Nightingale Songs

A forum for nurses to share their silent moments of reflection on their nursing.

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MAN/NURSE

To be a man and a nurse;
A contradiction and compliment
Opposite almost, the hard and the soft;
The ying and the yang; in touch with the deep.
Called to a new place to live;
In gentleness and quiet; in fear; Anticipation and excitement, an adventure;
And yet a sound inside calls from the dark. To be a nurse and a man;
In giving, openness and receiving;
All that it means to be whole;
I listen to the sound within, and hear the winds of my healing.

Tim Porter-O'Grady
HEALING-HIV+

Your wounds weeped Purulent
with the discharge of our Pain
and fear.
They tried to hide, only to reappear.
The treatment gentle, slow
A warm, loving balm to your soul.
Your stomach was fed the comfort
Food of your youth
And your lips drank in deeply all
You knew and understood.
The memories sweetened each moment
You stood, face to face with terror of
What might be mistook.
All inside shifted as slowly it came,
A gradual awakening; embracing of pain
As you conquered your demons
A lightness appeared
To stay forever and
Abolish all fears.

_Lorraine M. Wheeler_

FINAL JOURNEY

Your eyes are watching God-
focused on a place I have not
been, and cannot go.
But still, my job is to take you
there.
If I do it well, I lose you-
and yet, what else is left?
Hand in hand, we start on the road to
eternity.
I stop, you go on-
my job is done.
The caring never ends.

_Mary Gulbrandsen_
WE WILL ALWAYS BE TOGETHER

Our time together in one dimension
is over
But, in another, we will always be together
For you will always be with me
What you shared and what we
experienced is ever-present:
the pushing-resisting of
struggling, the moving in
decision, and the negentropy
of critical life situations

All of this, is now a treasured
dimension of who and what
I am - and I love and
thank you for it, with my
heart and soul
For we will always be together!

Charles J. Beauchamp

THE SENSE OF NURSING

My eyes see two people held within the boundaries of our
humanness, yet connected in dimensions unseen...

flesh
blood
energy
nurse
patient
humanity.

My ears hear the cries of man’s needs and despair from the past,
present, and future...

sustenance
security
hope
comfort
fear
resonancy.
My hands feel the expanse, yet unity, of the universe in the microcosm of one touch...

warmth
coolness
pressure
pulsation
wholeness
Integality.

My taste detects the bitter and the sweet of the lives I share for an instant in space-time...

happiness
sadness
loneliness
togetherness
multi dimensionality.

My mind envisions a place and time where mind, body and spirit are symphonic in purpose and destination...

touching
healing
helping
helicy
health.

Marla Ruth

A PRIVATE PLACE

I've weighed the child
And measured him from head to toe
Encrypted terse details of his fragility
In jet black ink upon a bureaucratic form.

With trailing tubes we more across
To quietly sit together as I finish up.
I cannot reach her, cannot see the shapes
She sees through vacant, staring eyes...
Can't know what hopes she had or has.

If I could split this thing apart
Then rip it into minute bits and fling
Them banished to the howling wind
I would begin again...
Create it all afresh, entire.
Would grab her in my arms
Across the thrashings of her lusty child.

I finish with my work.
she stands encumbered by entangled cords
And cannot grasp the plastic bag
To which her dying child is tied.
It is too much for her to bear.

I - helpless - ask naively, "Can I help?"
But now somehow she has it gathered in.
Without response she moves away,
Unseeing eyes transfixed by inward prescience
Of surcease in a far-off, private place.

Sanford M. Russel

In silence we find ourselves. Then perhaps a path that leads to serving others.
From the center point we move quietly full circle in lunar resonance. Beautiful trees appear grown tall where there was barren soil.
Caring emerges not from an open wound that is raw and painful, but
from an open heart, from a died and resurrected depth, a center point from which all the pain and suffering Humanity knows rests.

Trying to care for some other reason - examining one’s own truth and intention - Fear of not knowing what to do to the other...

In Healing, our pain is released and transformed - No longer frantic to do the "right thing" - we comfort the other by just being who we are. You may rest with open heartedness - Christ has no other way to work through you.

So relax - find love in who you are; you will see and others will know how comforting you can be. In time you will accept that not knowing the answer is both part of knowing and having an answer.

Julia A. Howell

THE EIGHT BEATITUDES FOR FLOOR NURSES

Blessed are the floor nurses for they have mountains to climb.

Blessed are the floor nurses for they must be brother, sister, wife, mother, father, friend to all patients who hunger to be heard and cared for.

Blessed are the floor nurses who laugh at themselves for their patients will laugh with them, and their hearts will be lightened.

Blessed are the floor nurses who can see that their hard work has a
purpose for they'll be on duty tomorrow.

Blessed are the floor nurses who teach their patients to do what they are capable of doing for they'll be rewarded with success.

Blessed are the floor nurses who listen to their patients for one day they shall also be heard.

Blessed are the floor nurses who allow others to be imperfect for they too shall be given that courtesy.

Blessed are the floor nurses for all their incredible work and continued perseverance for they are truly appreciated by their fellow nurses.

We couldn't do it without you.
Thank you.

_Bernice Basara_

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**UNDERSTANDING**

A couple of months ago, I met an 85 year old lady in a retirement center where I was working as a nursing assistant. That lady was not the oldest of all the residents but she was the most inactive. Her daily activities consisted of walking about 100 feet from her room to the dining room, then move to come sit in front of the nursing station until the next meal. After dinner at 6:30, she walked back to her room to sleep. She didn't talk to anyone and didn't want to be part of any activity even on invitation.

After I had observed her, I felt sorry for her. I looked at her kardex, she wasn't taking any medication but sleeping pills every night. In order to be able to help her and get acquainted with her, I asked to have her in my ADL list.

The first morning I entered her room, I called her by her last name respectfully. I presented myself as the one who will help her from now on. She was still in bed, soaking wet and smelling. Embarrassed, she started crying. I comforted her. I
told her that there is beautiful sunshine outside, that I am going to help her have a shower and get ready to go and enjoy it. After she got dressed up, she was very happy and she went out while I fixed her room. During the day I kept an eye on her. I took her for a walk. I suggested that she use the bathroom so that she can stay dry.

After a week of relationship based on trust, respect and understanding, I discovered from her that she has a sister in that same facility who doesn't put up with her because she is incontinent. The other members of the nursing team treated her badly also, they say she is lazy.

Again, for her sake, I changed shifts from day to night shift. The first night I went to help her get ready for bed, I gave her a good warm bath, dried her well and put talc all over her especially between her big legs. She used to wear diapers; I asked her, "are you comfortable with the diaper?" "I am a child now, I have no choice; they just put it on me", she replied. I said, "I will not put it on you if you don't want it. Will it bother you if I wake you up during the night to use the bathroom?" "Please do that, I will be more than happy to get up." I wanted to try helping her get control over her body. So for two weeks I woke her up every hour, the next week I modified the schedule to an hour and a half, then every two hours. After a month or so, I went in the room at 2 o'clock a.m. I was surprised to find her coming from the bathroom by herself. I congratulated her and gave her a big hug. She was so happy to be able to get up by herself and find herself clean and dry every morning.

Since then I observed that she started to say "hi" to other residents, to speak to some of them, even to get a seat in the TV room. She became less reluctant. She was ready to participate in activities. Her sister came to me to express her appreciation. The lady, my patient, said, "Now I am somebody. I am willing to do anything you tell me to do. You are a nurse, I love you very much."

I was very happy and thankful to God for the opportunity He gave me to be of some help to that lady. I was happy with myself too for that constructive work. It gives me confidence in pursuing my education in order to reach my goal, which is: being more qualified to help others grow, maintain or regain their integrity.

*Marie Porcena*