

# Healing Beyond the Wound

Category: Healing

written by Kevin Kirksey | February 8, 2021

My ICU room is quiet, except for the interruption of the sounds made by equipment attached to me. My most important visitor, my wife, has gone home for the evening. Thoughts of despair and brokenness begin to creep in. I contemplate what life after emergency, life-saving, open-heart surgery will be like for my wife, and will she recover from the trauma and fear she has endured.

As Editha, the nightshift ICU nurse, enters my room to take my blood sugar reading, I ask if I can have some morphine for the pain. With a smile, she responds by asking me what I think the result of the test will be. I make a guess, followed by her telling me what her guess is. I believe she won that first round.

Rather than yearning for morphine as she approaches me an hour later, I focus on playing and winning our game. Editha is purposeful, thoughtful, and kind to give me a mental break from the pain I endure. She does not have to do this; she chooses to offer this little thing, our game, for my benefit.

Walking around the nurse's station for the first time after surgery, nurse Barbara greets me with a high-five saying, "You are my rock star." I didn't get a job promotion; I didn't win the lottery; I didn't win an award. All I did was walk around a nurse's station. I feel important, acknowledged and valued.

I begin to observe countless examples of these little things that make a significant impact on me, from both clinical and non-clinical caregivers. My experiences have motivated me to want to give back in some way.

It is not the high-five itself, the blood sugar game, or being called "rock star" that is most important. These little things become a daily affirmation of my value, relevance and importance as a human being. I realize how acknowledgment, kindness, thankfulness and recognition can have a far-reaching impact on others' lives, even in the smallest doses.

Leaving the hospital, I contemplate if these caregivers are also teaching me about a better, more abundant life I could choose to live? After all, they give and give and give and ask for nothing in return. Could it be I should live my life, based on their example, by focusing on affirming others' value, as they did for me?

They put their life on hold for me. They taught me about my medications, how to eat correctly, how to exercise, and how to smile for no reason. They taught me how to be kind to a stranger, and how wonderful it is to be kind. They taught me, encouraged me, challenged me, and even high-fived me.

Thank you for believing in me, and thank you for caring for me in ways that

no one else could. Thank you for healing my wounds, but, most of all, thank you for healing my life.

As patients, we move on, we move forward. But we never forget.

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