

Presence

Category: Prayer

written by Anna Delamerced | October 1, 2016

I take a deep breath in and let it out. Breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in, breathe out. I wipe the sweat off my palms, adjust the newly-minted stethoscope draped around my neck and knock on the door.

A voice croaks, "Come in," and I enter the room to find the patient on the chair. His eyes look tired.

I remember to "foam in" and wash my hands. To break the silence, I talk about the weather, but all he does is nod his head.

The acronym O-P-Q-R-S-T flashes in my mind. I ask him all the scripted questions: *Onset. Provocation / Palliation. Quality of pain. Region / Radiation. Severity. Time.*

He comes in today with stomach pain, but his eyes tell a larger story, one of a deeper pain not easily cured. I deviate from the script. I do not want to diagnose his story so mechanically. I want him to talk freely.

"My father died of stomach cancer," he mentions, almost in a whisper... I nod and let the silence hover between us. A few moments later, he adds, "I do not want to die of stomach cancer, too."

How do I respond? I was not trained for this. Or at least, I have not been exposed to this. As a first-year student, my medical journey has only begun.

I want to reach out and tell him it will all be okay, but I do not know if it will all be okay. All I can do is reassure him: *We are here for you, to help in any way possible.* All I can do is make sure he knows his voice matters.

Perhaps that is a kind of prayer. Listening, hearing, understanding and simply being.

Oftentimes, your presence is enough.

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