



Capt. Jacqlyn Sanchez

Do the right thing

Making the right decisions—even the tough ones—is a mark of good leadership.

“DOING THE RIGHT THING is not easy, but it needs to be done,” observed Captain Jacqlyn Sanchez, RNC-OB, as she recalled a difficult time in her career with the U.S. Air Force. “My decisions were not popular at that time,” she said, “and I felt defeated and powerless.”

Fortunately, a close friend and fellow nurse, Major (Ret.) Dana Albalate, gave Sanchez the motivation she needed to make those hard decisions and move forward. “She told me, ‘Just be yourself,’” Sanchez explained. “Your work will speak for itself.”

As a clinical nurse on a high-risk labor and delivery unit in Germany, Sanchez relishes opportunities to go above and beyond for her patients: “When an expectant dad is deployed, I will facilitate a Skype call so that he gets to be a part of the delivery from afar.” The recipient of ANA’s 2016 Staff Nurse Patient Advocacy Award and a Texas Nurses Association member, Sanchez finds it rewarding to care for the men and women of the Armed Forces and advocate on their behalf.

“As the mother of three girls and two boys myself, having the honor of caring for women during labor and delivery and being a part of their birthing process is a reward in itself,” she said. “Witnessing the immediate love between a mother and her child gives me the resilience to give each patient my best every day.”

How would you describe your leadership style?

Most days I would consider myself a transformational leader. I enjoy encouraging, uplifting, and showing my appreciation to my coworkers. However, my leadership style is different depending on the situation I’m facing. Situational leadership is important in the labor and de-

livery setting because circumstances can change quickly, and dealing with each patient or peer may require a different leadership approach.

What was key in developing your leadership style?

The people who have mentored me, taught me, and trained me through the years were important in developing my leadership style. Among them, the leader I admire most is my husband of 15 years, who, while being deployed by the Air Force numerous times during his 18-year career, has supported, encouraged, and assisted me selflessly for my entire career.

Paramount in developing my desired leadership style was experiencing good leaders, like him, as well as bad ones during the course of my career. With each style (good and bad), I purposefully took away bits and pieces of what I wanted to

look like (as well as what not to do) in the eyes of my subordinates and peers.

What’s something positive you took away from the leadership styles you’ve experienced during your career?

Do the right thing even if it’s not the most popular outcome. Hard decisions have to be made, and not everyone will be happy with those decisions. By doing what’s right, you can stay true to the mission, and your integrity remains intact. I try to put the patients’ needs and best interests at the forefront of the situation. And I remember that someone is learning from the decisions I’m making, so I need to make them count.

What’s the best advice you would give to other nurses who aspire to be leaders?

Learn from your mistakes and aim to be better. You will fail, and that’s okay. Make decisions to benefit the majority rather than yourself. Remember that someone is aspiring to be like you, so give that person a good example to follow. If you remain true to yourself and your profession, the rest will naturally fall into place. ★

Interview by Apryl Motley, CAE, professional writer.