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Daring to write a Book Review

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Kathleen Heinrich's "A Nurse's Guide to Presenting and Publishing. Dare to Share" (Jones and Bartlett, Mass. 2008) is bursting with so much energy, practical advice, and gentle guidance, I found myself wanting to read it at one sitting. I recognized myself, colleagues, and students in every chapter, and was so enthralled that I talked about the book to anyone who would listen, gently suggesting it should be a required book in all of our School of Nursing courses.

But write a review? How could I dare? My inner-critic, faculty- scholar- imposter persona that we're warned about in the book instantly took over. Who did I think I was to be reviewing someone as accomplished as Kathleen T. Heinrich? She's been a nurse educator for 30 years, taught workshops on presenting and publishing for 15 years, and has been so successful that she was able to write this book based on her experiences. How could I possibly do justice to this wonderful book by this highly accomplished author?

But then, remembering that Dr. Heinrich envisioned the book as a "portable mentor," I decided to put her portable mentorship to the test and see if it could help me get through the book review. I reread her tips on quieting my inner critic. She suggests writing a response to the critic. To counter the numerous reasons I had for not being able to write the review, here is what I wrote:

It's true I am not as experienced in teaching or publishing as the author, but because I have written (with great effort) both for consumers and academia, and assisted others in publishing, I know what the hurdles are. Planning my own work, and trying to explain the steps between what happens in my head and what comes out on the keyboard can often be impossible (a sort of mind-keyboard gap). So I have a lot of real-world experience, and I know the practical value of this book is huge and very exciting. The "how-tos" of breaking projects into small steps, establishing helpful relationships with colleagues, great background real-life experiences; they're all captured and explained so well. I actually was stunned by how much easier my life would be if I used even some of the suggestions. And the tone is so friendly and full of stories that I felt like I was listening to mentor-friends. Therefore, I think it would be really selfish to not write this review and let others know about this book!

With my inner critic momentarily quieted, I could see that I *can* dare to do this, —because it's not about me. It's about a workable plan to get nurses' stories presented and published, and I have a chance to share in getting the word out. With that shift in perspective, my book review project morphed from a dreaded chore to a chance to share wonderful insights from the author and her co-authors. (The very same thing will happen when you decide to share your own stories---try it!)

Using a readable conversational style, Dr. Heinrich shows the process for creating and delivering presentations, and publishing for the popular or professional press. From having a presentation idea with an "eye-glitter" rating of 10 (the very best "yes!" idea), right through creating a manuscript from the same idea, it's all here. She uses her own past projects as examples, making the abstract ideas instantly understandable.

Each 3-5 page chapter contains an action plan for moving ahead with your own project, and the action plans called to me when I was struggling to frame an idea for a workshop. I tried out the

“presentation worksheet,” actually forcing myself to fill in the lines (I hate filling in the blanks. It makes life feel too structured and confining). To my surprise, out popped two interactive one hour sessions—the simple act of writing down the plan with interactive activities after reading the author’s experiences made the ideas flow. This step-by-step approach makes presentations and publications seem not only do-able, but fun and exciting!

Dr. Heinrich’s mentorship guides us through the process of establishing relationships involving peer-mentors, peer-editors, co-presenters, and co-authors. And in the book she role-models this for us by bringing in nurse- faculty and nurse-editor colleagues who have assisted with prior projects to co-author parts of the book. Like any good team project, the chapters appear to blend without effort and use the strengths of each member to create a synergistic whole more powerful than any of the individual parts alone. There is such energy in the discussion about co-creating the presentations and publications, it should spark collaborative projects galore. This portion of the book alone is priceless. From solitary writer to team member is such an important paradigm shift for many nurses who have been socialized to work alone.

One of the only comments I have for strengthening this book is an expansion of the chapter on searching the literature. Employing evidence-based practice is one of the core competencies identified in Health Professions Education (IOM, 2003), and any literature search and review should include this concept. This chapter could be expanded to identify the difference between research utilization and evidence-based practice, and include information about targeting the best and most relevant evidence in a literature search, and how to critically appraise it once found.

And really, I want a cover on this book that is as exciting as the contents. It looks like a textbook instead of a user-friendly book full of energetic, knowledgeable, and welcoming colleagues who stand ready to help! Whether you are a student at the undergraduate or graduate level, practicing clinician, faculty member or any combination thereof-this book, with an eye-glitter rating of 10 plus-is for you!

References

Institute of Medicine (IOM). Health Professions Education: A Bridge to Quality. (2003). Available online at <http://www.iom.edu/report.asp?id=5914>

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