

What it means to be a nurse

Nursing is not a profession; it is who I am. While I am truly honored to be a part of the most trusted profession in the US for 20 years running; for me, it's about making people feel better physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I believe that anyone can be trained in the science of nursing, but one cannot be taught the inherent ability to make the personal connection that provides healing and wellness on an entirely different level.

Nursing is perception. To quote Maya Angelou, "At the end of the day, people may not remember what you did or what you said, but they will remember the way you made them feel". As nurses, we have a very powerful ability to affect the outcome not only for our patients and their families, but our peers, subordinates and superiors. In the interest of science, we will certainly provide the medical interventions to promote a positive outcome, but there is so much more than that. Making a person feel important, validating their concerns, providing honest feedback, a smile or a gentle touch.... these are also very important in promoting positive outcomes.

Nursing is a balancing act. As nurses, we are trusted with the very fragile balance between life and death. There is nothing more powerful than helping a newborn baby enter this world or holding someone's hand as they leave this earth for their heavenly home. There have been times when I have done both in the span of one twelve-hour shift.

Nursing is a ministry. We are the ones that people look to for guidance, answers and advice. As nurses, we often find ourselves in difficult situations where the only answers we have bring fear or sadness. There is absolutely nothing more healing for my heart, as a caregiver, than being able to pray with my peers, a patient or their family. Sometimes the only positive thing we can offer is the power of prayer. I have comforted, and I have been comforted many times.

Nursing is advocacy. There are so many times that we encounter situations where our patients continuously fall through the cracks. Some examples are lack of mental health care/services, self-neglect or neglect at the hands of a caregiver, lack of family support or resources and the list goes on. We not only have the ability; we have the duty to advocate for our patients in order to get them the services and resources they deserve. A small victory for nurses, equal life changing victories for our patients.

Nursing is an art. Being able to balance the science, perceptive, ministerial and advocacy aspects of nursing is truly an artform that many find daunting and cumbersome. It is such a part of my being, that I find those characteristics carry over into nearly everything I do. And by doing so, it brings peace, fulfillment, blessings and joy in all aspects of my life.