Nurses often enter the profession with a notion of what they think nursing will be like. However, after some time, they may come to realize that the reality can be very different than that which they had expected.

I often receive emails from nurses, sharing their biggest career challenges. They write things like:

“The main challenge I seem to have in enjoying my career is the added demands put on me, which takes away from the time I can spend with patients.”

“I got into nursing because of my love for integrative therapies. A small team of co-workers and I are putting together a self-care proposal for our staff, but I am feeling discouraged because of funding/politics.”

“My biggest obstacle is the negativity. I am in nursing informatics and help providers with orders, documents, and flow sheets in the electronic medical record. Part of my job is to make sure we follow regulatory agency and policy requirements. It is difficult to help when you are harshly criticized for just doing your job.”

Even though the issues above are different, there is a

Nurses feel torn. Their job pulls them in one direction, while they want to go in another. These distracting and scattered experiences create frustration and disappointment in their work.

As leaders, there has got to be something we can do to support the nursing staff. There is: offer solutions.

Yes, at a time when resources are scarce, budgets are cut and staffing is tight- it is hard to remain optimistic and solution-oriented. However, it is imperative that we do in order to energize and retain clinical staff.
Here Are 3 Tips to Engage Nurses

1. **Listen.** The first step involves figuring out what the nurses want. We need to ask and then, listen. It’s important to hear both what is said... and what is not.

   We need to feel the energy of the group; observe the interactions of a team; and be aware of what’s going on behind the scenes in the workplace. Just in asking, we receive.

   We need to have the courage to ask our nursing staff what they want/need and be ready to listen.

2. **Learn.** A really neat thing that happens when we take the time to really listen is that we learn. We learn a whole lot about the nurses we employ!

   A way to be an effective nurse leader is to get to know your nursing team outside of the workplace. What are the nurses good at? Who has a really creative hobby? What family do they have in the community?

   To keep quality staff, you have to know them first.

3. **Leverage.** Here’s where it all comes together. Listening and learning about the clinical staff helps you act. Once you know more about the strengths your nurses possess, you can tap into them.

   A nurse loves to write? Get them involved in a publication course. A nurse is outgoing and articulate? Encourage them to present at a conference. Utilize strengths to bring more value to your team.

   The nurse who is involved in projects, activities, and group work is one that is much more likely to stay.

### About the Author

Keynote speaker and virtual conference host, Elizabeth Scala MSN/MBA, RN, partners with hospitals, nursing schools, and nurse associations to transform the field of nursing from the inside out. As the bestselling author of *Nursing from Within*, Elizabeth guides nurses and nursing students to a change in perspective, helping them make the inner shift needed to better maneuver the sometimes challenging realities of being a caregiver. Elizabeth received her dual master’s degree from Johns Hopkins University. She is also a certified coach and Reiki Master Teacher. Elizabeth lives in Maryland with her supportive husband and playful pit bull.