



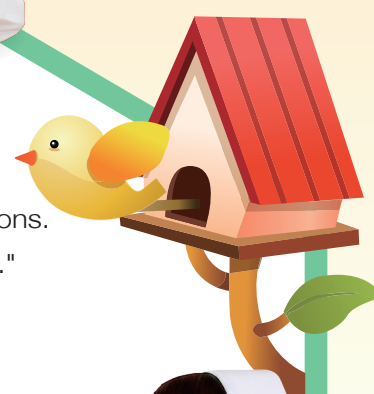
# Emotion Expression Board



**About the Emotion  
Expression and  
Communication of Nurses**



I often hear my colleagues mention with a sigh,  
"Someone is in a bad mood today, giving me a cold shoulder!"  
Although we are partners working together every single day,  
grudges may happen from time to time, caused by those obscure emotions.  
"If we know ahead of time something had happened to her, we can help."



Henceforth, the clinical environment began to adopt creativity  
and design platforms that allows  
nursing staff to communicate their  
feelings and emotions.

Message board, emoticons and story  
house, all to encourage appropriate  
expression of emotions, to facilitate mutual  
respect, coordination and assistance  
between supervisors and team members.



Interdisciplinary meetings, art therapy and similar activities  
can build positive and harmonious atmosphere,  
we wish that when emotions finally found their release and support,  
one would learn to love their colleagues, cherish oneself,  
recognize one's professionalism and feel at ease.



**Written by: Shu-Chen Wang, Supervisor, Dept. of Nursing, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital**

Nurses need to take care of their patients' physical, psychological and spiritual needs, and remove their personal emotions while doing so. Hence, in the 2006 issue of Tzu Chi Nursing Journal, a survey was conducted on whether nurses should cry in front of their patients. The simple survey revealed that majority of our nurses had cried at work, and the causes were closely associated with their patients' conditions, such as the patient's passing, the emotions of the patients and their family, or the improvement of the patient. However, nurses tend to keep their own emotions to themselves.

Yet even nursing professionals need emotional release from time to time. Who are there to assist their needs? For example, they have to drop all personal issues, big or small, the moment they step into the hospital. The ones who are married have marital issues, like the communication issues with her husband or other family members, or to have children at home with a fever. The young ones have their own troubles, too, having quarrel with their boyfriends or misunderstanding with close friends. These personal issues are a major test of the nurses' EQ.

In addition to anger and grief, which one has to keep in under control, what about good news that is worth celebrating? Should one share that news with her colleague during shift change? In the training of nursing professionals, fulfilling one's duty is a sacred mission, but where are the support and emotional

outlet for these nurses? The issue, unfortunately, is often ignored. Hence in this survey we targeted the emotional expressions of nurses at workplace, their response to others' emotional expressions at workplace and the support system available.

### **Maintain Good Mood at Work**

The survey received 1,406 questionnaires. Mood was divided into a two simple categories: Good and bad. The first question asked the whether the respondent would try and maintain a positive mood at work. The answer was divided into four levels. Out of all the respondents, 42.8% would maintain a positive mood, 38.5% remained "normal", while "sometimes" and "no" occupied 14.8% and 4.0% respectively. If by a strict standard and categorize "sometimes" as "no", it is then raised to 22.8%. Overall, about 80% of the nurses were able to maintain a positive mood at work.

The next two questions asked about how they express, or lack thereof, their encounters with happy and unhappy events.

For happy events, 48.6% "always" and "frequently" share with others; for unhappy events, 29.3% "always" and "frequently" share with others. On the other hand, 17.3% only "sometimes" or "never" share their happy events; 34.9% "sometimes" or "never" share their unhappy events and tend to keep it to themselves.

## Basic Statistics

| Gender                 | Number of People | %     |
|------------------------|------------------|-------|
| Male                   | 34               | 2.4   |
| Female                 | 1,372            | 97.6  |
| Total                  | 1,406            | 100.0 |
| Age                    | Number of People | %     |
| under 20               | 32               | 2.3   |
| 21~25                  | 371              | 26.4  |
| 26~30                  | 335              | 23.8  |
| 31~35                  | 313              | 22.3  |
| 36~40                  | 196              | 13.9  |
| above 40               | 159              | 11.3  |
| Total                  | 1,406            | 100.0 |
| Nursing Level          | Number of People | %     |
| N                      | 431              | 30.7  |
| N1                     | 331              | 23.5  |
| N2                     | 441              | 31.4  |
| N3                     | 131              | 9.3   |
| N4                     | 72               | 5.1   |
| Total                  | 1,406            | 100.0 |
| Job Title              | Number of People | %     |
| Registered nurse/nurse | 1,072            | 76.2  |
| Deputy head nurse      | 48               | 3.4   |
| Head nurse or higher   | 109              | 7.8   |
| nurse practitioner     | 121              | 8.6   |
| Others                 | 56               | 4.0   |
| Total                  | 1,406            | 100.0 |

The result seems to fit the stereotypical mindset of our culture: speak only the joy and never the sorrow. The unwillingness to express sorrow may also be interpreted in a different light: expressing these negative emotions do not contribute to solving the issue, hence keeping quiet.

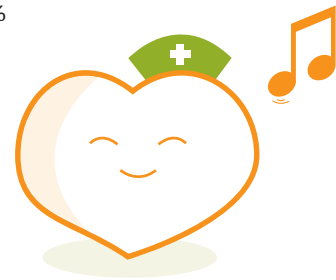
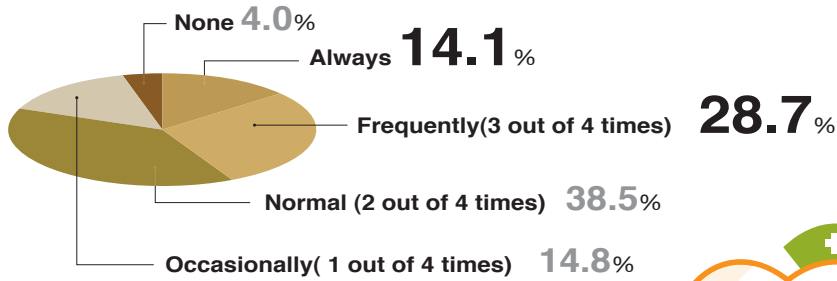
### A Good Superior Is a Good Listener

Upon further investigation, the persons the nurses tend to express their emotions to at work are primarily their nursing colleagues at the same unit,



# Q1

**For the past day, I try to keep good mood while working?**  
( N = 1,406 )



78.7%. Those who speak to colleagues from a different unit only occupied 25.7%. Coming third was supervisors, 17.6%. Fourth was non-nurse colleagues. It is apparent that nurses tend to share their emotions with other nurses they work with daily. By creating a strong bonding and trust relationship among the nurses within the same unit could facilitate the willingness to confide personal emotions. The success of a supervisor hence lies in whether the nursing colleagues are willing to confide in you.

Inside the delivery room in Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, one can feel the trust between the colleagues and the head nurse. "When working in the delivery room, it appears as if you are nursing a pregnant woman, but in fact you are

taking care of two lives. Whenever a patient is in labour, the demand for staff is high. Fortunately, we have developed a tacit understanding to assist each other. If someone is in need of help, they would ask the head nurse." Nurse Dan-Fei said. The head nurse, according to Dan-Fei, is endeavored in resolving administrative or interdisciplinary issues nurses may face. Although sometimes it is even beyond her jurisdiction, her effort and dedication are apparent to all. "Our unit would employ all kind of methods, like message board, ward meeting or email, to allow our colleagues to freely express their plight at work. When new nurses encounter communication issues with patients, the head nurse would then utilize morning meeting or ward meeting and encourage

senior nurses to share their experiences, which in turn speed up the learning curve of these new nurses.” Dan-Fei said.

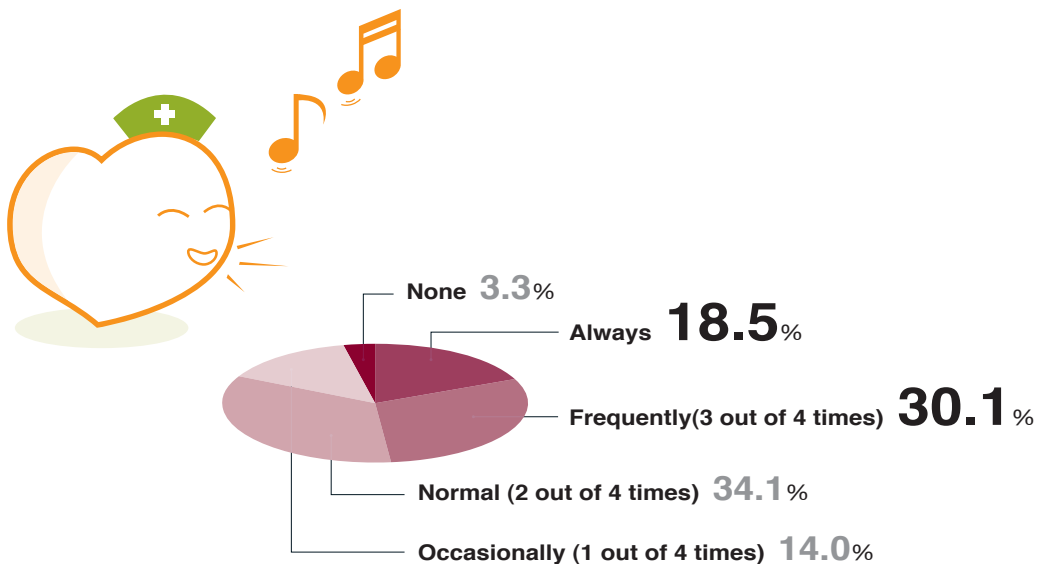
“Of course, we do not only share our plights, but happiness as well,” Dan-Fei added. The ward staff meet once every two to three months on regular basis. During the Christmas present exchange, sometimes the doctors would treat everyone to a meal. The ward always filled with endless snacks and desserts voluntarily supplied by the ward staff, so no one would ever starve because of work. On the day of winter solstice, someone stayed after a graveyard shift to cook a pot of sweet rice balls. “Someone just came back from Korea recently, and

she did not just share her travel stories, but also hand creams for everyone. Since our work entails us to wash our hands frequently, she wanted to make sure that our hands are well protected,” she said.

### Learn to Express Your Feelings

To enhance medical quality, team collaboration has become a recent emphasis. Team collaboration, aside from mutual respect, focuses on mutual support. Whenever a team from a different unit implemented certain creative ideas, it is worth learning from. Under the guidance of the head nurse, for example, the nurses of the SICU of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital are

## Q2 | During working hours, I would express if I feel good? ( N = 1,406 )





encouraged to express their mood. When the leader of the day asks “are you safe”, everyone would either answer “I am safe” or “no safe” with hand gestures. Forming a circle overhead with both arms signifies a good mood, while a cross in front of the chest signifies a bad mood. Also, there is a message board in the ward corridor available for all staff members. People who are happy can post a smily face, and someone who is under the weather can post a frowning face. You would know how to moderate your interaction with others according to the board. The information also allows the head nurse and team leaders to intervene with timely and appropriate assistance.

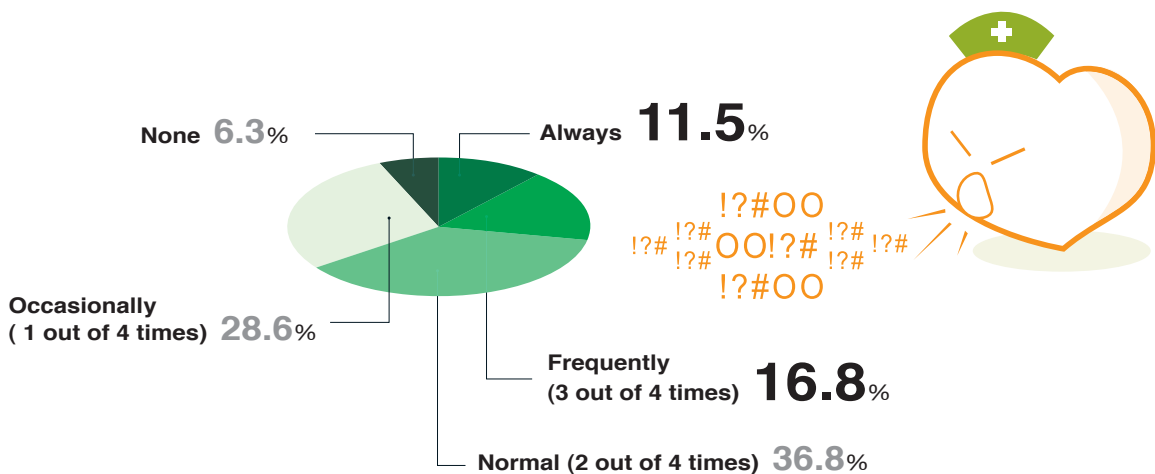
The heart lotus ward, or the palliative

care ward, has implemented a “monkey tree climb” board. Each nursing staff expresses their mood by placing the monkey on the tree. Some may sit leisurely on the trunk while some may be hanging upside down in distress. By marking one’s mood, the team members have an accurate understanding of everyone’s status.

The respiratory care center (RCC) employed a method worth learning from. Even before the center was operational and the space was empty, Head Nurse I-Ching began pondering on how to invigorate this cold, stern environment, to create a cohesive force among the nursing staff from different units. As soon as the equipments were in place, she

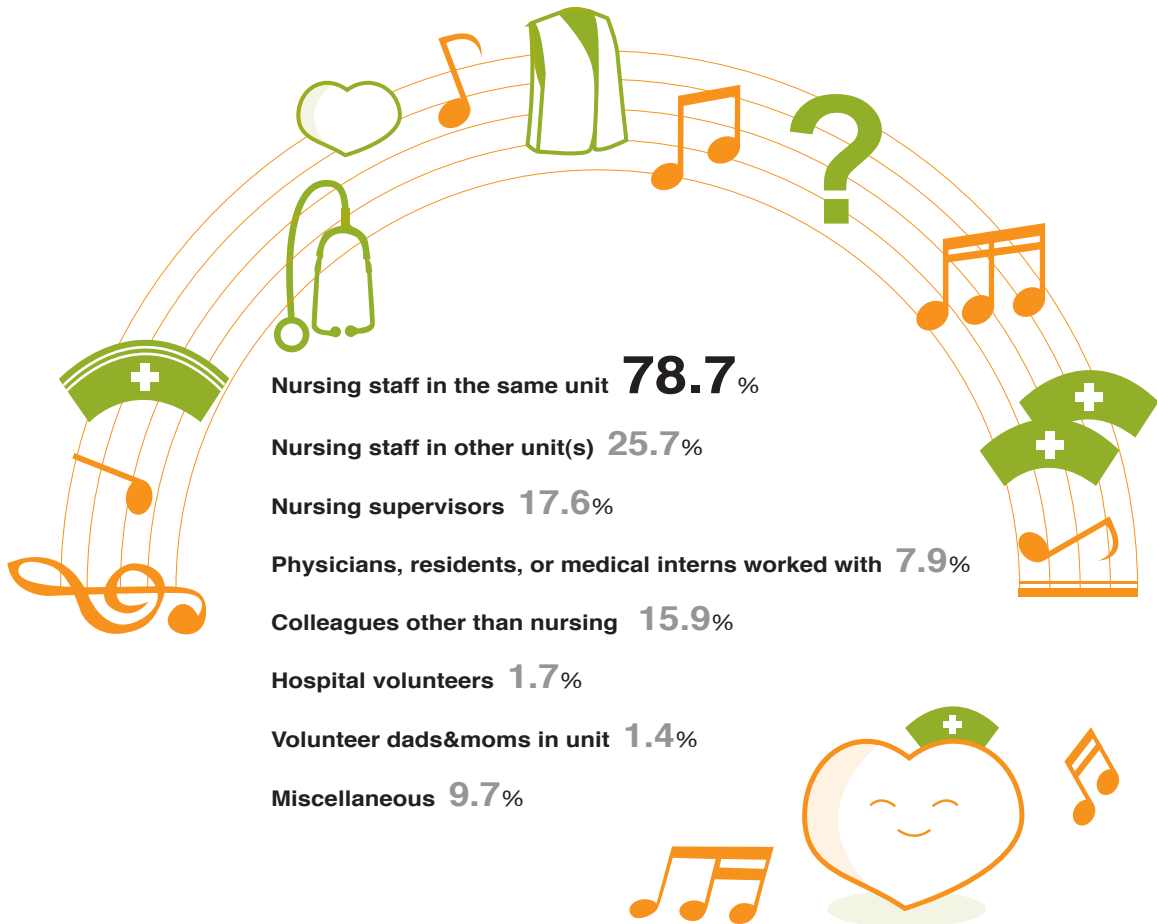
### Q3

**During working hours, I would express if I feel bad?**  
( N = 1,406 )



# Q4

**The target group(s) that I expressed feelings to?**  
**( N = 1,406, multiple choice )**



arranged and designed an activity board, with graphics and writings, on the ward wall. Originally the board was intended for the team member to vent their emotions, eventually it evolved into a board for the patients and their family as well. Some patients would revisit the hospital simply to leave their thoughts on the board.

Nurse Tzu-Chun said: “When I am

exhausted, I would walk to the board and read. Whenever I see the words “war spirit” written by the head nurse, and the photos posted by the patients, I would feel inspired and regain the strength to complete a day’s work.” Aside from celebrating holidays, Head Nurse I-Ching would sometimes lead her colleagues to perform something crazy as a way to vent.



For example, she would rent costumes to perform bizarre dance moves, or light fireworks at the beach while lining them up to write RCC. Now, RCC is no longer empty and cold. Everyone, including staff from other units, can feel the cohesion among the RCC staff, and the patients are extremely satisfied as well. In early 2014, they designed a “Respiratory Treatment Party GO” event, placing a map beside every patient’s bed marked with their current treatment goals. The intent was to inspire both the medical team and the family to aid the patients on weaning off the respirator.

### **Multiplatform for Self-Expression**

On the tools our nursing staff utilize to vent their emotions, 30.8% chose LINE, 27.7% chose Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo or other online communities, 9.3% chose to speak it out; and 5.0% chose blog. Other tools had only minimal usage, like the message board 0.8%, hospital mailbox 0.4%, and psychological counseling 0.6%. Apparently the smart phone that has internet access has significantly altered our ways of communication.

If nurses simply wear their negative mood on their faces, most patients would probably be frightened, or worse, infuriate them. Therefore it has become a norm for everyone to disguise and conceal their emotions. So long as the nurses are willing

to communicate, to vent their emotions, it is considered a positive behavior.

The lotus ward often arranges art therapy sessions that encourages nursing staff to paint or make pottery to release their emotions. Another available tool is the “Story House”. The nurses would write their feelings inside the story house, and while they write, the negative mood or grief from nursing patients is relieved.

### **Relieve the Stress and Resolve the Problem**

The final question on the questionnaire asked if the problem leading to the stress, after the stress is expressed and relieved, is resolved. Only 5.1% answered no, while 54.2% answered “always” and “frequently”. All in all, more than half of the sample answered solidly that issues are resolved once being expressed.

On every Thursday, a routine group meeting is held by the general medicine education unit, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. Head Nurse Fen-Lan said, “The group meeting helped many nursing staff to solve their troubles at work. For example, a patient’s family members suffered from manic depression and often lash out on the nurses. After the issue was raised in the team meeting, the attending physician immediately resolved the situation by communicating with the family members. The doctors also regularly assume the role of

educator. For example, a patient's family member was frequently drunk and yelled in the ward. The nurses tried to talk him down but to no avail, so they employed the empathetic conversation method taught to them by Dr. Ya-Ju Wu and said, 'I understand you are only trying to solve your insomnia with alcohol.' The nurses first comprehend his frustration and then informed him that the behavior is not appropriate in a hospital setting, to which he accepted and stopped drinking. This encounter gave the nurses a new tool to resolve conflicts."

Ever since she began promoting team resource management (TRM), Head Nurse Fen-Lan Su said, the doctors assume two new roles: as friends, and as mentors. Nurse Yin-Chieh and Pei-Hsun also pointed out that whenever

a nurse discover potential risk and successfully avoided it, the doctors would offer positive encouragements, which would in turn instill a sense of accomplishment in these nurses. During the pharmacy residency program (PGY), the trainee would meet together for lunch or dinner to celebrate their advancement towards professionalism. "The nurses would also share their joy among colleagues," Yin-Chieh and Pei-Hsuan said. Most of the nurses working in Hualien are from out of town, so it gradually became a natural habit for the nurses, after a visit home, to bring back their local delicacies.

Team members, doctors or of other positions, can assist nurses in dealing with their problems and elevate their mood.

## Q5

### What are the potential areas of improvement in nursing education?

( N = 664, multiple choices allowed )

Blogs, webpage diary **5.0%**  
 Emotion board set in my unit **0.8%**  
 Opinion box in hospital **0.4%**  
 See a psychiatric counselor **0.6%**  
 Miscellaneous **4.3%**



Spoke out to someone **9.3%**  
 Writing e-mail **5.0%**  
 Line **30.8%**  
 Facebook, twitter, yahoogroups etc **27.7%**



Furthermore, some feelings can be detected and voiced out, while some are lurking underneath and requires guidance to identify and recognize. For the past year, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital has been promoting humanoid figure clinical case method in order to encourage nurses to make self-reflection a habit. Through it they can identify their patients' problems and their own, and draw strength from such realization. For example, an aboriginal nurse had a relative staying in the ward she services in. The relative, an elder, worked hard daily on rehabilitation to reduce the burden on his family once discharged; the aboriginal nurse, on the other hand, believed that she as a nurse should share that burden with the relative and yet was concerned that she lack the ability to do so. Through self-reflection, her colleagues guided her into seeing her capability and limitations, worked with her to draft a joint care strategy with other family members, and allowed her to finally let go of the stress. Some nurses grieved over their patients' passing, or seeing acquainted caretakers receiving blames by their patients' family, and finally found their emotional outlet through self-reflection. Some nurses witness the patients' conditions and reflect on the psychological and physical conditions of their family and friends. It may appear as simply as an education program, in fact it also allows the nurses' work to be seen, which also helps to indirectly relief their stress.

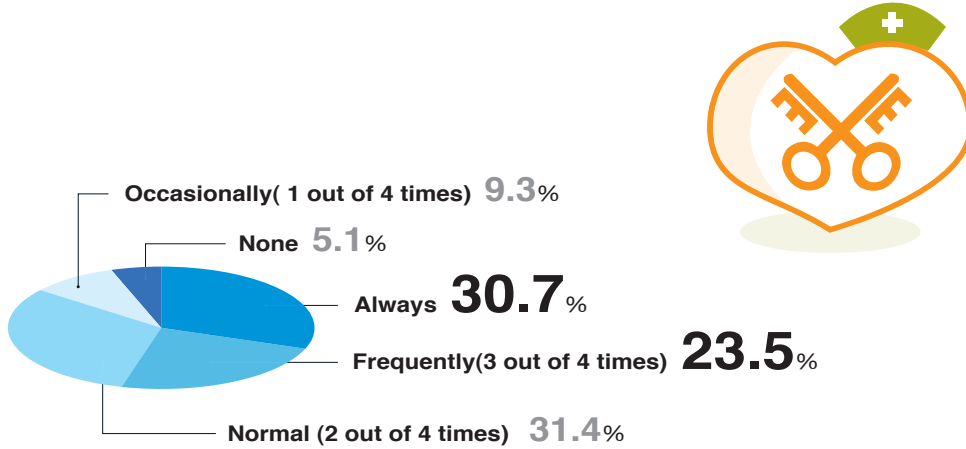
## **Self-Recognition Facilitates Good Mood**

Nurses should not simply conceal their emotions and feelings but to express them moderately, yet their personal expectations often demand them to present their best in front of patients and family. We, therefore, should facilitate moderate expression of underlying emotions, so that our colleagues may have a clear grasps as to who is having a bad day. Exhibit your emotion temperature, both good and bad, so we could solace and cheer together.

Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital began its collaboration with Xiamen Nursing Association in 2012. Together they held a series of Tzu Chi Humanities Seminars, which was well received by the nursing supervisors in Xiamen. Director Jin-Hui Zhang of Xiamen Nursing Association said, "Tzu Chi transformed me from within. I truly hope that we can enhance our collaboration and exchange with Tzu Chi. After the training seminar, the quality of Xiamen nursing care raised considerably." In Sept. 2013, ex-President of Tzu Chi College of Nursing Fwu-Mei Chang, Director Shu-Chuan Chang and Deputy Director Hui-Ling Lai of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital visited Xiamen. They discovered that hospitals in Xiamen fully utilized the concept of the message board, calling it the "The Emotional Weather Watch". Aside from documenting the mood of each nurse, it also prompted consolation

# Q6

**When I encounter a problem, a doubt, or stress, it could be solved if I expressed out? ( N = 1,406 )**



within the staff. Now we shift our attention back to ourselves, trying to identify other potentials of TRM which we could exploit, so that we could maintain a positive energy and sustained passion within our hospital, while releasing steam from time to time.

By examining each ward, it is not hard to realize that the head nurse and team members of every ward have endeavored to create positive team atmosphere. Message board, art therapy, story house and the solace of Yi-Te moms and Tzu-Cheng dads have exerted their impact in the nurses' hearts. Just like many nurses said, the harmonious ambience in the workplace comes naturally, not by any rules or regulations. However, to facilitate

such ambience demands countless hours and efforts by the head nurse. The feedback of team members is considered as a intangible support for the nurses, and the feedback from patients allow nurses to learn and grow, to discover their own source of joy. Personal growth, on the other hand, is equally important. To receive professional recognition, to be confident at one's job and attain a sense of accomplishment, would encourage one to spread love to others and oneself.

Caption: The story house allows the nursing staff to share their thoughts and feelings with others. The photo illustrates a story house handmade by Heart Lotus Ward Nurse I-Hsun Chiu of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital.