

One Nurse's Story

We could all tell countless stories about crazy situations and really crazy people...watching someone die and come back to life...watching someone die and not come back...praying with someone just diagnosed with cancer...watching drug dealers try to sneak out and escape from the police...talking with homeless men, prostitutes, retired priests, gospel singers, and professional boxers.



Hearing stories everyday from my patients' lives...some in hopeless situations...some killing themselves while stuck in addiction to drugs, alcohol, or eating disorders...some whose lives are ending...some facing a prognosis of six months left to live...some who are healed and finally have hope again...some who are dying alone with no family...some going through hell...some getting ready for heaven...some who want to dance the polka with me down the hospital hallway...some whom I cry with...some whom I laugh with...some whom I want to yell at...some whom I don't understand and probably never will.

Here is what I really want. Somehow, I want to be able to be an agent of hope to all of these people. The thing that I wrestle with every day is how to make that happen. How do I bring the hope, healing and peace into the life of every patient that I touch? I am surrounded every day by people who are in the middle of a crisis, and every day I wonder what it would look like for me to offer them hope, as well as their Hydrochlorothiazide, Metoprolol and Thymoglobulin. I so don't have it figured out yet. I guess that's what I am there for, because this is where it really matters, isn't it? How we walk out there — in the midst of chaos, hopelessness, stress, sickness, and crisis.

I was reminded what a privilege it is to be doing what I get to do every day. To be able to enter into the stories of people from so many different walks of life. I get to enter into the heartbreak of reoccurring cancer diagnoses in patients who have been battling it for years, and the life-giving procedure of kidney transplants for patients who have been on a waiting list for years.

I get to take an active role in bringing just a glimpse of hope near to all of these. From the story of a homeless man struggling to overcome a chronic drug addiction to the story of a 95 year old man who took me off guard with his contagiously playful spirit and sarcastic quips of "now just wait one minute there, sunshine" when I would talk too fast. As I was saying good-bye to this particular patient at the end of my shift, he took my hand and kissed it as only a 95 year old man could. I was taken off guard by the dignity that exuded from this man lying in a hospital bed. I was honored to have been a part of his story. What a privilege.

Even if we don't have all of the answers all of the time, and even if we can't fix every broken, hurting, painful person's story, we do know that just being present — just offering a moment of peace or a moment of hope — can powerfully impact the lives of those we touch. And I think that is what we are here for.



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