



What About the Nursing Profession Makes Me Passionate

I was gathering my thoughts on this essay topic last Sunday, sitting in an ICU at my husband's bedside as he endured the onslaught of sepsis for the umpteenth time in his grueling four year journey with leukemia. It came to my mind because when I walked into the unit, his nurse looked up and said "you're a nurse, right?" As frequent flyers, he and I are rather known around there and I always let the staff know that I am a nurse so that I can get the real scoop. And then the nurse proceeded to give me a report and I once again was so glad to be a nurse. This is just one thing that makes me passionate about being a nurse, that it is my assessments that have probably prolonged his life; I quickly detect the signs and symptoms of infection and graft vs. host disease. His doctor has told him, "she's the boss, I am relying on her clinical assessments."

In these four years I have also been his advocate for adequate pain control, his home health IV nurse and his wound care nurse, his transporter and educator. It has felt like another full time job sometimes and it is while caring for him, a 64 year-old stubborn and sometimes grumpy man, that I remember the reasons I became a pediatric nurse, not an adult nurse!

Yet he represents much of what makes me passionate about nursing; making a real difference in someone's life, connecting, listening and really getting to know someone, and intervening in ways that reach to the heart of the matter, solve problems and sometimes save a life.

But that's not the only thing that makes me passionate about nursing; there are so many aspects of this profession that I love. I tend to be a woman of excess and usually function in a sort of whirlwind and I like to have many balls spinning in the air.

One of my passions in nursing is writing. I love writing although I know I am not the most disciplined. I enjoy writing the case scenario studies that are the basis of our unit's education program. I love my newsletter, the local SPN quarterly and am one of the few nurses I know who enjoys DARPing. And I am proud to report that I keep up with and comment religiously on everyone's Facebook statuses! Sometimes it is even therapeutic as I have been able to offer some counseling on how to get services to one of our adolescent patients who asked for help on Facebook!

I love teaching! I say yes to any teaching opportunity because I love talking, but I love it too because it forces me to study, to focus and make sure I know what I am talking about. I love precepting and the nurses I precept become like daughters to me, I watch over them even years after graduating, like a proud mother.

I have a passion for my co-workers! I love engaging them, cajoling them to write, teach, climb the professional ladder and participate in professional organizations and events. I make every effort to recruit for SPN as well as the 6 North Snow Bunnies, our ski/snowboarding club.

I love attending meetings and was thrilled to be the chosen volunteer for the House of Representatives and I actively campaigned to be a council member. I may not love every hour of every meeting I go to, but I love being in the thick of things and possibly helping to make changes for the better. Maybe it's my nosy nature, but I especially enjoy the reports from the other councils. I have always had a passion for organizing fun celebrations like bake sales and book fairs at the schools my daughter attended and potlucks and parties at work, so helping to organize some of the Nurse Week events has been very satisfying.

But these are just some of the things that make me passionate about nursing. I love to dabble in all of them because I think they are interesting and challenging and fun. But what captures my passion the most is passionate nursing! I love the days when a nurse colleague is pursuing a vexing problem and

engaging the rest of the staff to help. I love watching when nurses get passionate about a patient. It doesn't happen all the time to every nurse, but it happens a lot and it is a joy to watch. Sometimes it is just serendipity—a nurse is assigned to a patient and they click and bond and the nurse becomes so therapeutic because of that chemistry. When it happens to me, it is like a rare gift.

I try to connect with every patient of course, every day and usually can find something to fall in love with whether it is the toothless grin and strong finger grip of a baby, or the smart and funny cool of a teenager. But sometimes there is that connection that re-charges my batteries and stays with me forever.

There is, of course, my husband, whose life is often in my hands. I know I have saved his life and I know I pull him through. But there are others; the children I have known and bonded with. My favorite stories are Rosie and Maddy.

There is Rosie. She was 11 when I first took care of her and she had bone cancer that caused her terrible pain. She shrieked and some staff members found her inconsolable and unreachable. There was something about her though that touched me and there was something about me that could reach her. It was one of those inexplicable connections. Except for one thing, we had the same birthday. Thirty some years apart, but born on the same day, we were Gemini twins. I decided to use imagery and we went to the beach together. I also decided to argue for different pain medication. And I listened and sat with her. She became my patient on every admission and when, at 16, she relapsed and lay dying in excruciating pain at another hospital, I went to sit with her and her mom and supported mom as she decided to ask for heavier doses of pain medication even though she was told it may compromise Rosie's breathing. As Rosie's primary nurses through so many years, her loss still brings me to a standstill and I relive the grief again. I have written about her before; she is never forgotten to me.

There is Maddy. She was a senior in high school, shot in the back on the way to school. I was assigned to her one morning and found her to be quiet and sad and resigned to her helpless state. She had no feeling in her legs and nurses were doing all her care including catheterizing her throughout the day. I made it my mission to teach her how to cath herself and give her back some independence. We had a long weekend to work on this and I decided to start off with a beauty day; a long bath complete with music and then a foot massage with Victoria Secret lotion, not baby lotion! Then we got down to work with reading material, good adaptive equipment and plenty of cheerleading. I reminded her that she could be independent if she took on the hard work to master self-care. I still have the glittery card she made for me thanking me for pushing her to learn to cath herself and take some control back for her life.

There are a lot of things that keep me passionate about nursing! All the opportunities and activities open to me keep me re-charged and enthused; writing, teaching, getting involved...but most of all, finding those rare and oh so precious moments of real connection and making a real difference in the life of another person.

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