Mentoring in Healing Touch

by Mary Jane Aswegan, RN, CHTP/I

My personal perspective: My involvement in “energy healing” began seven years ago. I received my certification as a Healing Touch Practitioner in 2002 and as an instructor in 2005. Critical Care Nursing and Education has been my dual focus for over thirty years and I have had the privilege of working in two fine medical institutions; the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota and Scripps Hospitals in San Diego, California. I have had the pleasure of mentoring seven apprentices, four of whom have become certified. I am grateful that the Healing Touch Program recognizes the importance of the mentoring process and incorporates it into the requirements for certification. Mentoring helps to provide the mentee with self-confidence and empowerment. In turn, it helps revitalize personal and professional growth for the mentor. Mentoring has been a continual learning experience for me. Along the way, I have developed suggestions and tools to streamline the process for mentees. I invite you to look with discernment at these tools and use whatever enhances your practice.

Origins of the Mentor: The original “Mentor” was the name of a person described in Homer’s Odyssey as the wise and trusted counselor whom Odysseus left in charge of his household during his travels. The Greek Goddess Athena assumed the guise of Mentor in order to become the guardian and teacher for Odysseus son, Telemachus. Mentor-type figures were prominent in Greek Mythology. The word mentor has become synonymous with friend, counselor, guide or teacher. Well-known mentoring relationships in history took place between such famous pairs as Socrates and Plato, Freud and Jung. All four men benefited from their stimulating, interactive dialogues.

Definition: Merriam Webster defines a mentor as a “trusted counselor or guide.” For Healing Touch, mentoring is viewed as a process where a more experienced Certified Healing Touch Practitioner provides advice, encouragement and support to a less experienced person. If the mentee does not have a nursing background, he/she is required to select a mentor who is a registered nurse. The mentor serves the mentee as a teacher and advisor. Mentors help the students develop skills to further their personal and professional growth.
A historical view of the mentoring relationship: Mentor's task in the Odyssey was not just to raise Telemachus while Odysseus was away, but also to prepare him for the responsibilities that he would face as heir to a Kingdom. Mentor's “raison d’être” centered on empowerment. This is the primary goal of all HT practitioners. Respect for the individual’s uniqueness is paramount in helping the mentee to gain self-confidence as a practitioner. The mentee needs to acquire the necessary discipline to complete the certification process. The mentor provides guidance, advice and resources to keep the mentee motivated and on track. The mentoring process is a partnership that requires effort and contributions from both parties in a mutual sharing of information. I have discovered many benefits from this relationship, which have enriched my life.

How to select a Mentor: One of the misconceptions involved in selecting a mentor is that the two of you need to be personally acquainted. Several of my mentees did not know me before we entered into the relationship. We have a common bond in Healing Touch—to “do the work” as founder Janet Mentgen so often said and to emphasize the Standards of Care and Ethics of Healing Touch. A mentee’s self-awareness, confidence and abilities reflect the input of the mentor.

The best way to find a mentor is through word of mouth in the Healing Touch Community. Most practitioners are honored to be asked. If their personal circumstances prevent them from accepting your request, do not become discouraged. There will always be others who would relish the opportunity.

Formalizing a Mentoring Relationship: During the initial meeting, I present my mentee with a formalized mentorship agreement and we establish objectives and goals necessary to move from Level 4 to Level 5. We set up a minimum one-year timeline concerning the scheduled completion of each homework requirement for Level 5. This timeline is flexible and open to renegotiation. I have found that organizing the required tasks minimizes procrastination. Another important aspect in setting up this agreement relates to developing a self-care plan. Finally, I invite my mentees to contemplate three philosophical questions and to record their reflections in their personal journal. We re-evaluate these questions throughout the mentoring process.

Three Philosophical Questions for Mentee’s to Contemplate:
1. In the present moment, how do you see yourself as a Healing Touch Practitioner?
2. What goals do you hope to accomplish in your Healing Touch practice?
3. How does the practice of Healing Touch contribute to your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health?
Preparing for Level 5 and Certification: Most mentees experience a state of overwhelm, when they consider the requirements for HT Program Course Completion (Level 5) followed by applying for international certification through HT International. Often they express their angst with comments like, “I don’t know where to begin.” To alleviate their anxiety, I suggest that my mentees put together two notebooks; one devoted to the eight Criteria for homework and certification and the other dedicated as their professional profile book. In the Criteria notebook, I encourage them label the eight sections as follows:

1) Completion of Coursework
2) Professional Resume
3) Healing Modalities
4) Mentorship
5) Educational Experiences
6) Case Study
7) Documentation of HT Curriculum Techniques
8) Self-Study and Established Practice of HT.

The Professional Profile Book serves the purpose of reflecting the unique background and personal assets of each Healing Touch Practitioner. The mentees can use their own creativity in compiling their book. They may wish to include photos, brochures, business cards or other items, which will acquaint the Healing Touch Community with them and their personal journey.

We then proceed to examine the certification/homework packet and review each criterion. I provide them with a copy of my own completed certification packet so that they can see what the finished product looks like.

I encourage my mentees to open a folder on their computer entitled “Healing Touch Certification”. I recommend saving each of the files of the eight criterion in that folder. In the beginning, as my students complete their requirements, I ask that they submit them to be critiqued. I remind them to back up their computer files on a flash drive and I save their copies until my mentees receive their certification.

I strongly recommend that all of their homework for certification be completed before they attend Level 5 if at all possible, although this is not a requirement for attendance at Level 5. I want them to feel confident and well prepared for this fifth level class because they will appreciate it more and will be better equipped to contribute to the discussions. Well-docment-
ed homework is beneficial for Level 5 instructors, because it enables the teachers to offer constructive feedback. Well-prepared students discover that instead of major revisions they only need to make minor revisions for their final certification packet.

How often should the Mentor/Mentee meet? I like to meet face to face at least once a month. In addition to our monthly meeting, I encourage my mentees to be in touch by email or phone for discussion of homework and feedback on their healing treatments. They must take the initiative to contact me to set up our meeting times. I require them to check in with me via email or phone when a meeting cannot be arranged. Monthly meetings are strongly recommended by the Healing Touch Program.

The Mentor’s Role: An ongoing responsibility of the mentor is to examine how their mentees incorporate Level 1-4 techniques into their practice. Mentors should remind their mentees about the importance of listening to their clients and letting go of expected outcomes. Learning to trust their growing skills and intuition is also essential. I focus on reviewing their treatment sheets, which follow the format of the Healing Touch Sequence.

Group Mentoring: About a year ago, in response to one of the mentee’s requests, I formed a monthly support group for the benefit of my apprentices. We devote our time to reviewing the certification packet; reading parts of their healing modality experiences; discussing book reviews; going over the resume process or evaluating a case study. This enables them to see where others are in the process of their coursework, keeps up their momentum and offers them feedback and practical advice. It also provides an opportunity for all of us to give and receive Healing Touch! For those of you who are mentoring several students, I highly recommend that you gather them together as a group.

Personal Reflections on the Mentoring: I believe that each person has the creative potential to meaningfully connect to others through their heart chakra. Healing Touch is truly a heart-to-heart connection between the practitioner and the client. I have discovered this same heart centered connection with all of my mentees. As a former nurse-educator, I entered the mentoring program to guide and teach others. To my surprise, what I gave out came back to me ten fold. In the process of mentoring, I was mentored.

Mary Jane’s Bio:
Mary Jane Aswegan, RN, CHTP/I, has over 33 years experience in Critical Care Nursing and Education. She developed education programs in nursing for the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota and for Scripps Hospitals in San Diego, California. Mary Jane began energy work in Healing Touch in the year 2000, became a certified as a Practitioner in 2002 and as an Instructor in 2005. She is a member of Healing Touch International. She has lectured Internationally, Nationally and locally on Healing Touch. Mary Jane wrote an article on her experiences in Germany for the Healing Touch Newsletter in 2004. She utilizes Healing Touch as a complementary modality to traditional Medicine and is currently coordinating the Healing Touch Program at Scripps Memorial Hospital in Encinitas, California.