

Relational Café Strengthening Nursing Voices



AT A GLANCE

George Fox University's Relational Café sought to address nurse burnout, improve quality of life, & strengthen social connection through leadership development. The project used an intergenerational café-style format to build relational leadership and trust among faculty, students, and community nurses. Statistical significance targets were not met; participation varied session-to-session, limiting paired analysis.

Key Outcomes

The project aimed to achieve statistically significant improvements in burnout, quality of life, and peer connection. This goal was not met; none of the measured changes reached statistical significance due to small, inconsistent cohorts and low response rates. Descriptively, quality-of-life scores improved, burnout scores increased slightly, and indicators of connection and relational climate showed modest positive shifts.



21%

Increase in quality-of-life indicators



0.38

Point increase in burnout score, Still below burnout threshold ≥ 3

CHALLENGES

Nurses and students reported burnout, compassion fatigue, and weakened professional relationships as systemic stressors impacting morale and retention. The project also anticipated inconsistent availability among participants, particularly for evening sessions, which contributed to variable attendance.

SOLUTIONS

GFU implemented a structured Relational Café model focused on empathy-based leadership development and spiritual reflection. Sessions combined small-group dialogue and experiential learning. Key activities included:



Relational
Café
Sessions



Engaging
Participants



Neutral
Facilitators



Incorporating
Relational
Leadership

LESSONS LEARNED

Evening scheduling and competing academic, clinical, and work demands limited consistent participation across sessions. Variable attendance reduced opportunities for relational continuity and contributed to small pre-post sample sizes. Leadership turnover and fluctuating faculty involvement affected momentum, reinforcing the importance of stable facilitation. The project team noted that earlier integration of relational practices into coursework or structured programs would enhance continuity and support longer-term outcomes.



Not everyone could attend every session, and that made it hard to build the continuity the model relies on.

Healthy Leadership Driving Healthy Culture