As a nurse practitioner, professor of nursing and Certified Healing Touch Practitioner, I am often asked how to incorporate Healing Touch into a conventional work environment. I tell people I just try to be the “pebble in the pond” of possibility. What this means is that some of the most sustainable change occurs through subtlety and small ripples of influence rather than big waves.

One of my stories of how I have been a “pebble” begins with how I brought Healing Touch classes to a collaborative baccalaureate nursing program to a community college in southwest Ontario, Canada.

In January of 2004 I started working as a professor, teaching senior nursing students at a three-site, collaborative, baccalaureate nursing program. During my first year I was introduced to many new colleagues. This gave me numerous opportunities to discuss my interest in Healing Touch and my private practice, in addition to addressing challenges facing today’s healthcare providers.

Caring for self has long been an issue in the helping professions and addressing this concern by offering Healing Touch to students seemed like a natural fit. I was able to persuade faculty that Healing Touch was a nursing intervention worthy of study and by citing a 2005 article in the Journal of Nursing Education by J. P. Bellack which suggests that nurse educators tend to hinder their own...
personal development, career and personal health because they put too much focus on the development of future nurses. In the article Bellack outlines 12 critical competencies for developing self:

1) self-knowledge
2) personal learning
3) compassion and empathy
4) approachability and inclusiveness
5) collegiality
6) integrity and trustworthiness
7) composure
8) patience and persistence
9) organization and efficiency
10) organizational savvy
11) perspective and vision and
12) work/life balance,
and further states that failure to pay attention to developing competency in these areas can decrease work satisfaction or even stall or derail a career.

I emphasized that Healing Touch stresses the concept of self-care throughout its program, therefore offering Healing Touch to a collaborative baccalaureate program could provide one means of promoting many of Bellack’s outlined competencies, particularly in the areas of self-knowledge and care, personal learning and collegiality (outside of planning meetings, there are few opportunities to network between the three sites of this nursing program).

In addition to faculty support, I gained the support of the nursing student government, which provided a lump payment, allowing student registration costs to be adjusted. As a result, during my first year I was able to coordinate a Level I workshop for 34 senior BScN students from all three sites and each student was given eight (8) credit hours toward required clinical time for taking the class. Teaching classes on two consecutive Sundays enhanced enrollment because it did not interrupt students’ homework and/or work hours.

Once the faculty witnessed the enthusiasm for and benefits of the student workshop, requests for a workshop of their own came. Time was a huge issue for the faculty of all three sites. Where would we find two consecutive days for all faculty members to be present?

Fortunately, each spring, after most classes were finished, our campus provided a week of faculty education called “Triple E” (Educators Educating for Excellence). This event provided the perfect opportunity for a workshop. With courage (or plain old guts as my colleagues would say), I approached the Director of Professional Development and explained the benefits of Healing Touch as I had done previously, and described the excitement around campus for a faculty class. Although I wouldn’t be teaching the course, I asked if she would be open to paying the instructor’s fee and making the workshop a part of the week. I also was able to persuade her of the benefits of including our other sites in the workshop as it would address our need for cohesiveness (the nursing program is collaborative, not the other college programs). The answer, thankfully, was yes. We were on our way.

The faculty Level I workshop took place in June of 2005. Thirty-one members of the nursing faculty and three members of the other two faculties attended. Although many members felt they were coming to learn therapies they could practice on others, they quickly realized that the main benefits were to self. Everyone who attended enthusiastically acknowledged the benefits of the program in terms of self-awareness and self-care. Faculty practice sessions continued throughout the year.

As I write this, we are planning our next Level I workshop for faculty, back-to-back with a Level II workshop for those that attended Level I last year. This year’s level I workshop will be open to all on-campus staff and we are encouraging other helping professions groups (paramedics, early childhood education, student services counselors) to attend. Where this will lead, only time will tell. I envision the establishment of more practice clinics where faculty and students can come together to model self-care and care for others.

Being a pebble in the pond of possibility in your work environment is an exciting endeavour. You never know where the ripples of your influence will go. Yet, here are two things I have learned through this experience:

1. Don’t push your agenda or beliefs.

People often ask me how to bring Healing Touch to their conventional workplace, either to practice or teach. My key suggestion has always been to “just be”. What I mean by that is to “be the energy” that you, yourself wish to work
in and be with. This requires an ongoing awareness of your own energy field and energetic health.

In 10 years as a Certified Healing Touch Practitioner (CHTP), I have never pushed my beliefs about energy work or its practice on anyone in my conventional practice arenas. I have always just been me.

What does that mean? I have always stood in the same intention in my conventional practice as I have in my energy practice -- for the highest good of those that I am with. By holding a space for healing and looking for opportunities to be of service, i.e., helping with a headache of a co-worker or calming an anxious patient or student, I have opened more doors for discussion, discovery and dialogue on the practice of energy therapy than I ever could have had I proselytized my beliefs. During discussions there are always openings for learning and demonstration. These opportunities lead to requests for workshops, practice sessions and the development of proposals. The ‘work’ speaks for itself and often the testimonials of patients and co-workers do more to open doors than anything else I do.

I would be remiss, however, if I didn’t say that being respected for my knowledge and clinical expertise in my conventional practice arena has also been crucial to my success. I truly don’t believe that anyone would accept my ideas about healing energy if they didn’t respect my conventional practice and knowledge.

2. Be creative in your strategies

a) Capitalize on opportunities in your workplace. Are there educators looking for exciting, new topics? What about awareness weeks, or other opportunities your profession highlights?

b) Who are the sceptics in your workplace? Do you know the research about energy work well enough to discuss it with them?

c) Look for opportunities for funding. Remember if you don’t ask, you won’t know. The worst case scenario is that someone will tell you “no”, but they may know someone who can help you.

d) Negotiate costs and instructor fees, if possible. A larger-sized group may help you bring down the price/person and therefore encourage more participation. For our current workshops, the participants are responsible for paying their HTI registration fees and their certificate costs. The College pays for the instructor and the space is available on site free of charge.

e) Encourage representatives from book publishers to be on-site or work with your local bookstore to bring in reduced pricing on Healing Touch textbooks with bulk purchasing.

There are many ways to make these things happen. Like the energy work you do, follow the flow. Stay grounded in your intent and allow the rest to present itself. It is my hope that you, too, can stand in your intention of healing and explore where the ripples of your pebble of possibility go. Peace.

“Every experience in life, everything with which we have come in contact in life, is a chisel which has been cutting away at our life statue, moulding, modifying, shaping it. We are part of all we have met.” -Orison Sweet Marden

Above: Kathy Moreland Layte and her husband, Brian Layte