this endeavor.

Why Use Mindfulness to Cultivate Understanding of Watson’s Theory of Caring?

In studying, practicing, and teaching Watson’s theory over the years, I have found it helpful to incorporate mindfulness practice and perspectives from Thich Nhat Hanh’s Zen Buddhist tradition (Sitzman, 2002). Nhat Hanh’s mindfulness practices are not religion specific and can be cultivated within any spiritual tradition or in the absence of spiritual tradition. Watson’s work often discusses the
importance of cultivating personal practices, including mindfulness, to support caring comportment:

This model now more explicitly acknowledges that the nurse or practitioner who is working with this theory and its underlying philosophy, needs to cultivate a daily practice for self. Practices such as centering, meditation, breathwork, yoga, prayer, connections with nature and other such forms of daily contemplation [mindfulness] are essential to the theory’s authenticity and success. In other words, if one is to work from a caring healing paradigm, one must live it out in daily life. (Watson, 1997, p. 51)

Internalizing and then consistently practicing caring from within and without are essential in cultivating deep and lasting understanding. Another nurse theorist, Newman (1997), echoes this belief:

We must study the process of our relationships with clients from within, as part of the process. We are imbedded in what we study. We cannot step outside the process. The nature of reality is not outside ourselves … The paradigm of nursing embraces wholeness and pattern. It reveals a world that is moving, evolving, transforming—a process. (Newman, 1997, p. 37)

Although Nhat Hanh’s mindfulness approach evolved from a Zen Buddhist tradition, it closely parallels both Newman’s and Watson’s work:

[With mindfulness] we can appreciate the wonders of life, and, at the same time, act with firm resolve to alleviate suffering [ours and the suffering of others]. Too many people distinguish between the inner world of our mind and the world outside, but these realities are not separate. They belong to the same reality. The ideas of outside and inside are helpful in everyday life [and in nursing practice], but they can become an obstacle that prevents us from experiencing ultimate reality [similar to Watson’s notion of abiding in the highest consciousness of love]. (Nhat Hanh, 1993, p. 4)

Nhat Hanh offers simple yet powerful insights and mindfulness practices that will support understanding, internalization, and meaningful translation of Watson’s theory into everyday nursing practice and everyday life. They are presented in each chapter as an accompaniment to Watson’s work, and to provide examples of how to cultivate personal practices that will support caring comportment in nursing and beyond.
ART AS AN ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY FOR LEARNING

Watson’s theory is multilayered and complex. In addition to engaging in spiritual practices to deepen understanding, art provides a hands-on approach that will help clarify underlying structures of the theory, the scaffolding upon which the Caritas Processes are placed. This approach moves away from traditional word-based learning and toward an integrated, wholistic understanding. I have used art to teach nursing theory in general, and Watson’s theory in particular, for many years with great success (Sitzman & Eichelberger, 2010). Art, as it is used within this context, is meant to be a contemplative exercise for the learner, helping to uncover underlying theoretical structures and nonverbal understandings as they emerge in the conscious mind as a result of committed study. Art activities can facilitate deep insight and mindfulness. I have found, for Watson’s theory, that pointillism, mandalas, and photography have been the most helpful approaches for stimulating growth, insight, and learning. Brief explanation of each art form and its usefulness for studying and practicing Watson’s theory follows.

Pointillism is a technique in which tiny points or dots of pure color are painstakingly applied to a canvas. Georges Seurat (1859–1891) perfected this technique and created many iconic masterworks such as A Sunday on La Grande Jatte, 1884.

Source: Georges Seurat, A Sunday on La Grande Jatte, 1884, 1884–1886, Oil on canvas, 207.6 × 308 cm, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, 1926, p. 224, The Art Institute of Chicago. Reprinted with permission from the Art Institute of Chicago.
Viewed close up, individual dots of pure color are clearly apparent. Viewed from far away, the human eye mixes the colors and creates a vibrant, multihued image in the mind’s eye.

There is unity and form [in pointillism], and at the same time there is awareness of the interplay between individual points of color and the larger composition … [pointillism images] are finite works, with specific themes and bounded visual representations. However, the many points of color within each work seem to merge with the light and color in the surrounding environment to create a feeling of boundlessness. (Sitzman & Eichelberger, 2010, p. 22)

Pointillism can also be found in nature, for example the night sky with stars and planets, or the sand and tiny seashells that can be found on the beach. Watson’s theory is like a pointillism image. It is made up of distinct points of knowledge development that merge to form a bounded yet ultimately boundless approach to caring in nursing. In this instance, learners are invited to take the opportunity to consider distinct points in Watson’s theory, to transform them into a purely visual representation (or points of color), and then place them within the context of a wordless pointillism image. Creating pointillism images provides opportunities for contemplation, exploration, free expression, learning, and feeling the central tenets of Watson’s theory within a realm other than the traditional word-based method that may sometimes confound understanding within a tangle of words. Mandalas serve a similar purpose.

Mandalas are manmade or natural forms in which there is a central focal point around which multiple elements are arranged. The structure of mandalas evokes clarity and beauty. The natural boundary provided by the arrangement
of elements around the central point provides unity and offers the possibility of adding additional layers without altering the central point. Possibilities for creating mandalas are endless. I have had students who created mandalas from leaves, pine cones, paper, paint, pencils, markers, found items, trash, textiles, and edible elements.

Mandalas are abundant in spiritual traditions, for example, rose windows in Christian cathedrals, sand paintings in Buddhism depicting the cycle of birth and death, tile decorations in Muslim mosques, and temple murals depicting natural cycles in the Hindu tradition. Mandalas are also abundant in nature, for example, the iris of the eye, flowers, hurricanes, spider webs, the solar system, the arrangement of branches and leaves on trees, seashells, and the human form.

Envisioning caring as a central point and then arranging specific aspects of Watson’s theory around that central point will help each learner to organize understandings into unique and meaningful configurations. As learning deepens, elements may be added or rearranged until cohesive comprehension is achieved.
Some learners might prefer to search for and document/take photographs of existing images to evoke elements related to Watson’s theory. This offers yet another approach for visual exploration and learning.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ARRANGED

This book is arranged to provide a simple and direct method for learning about and working with Watson’s Theory of Human Caring. Overviews of Watson’s theory, Nhat Hanh’s mindfulness practices and perspectives, and Layers of Caring and Mindful Influence are presented in the following three chapters. The remaining chapters will present each of Watson’s 10 Caritas Processes along with project abstracts that illustrate integration of the theory into professional practice in a variety of areas. The project abstracts describe actual projects undertaken by students in the Watson Caring Institute Caritas Coach Education Program.

Mindfulness insights from Thich Nhat Hanh’s tradition will provide examples of intersections between caring science and mindfulness practice. The mindfulness examples and practices presented here are not specific to one spiritual tradition and are meant to enrich and support all spiritual traditions.

Art activities will also be included for learners interested in deepening understanding through the creation of contemplative art. Simple steps are provided below for the creation of each type of art.

CREATING POINTILLISM IMAGES

Follow the steps listed below to create simple contemplative pointillism images (summarized from Sitzman & Eichelberger, 2011):

1. Gather art supplies that include cardstock or watercolor-weight paper, acrylic or watercolor paints, and cotton-tipped swabs. You may also use markers, crayons, or colored pencils.
2. Using a pencil, lightly outline shapes or forms on the paper to evoke the concept you are contemplating.
3. Use the cotton-tipped swabs and paint, markers, crayons, or colored pencils to dab different colors within and around the shapes outlined in Step 2. Fill each shape with two or three different colors of dots, and also fill the surrounding space with contrasting colors.
4. Look at the finished work close up. Notice how easy it is to see individual dots of color and how difficult it is to discern the shapes that were penciled in at the beginning. Watson’s Caritas Processes are made up of distinct conceptual/theoretical ideas, represented by the individual points of color in the pointillism image.
5. Now look at the finished work from 20 feet away. Notice how individual dots of color are difficult to distinguish, and it becomes easier to see those larger shapes that were penciled in and filled with distinct colors. When the components of Watson’s Caritas Processes blend together, a transpersonal caring moment is created. The visual blending of the dots in the pointillism image represents this phenomenon. Transpersonal caring moments will be described in more detail in the following chapter.

**Creating Mandala Images**

Mandalas have a central point of interest (the concept or idea that you are contemplating), surrounded by smaller components (supporting ideas related to the central concept) symmetrically arranged into a unified whole. Mandalas are purposefully arranged to evoke clarity, beauty, and nonverbal understanding. They have boundaries to provide a sense of unity and completeness; however, the symmetry of mandala designs easily allows for the inclusion of additional layers as ideas and understandings develop. To cultivate understanding and insight, it is important to experience the creation (or completion through coloring) of mandalas. Follow the steps listed below to create simple contemplative mandala images (summarized from Sitzman & Eichelberger, 2011):

1. Assemble whatever tools you prefer to color with: crayons, markers, paint, colored pencils, or colored bits of paper.
2. Go to a mandala website (there are numerous websites with free mandalas available to print), purchase a mandala coloring book, or draw your own mandala to color. Choose a design that resonates with your feelings about the concept(s) you are contemplating.
3. Add colors to the mandala that express your feelings and understandings about the contemplative concept.
4. It is also possible to create mandalas with found objects from trash, nature, or everyday household objects. Choose the method that is most interesting to you.

**Creating Photographic Images**

Use a camera of any type to create photographic images that represent Watson’s work. Pointillism can be photographed because it is evident in the weave of textiles, the skins of lizards and frogs, patterns of fading and wear on articles of clothing, television screen images, the inside of pomegranates, leaves in a forest.
landscape, sand on the beach, wood grains, ceramic textures, cross-stitch pictures, and fields of grass and wildflowers. Mandalas are abundant in urban and natural surroundings. Mindfully observing the contents of a living room, components of a neighborhood park, the façades of churches, or the toys in a preschool classroom, for example, will provide many mandala forms to photograph. Other examples of mandala forms to photograph include flowers, cross-sections of oranges or other fruits and vegetables, ripples in ponds, stars, constellations, seashells, crystals, and pine cones. Write contextual descriptions of the photographs you create that clarify relationships to Watson’s work.

**REFERENCES**


