

The Devotion of a New Nurse

Category: Turning Over a New Leaf
written by Emily Marantz | January 3, 2020

I can tell you stories about my day, about the mundane miracles that transpire in the time-warped world of this hospital birthing center, but words will hardly convey what it is like—for me—to be a new labor and delivery nurse. Every time I meet a patient and ask them about themselves, I am reminded that I am only hearing bits of the whole story of their life, that I will never really know what life is like for anyone else, and that no one will know (or needs to know) what it is like for me. This seems lonely at first but is actually deeply intimate.

Often, we don't ask our patients many questions or get a full history, because the mother is already deep in labor. Instead of listening to her words to piece together a story or picture of who she has been, I meet her as she is now. I listen carefully to her heart, her breath, her belly, her moans, her sighs, her silence, her cries that often she tries to quiet. I feel and track the story within her pulses, as everything changes. I listen to the unspoken worries that I see on her face. My womb aches with her as I feel her shiver, my heart swells with trust in the goodness of the world—with trust in the next generations and the brilliance of life itself.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the incessant rush of our shifts and the responsibility of my position, my priority is to offer her a calm knowingness and a deep peace that I didn't know I had within me (until I had to find it). I began to find my way of healing, my way to bring myself back, when I was taken deep into the surrender of a mysterious chronic illness, on my own and far away from home.

Nothing has healed me more than my choice to become a nurse, to support others' lives in fundamental ways. I am the daughter of two doctors (my mother an obstetrician), and it took me many years to grow through the resistance and judgements regarding our health-care system. I decided to become part of it, part of the change I long to see in it; this commitment continuously brings me deeper into empowerment, healing, forgiveness, and recognition of the immensely powerful love that keeps each and every one of us going, willing, breathing, pulsing, driven to support and witness each other in this great, great mystery.

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