

FROM HEAD NURSE:

Turn Pressure into Strength

Lin Yi-Ching, Head Nurse, Respiratory Care Center, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital



Yun-Yin is a nice lady. She used her smile to cover up her stress and discomfort. In fact, work in the Intensive Care Unit is very tense. If I have to fight for my life, why would I care about anything? Therefore, conflicts and impacts are very stressful in the clinical environment. Most nurses have emotion; some of them will just explode. But I did not see that in Yun-Yin. She always says, "I am sorry, senior nurse." "What do you think about this?" She would tell me, "I am really mad", and still had a smile on her face. When she was scolded, she would cry and smile, "Thank you, senior nurse."

When she walked into my office the other

day, I saw a beaten-up, an almost collapsed person. Immediately I realized there was a crisis. Someone who had incredible endurance would start to crumble down, which meant that individual had been tremendous pressured, and her tolerance limit was far exceeded.

When I found out she had the idea of killing herself, I knew this is a serious matter. In other words, if this were for other individual, I probably would laugh it off, and say, “You must be kidding.” But when it came from Yun-Yin, I sensed she had reached her threshold and if I did not seriously look into it, I was not sure what she would do next?

I felt so sad watching Yun-Yin cried. I knew my solution would not be to cry with her. I would rather provide her with guidance to bring her up from rock bottom. I knew the cause of her problem was the lack self-confidence; she had a sense of poor achievement, and could not do anything right. She was trapped in this cycle and just like a hamster running a spinning wheel.

Therefore, when I saw the poster “Comforting Nursing Contest”, I asked her to participate. The first purpose was to divert her attention, the second purpose was to pull her from clinical depression, and the third purpose was to rapidly elevate her professional knowledge and capability.

Although this competition posed a challenge to them because they only had about one year working experience, how would they know patient’s comfort level? On the other hand, I felt that just because of their lack of experience, they would not be bound by the routine that were practiced by senior nurses and could do things differently. Anyhow, I thought this was a risky move, a gamble; if I did not handle this properly, Yun-Yin could fall deeper into a cycle of depression and could completely lose her sense of accomplishment.

On the other hand, I fully understand her strength - her endurance. People with this capability can endure all sorts of setbacks and challenges. I need to make Yun-Yin be aware of her own values, let her know that she can make things happen. But I also need to make sure that this additional pressure will not crush her. Therefore, I decided to accompany her during the entire process.

After the contest, I thought Yun-Yin had developed the team spirit with her team members. When a person starts to trust the team, be recognized by the team, that person becomes a part of the group – group behavior. On the other hand, when the person does something glorious, it is meant to honor the team.

This sense of group honor is very important, but not everyone can be inspired this way.

Once our unit was quite busy and did not have extra resources to handle more things. The medical doctor still gave us more assignments. At that time, Yun-Yin was quite painful but still accepted the assignments. I asked her, “You are quite busy and almost drown in your work, why would you agree to take on more assignments from the medical department?” She replied, “I am afraid the medical department will blame us for delaying their progress.”

That evening at nine o'clock, after Yun-Yin finished her shift, I discussed with her about her feelings, asked her why she would not bring this up on the spot? She said, “I wouldn't dare. Besides, medical doctors would not listen to me. When I wanted to communicate with him, he just turned his head and walked away...” So, I analyzed the ways to keep medical doctors around and listen. I asked her to practice one more time. She actually did afterwards. Even though she was nervous, with her face blushing and her heart pounding, she actually did it.

In fact, in the medical field, nurses are the largest group after all, but they tend to be very quiet. This could be the result of our training, but the young generation should not be this way. I hope we could fully utilize young generation's characters



Head nurse Lin Yi-Ching (right), nurse Chou Yun-Yin (center) are encouraging an old lady patient.

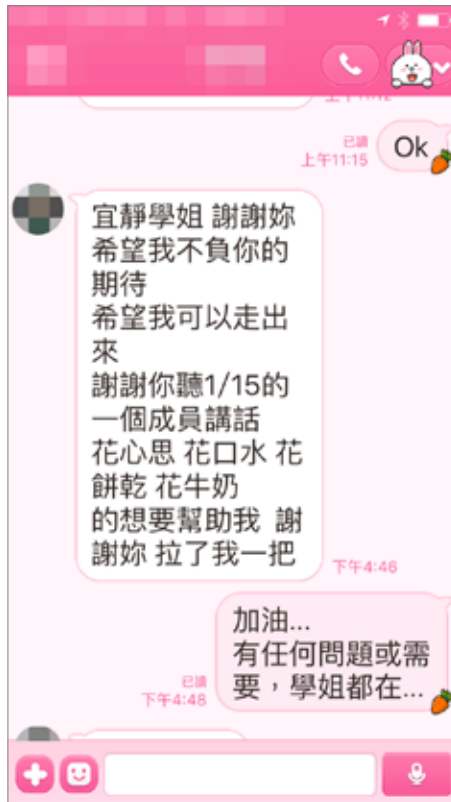
of “Speak up”, train them to dare to speak up, not just always to accept in silence.

I could see Yun-Yin and some new nurses are still circling at the bottom, but I would like them to understand, even sometimes you feel you are losing your enthusiasm, feeling tired, mounting pressure is going to explode on you, remember that your head nurse is always behind you and never give up on you.

I have been in the nursing field for more than ten years, and I am a nurse for the critical ill patients. My patients could not speak or express themselves, so how would I know what their needs are? I train my ability to observe, by looking at patient’s facial expressions, their skin color or even nail color to identify any changes. Actually some symptoms would start showing up in the nails first. If I overlook these details, I could miss the golden opportunities!

Using this kind of observation, I identify my colleagues’ characters and weakness, so I could train them. I do have great expectation that everyone will be equipped with the knowledge to become a leader in their respective units. I am not the “typical mother” type person that I will give you the clothing when you are cold. I would let them know where the clothes are but they need to pick them up themselves. When they are hungry, I will tell them where the materials are and how they could cook for themselves. I hope all nurses working in the Respiratory Care Unit are enthusiastic about their work and being professional.

Just like I told Yun-Yin, “You turn tears into growing up.” But it is very important that in the process, pressure is never meant to be on your shoulder, it should be on your back as a source of energy to push you forward.



Text messages between nurse Yun-Yin and Head Nurse Yi-Ching filled with sincere words. Yun-Yin texted: Thank you HN, hope that I can walk out of the dilemma and won't fail you... and Head Nurse replied with firm support.