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Nursing Professional Tips: Three Ways to Create an Everlasting Impact on Your Patients

The intuitive nurse knows how to tune into patients. It's a special skill and can change the trajectory and health outcomes of their patients in a positive way.

Many nurses go into the profession to make a difference in patients' lives, and often this requires they go beyond the bounds of everyday medical treatment they are required to provide. Preventing burnout, finding life-balance and reminding yourself about inspirational tactics and approaches you can employ in a medical setting is a great way to build resilience and renewal, and drive professional satisfaction.



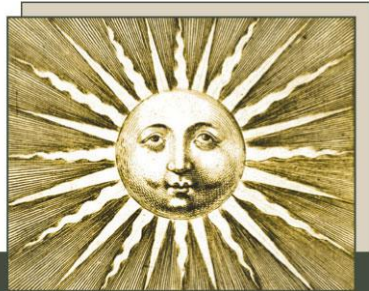
Having experienced a harrowing ordeal with a life-threatening cancer that left me with a permanent facial difference at the age of 21, I was lucky to find a way to harness daily inspirations into key turning points that enabled me to create a [framework](#) of four key principles to not only manage adversity whenever confronted with it but to learn how to create a better, more fulfilling life — whether personal or professional — because of it.

Thanks in part to the medical community who blessed me with great care, and inspired hope at every stage of my battle, I was able to develop that coping framework and to face life challenges and rebuild confidence for happiness, success, and purpose.

But it took some special nurses to inspire me to take on my battle every day, make incremental progress, and know that the people caring for me had my back.

I was lucky to have some of the best nurses any patient could ask for. To say they were committed to patient care and comfort is a huge understatement.





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1. Connect with the person and figure out what makes the patient tick.

Carolyn was a young oncology nurse who strived to see improved patient outcomes. She had an incredibly warm smile. She was the first nurse I remember entering my private room after my transfer from the recovery room. She was engaging and confident. We had some small talk, and then she informed me it was time for my morphine shot. Soon after, she left because her night shift was over.

The next evening, she entered my room carrying a Walkman and a bunch of music cassette tapes. (Keep in mind, this happened in 1985. I realize many of you reading will not know what a Walkman actually was, but bear with me.)



Knowing my age, she guessed I would appreciate some old-fashioned, classic rock 'n' roll to listen to. "For your entertainment," she said as she handed me a bundle of tapes.

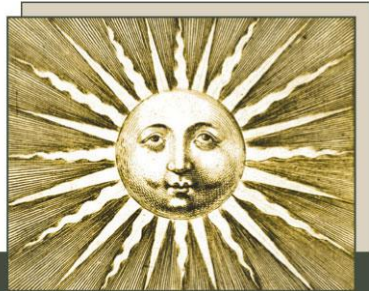
Carolyn also challenged me in a way she thought might motivate me—even though we had literally just met late the night before over that morphine shot, the first I remember receiving.

My urinary catheter had been removed at some point, and I wasn't meeting the staff's requirement to empty my bladder soon enough after that. Apparently, it was Carolyn's job to change that during her shift. She entered my room carrying a very large catheter. She placed it at the end of my bed so I could see it clearly.

"What's that?" I asked.

"That's a size 26 catheter. That's the biggest one we've got, and that's what I'm going to use on you if you don't go to the bathroom on your own really soon."

I stared at the width of the tubing and gasped, realizing what this device was and where it needed to go. Carolyn crossed the room and turned on the faucet in my sink to its maximum so that I could hear it running from my bed. Frightened by what I was seeing, I was able to pull myself out of bed. I walked into the bathroom with my IV stand in tow, stood over the toilet, heard the running water, and was miraculously able to urinate. It wasn't so much my fear that motivated me. It was Carolyn's devilish smile and humor. She knew how to push my buttons for immediate results.



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As I reflected on that experience later, I realized she was just showing she cared and was committed to getting the best outcome for her patient, whatever that took. Call it tapping into the individual and figuring out what makes them tick, or just knowing from experience how a young male might respond, Carolyn had solutions.

2. It's okay to take risks and be human. Follow your instincts and remember why you entered your profession.

One of my other nurses was Adrienne, who was about the same age as Carolyn. She was the definition of kind. You could tell Adrienne would never speak a negative word about anyone. She carried a warm smile with her always. One night she came into my room on her final rounds to cleanse all my surgical dressings, which were numerous. I had skin grafts seemingly everywhere and dozens and dozens of staples on my chest, where a delto-pectoral flap had been returned to heal after the excision of some of the tissue to fill a cavity that had been created in my nasal area. Cleansing all these wounds was a long, arduous process, and she was very meticulous in ensuring each area was thoroughly cleaned and re-dressed as necessary.

When she finished, she walked over to the hallway door, closed it, turned off the lights, and walked back to my bedside. She pulled up a chair next to my hospital bed. She reached for my hands and asked if we could pray together, knowing from earlier conversations that my religious faith was very important to me.

"Of course," I said. I closed my eyes and listened to her soft voice.

She began the prayer, asking the Lord to give me courage and strength to heal and find peace and comfort in the days ahead. She released my hands and rose from her chair. "Thank you, Adrienne," I said. "You are very kind."

"Sleep well," she said. "Have nice dreams."

As I say to nurses to this day, "Take a risk. Be yourself and tap into patients with your intuition." That prayer time with Adrienne was one of the most memorable and powerful experiences I had in the hospital.





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3. Make the patient feel like they are important, and your priority.

Later, after I had completed six weeks of radiation therapy, I had follow-up treatment that required I spend forty-eight hours in the cancer ward on the eleventh floor of Long Hospital at UC San Francisco, where a denture with iridium seed implants was inserted into my oral cavity. I was cordoned off in a room with yellow warning tape across my door because I was radioactive, and I could only be visited by medical staff with Geiger counters.

Claire, another young nurse, was kind enough to ensure that I was comfortable in my room and had everything I needed, finding time to visit me periodically, giving me something to look forward to during her shifts.

She seemed more concerned with providing patient care than worrying about her Geiger counter. That meant so much to me.

I remind others to show gratitude when they experience kindness, as I did with Claire, Adrienne, and Carolyn. Everyone wants to be appreciated, and that is a big part of why people do what they do every day, because what they do makes a difference. Your patients may just find they get better care and attention because of their sincere appreciation.



If you are interested in receiving periodic communications, tips, and information about my upcoming book, *The Resilience Mindset: How Adversity Can Strengthen Individuals, Teams, and Leaders*, and future speaking events, please sign up for my newsletter [here](#) or email terry@terryhealey.com with subject line 'Newsletter'.