



PLEASE LISTEN TO ME, DEAR HEAD NURSE

Facing Exploding Pressure

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Once a freshman who just completed her internship came to me and asked: “How long have you been a nurse?” “Oh, I just passed the one-year mark a few days ago,” I replied, my face was showing worries. The junior continued asking: “Did anything happen in that year? Do you have any setback?”

“Of course, I do.”

I remembered when I just started working as a nurse; I faced tremendous pressure. I was in constant worry that my poor technique might harm patients, that I couldn’t remember all medical theories and let our head nurse down. I worried that when facing a patient’s family I could not describe the patient’s conditions well and caused them to suspect my ability, I was afraid that I could not answer a patient’s conditions during the consultation session between the medical team and the nursing team... As a result, I had to prepare many notes, the small notes listed all items that I might forget and the big notes listed my goals and my own expectations.

But when I got off from work, I noticed all my tick marks increased with many incomplete “X” on my goals. I was really disappointed.

Later on, when I was near the nurse station, pressure mounted just for the thoughts of facing patients, families, and doctors, I felt choked and I could not breathe. I was so afraid of my performance that I would be reprimanded. When I returned to my dormitory, I would sit on the floor and tears would stream down my face. I felt so stupid that I could not do anything. I wanted to call my family, but I was afraid when they answered the call, I would be too choked up to say anything.

Switch Your Attention, Head Nurse’s Different Kind of Encouragement

When I was really down, I thought about taking medication, such as sleeping pills or tranquilizers as long as I did not have to take them on a long-term basis. But when I reached out to those medications, I felt the resistance in myself, I thought, “If I could adjust myself why would I need them?” However, pressure kept mounting so eventually I collapsed.

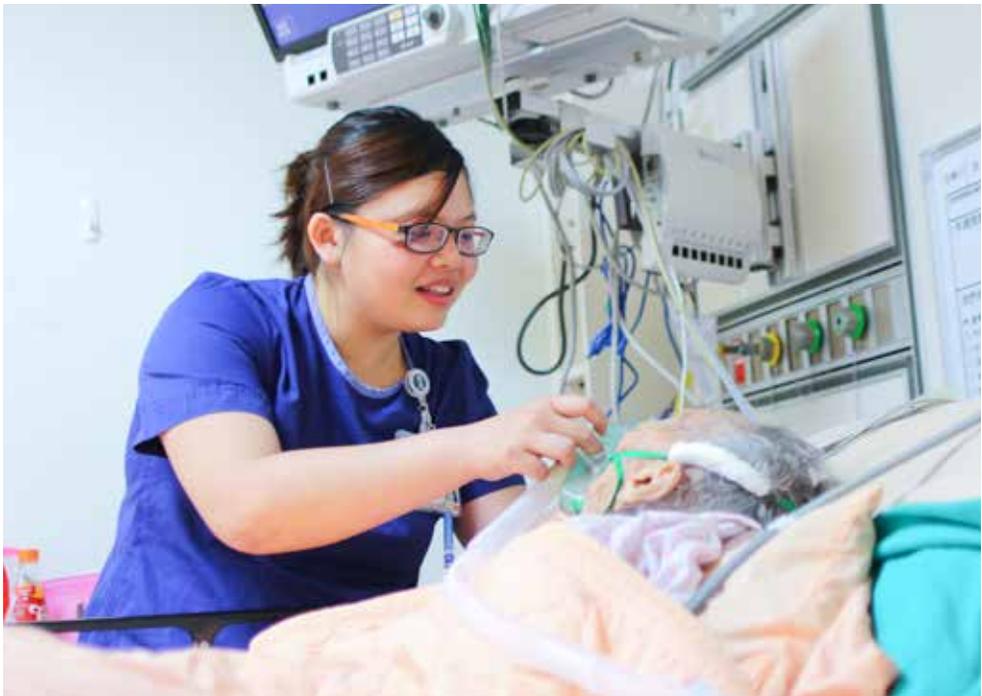
In September of last year, I texted our head nurse (Lin Yi-Ching): “Do you have

some free time today, I would like to talk to you. I think I am going to explode and don't know what to do. I tried relaxing myself, but it was totally in vain.”

The head nurse quickly called me into her office and listened to my complaints, my frustrations and watched I cried. I said, “Head Nurse, I was so down and I wanted to hurt myself...” She was surprised for a moment, but it was unexpected that she did not try to comfort me. She calmly gave me some biscuits and milk to a hungry and crying person. When I had food in my stomach and I felt much better and calmed down, then she started to comfort me.

Luckily when my life hit the bottom, I met our very considerate head nurse and many good colleagues. She quickly understood and saw what problems a new nurse could face and then called me into her office again.

Everyone thought the head nurse called me into her office to chat and to pat on my shoulder, to ask me continue working hard. No, that was not the case. In fact, she gave me an assignment with even more pressure. During that time, the Nursing Department was holding a “Comforting Nursing Contest”. The head nurse asked me to participate in this contest. She said, “Yun-Yin, you can do this.” I



Nicked name “Nurse with an Angel’s Smile” – Chou Yun-Yin is taking care of patients at the Respiratory Care Center, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital.

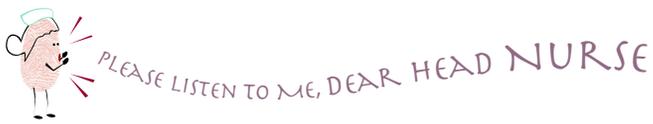


Head nurse Lin Yi-Ching(Center), nurse Chou Yun-Yin(Left) are discussing case studies with colleagues.

was stunned but I nodded my head and said, “Sure. OK.” To many people this might be a good opportunity for them to show off their talent, but to me this was a tremendous pressure, and I thought I might as well turn in my resignation letter and say goodbye.

Fortunately, I did not reject this challenge. The head nurse brought one of my colleagues into this competition. So, my colleague and I had this daily question: “What do we need to discuss with the head nurse today?” We had no idea but stared at the computer screen and repeated the same question in our head - how painful. Since we were already in the game and could not back out, we had to complete the mission no matter how painful it would be.

During the entire process, the head nurse would lead us step by step, from preparing briefing, collecting information, to completing the presentation. We put our focus on one of the daily routines: “How to painlessly remove sticky tape from patients who had internal bronchial tube (intubation) for almost twenty four



hours?” Even though normally patients would frown when we removed the tape, we thought just removing a tape, so how painful could that be?

But when we started seriously looking into this, we tested it ourselves by taping our own face and then removed it without first wetting it, our skins turned red and it was quite painful. We also discovered that senior nurses taught us in the past, before you removed the tape, put some lotion to wet the surface, it would be quite effective.

The day arrived and we had our presentation. Many competitors were very experienced and seasoned nurses. They had prepared many presentation aids, brought them out one by one. The judge said, “We never thought the novice nurses could counterattack. We normally don’t see this kind of simple and fresh presentation in a competition like this.” I thought: “Alas! We only had our oral presentation and the materials used clinically... We never thought we could have won the third place.”

We were so happy and felt “Wow, we could do it.” We felt we were aided to win glory for our unit. We also appreciated the Nursing Department from whom we were chosen among many superior competitors in this contest. If I had to say how much effort was involved, I would say 95 percent of the glory should go to our head nurse who corrected our work and pointed out the blind spots in our presentation, and taught us how to do presentation.

More importantly, because we had to concentrate on preparing the competition, it allowed me to divert my daily work pressure and took away my mind so I could focus on improving my own deficiencies. I finally came to realize the true intention of our head nurse.

Mounting Pressure When Doing It Alone; Bringing Back the Original Intention

I remembered years ago when I just graduated from the school and as an intern, my responsibility was little. After I received my registered nurse license in 2015 and started handling the daily work alone, everything changed. Every task I did I had to work closely with the patients. I needed to be sure I understand every question because in the Respiratory Care Center, patients could not jump up and

tell me, “My condition is like this like that...” I had to figure out everything myself.

Although we all say, “We learn from our mistakes, but in the medical field, there is no room for mistakes!” So, when I had to start on my own, the desire of not making any mistake gradually turned into pressure. Once I made a mistake, I would blame myself, “How come you made a mistake again?” Even I tried to encourage myself afterwards, “Learn how to do this right at the very first time, and I will not make any mistake in the future.” But when I made another mistake, the pressure would hit me hard once again.

Now, There Is Another Challenge: “Going Alone” Is Waiting for Me.

With many incoming new nurses, I became a senior nurse. I was responsible for leading new nurses when veteran nurses were on vacation. Sometimes I still ran into things that I was not familiar with. When I made a similar mistake while leading the young nurses, I would blame myself, “You are already a senior nurse, and how could you make a mistake like this? So whom they could learn from?”

Therefore, I am pondering every day the tasks that I picked up from senior nurses in the past. “Today, I am leading a team of younger nurses, what can I offer them? Can I be as good as a senior nurse?” This is the goal I am trying to achieve.

Nursing is an art to join hearts. My original intention of nursing is quite simple. All I wanted was a job that I can help others. When I was young, my aunt always praised me, “You are a little angel, your smile can cure things and help many people!” Because my aunt and I were very close, so I was sad when she passed away with cancer. But, a thought arose in my mind - although I did not have a chance to relieve my aunt’s suffering, I could be a nurse to help many other people. Through my work I could relieve their physical sufferings. With this original intention, no matter how hard the nursing work is, I will always continue.

One of my favorite Jing Si Aphorisms is: “Do not be afraid that you couldn’t walk ten feet in distance, only fear that you wouldn’t move an inch.” Everyone in his/her life and career will run into some setback. If I did not make the move or the first step, I would not be able to harvest the fruit today. Because of that I became more self-confident.