

April 27, 2020

Dear New Graduate Nurse,

Congratulations! You have achieved a major accomplishment during these unprecedented times! My name is Christina and I am a nursing graduate from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh in December 2009. I have been privileged enough to be a registered nurse at the University of Wisconsin Hospital (UW Health) for the last 10 years on the abdominal transplant floor. I have pursued my Masters in Nursing Administration from Edgewood College to one day be in management.

When choosing the path of nursing, it has many avenues you can choose to take, and the opportunities are endless. I wanted to do something in my career that was challenging, but also make a difference in people's lives. Becoming a great nurse means committing to go that extra mile for your patients. As a nurse you get to be the advocate for your patients and their families in times of uncertainty and fear. They will put their trust and faith in you to do what is best, in collaboration with the interdisciplinary team.

Let's not forget that nursing is rarely boring or predictable, but in nursing we are present at life's most important events, from trauma to recovery, and from birth to death. For me as a transplant nurse, I get to see patients get a second chance at life through a selfless gift from the donor and their families. I love to be a nurse; it is who I am, and I am proud to stand with my co-workers every day. They become your family, when times get tough at work – which there will be – they will be there to put a smile on your face.

So, as an experienced nurse here are a few words of wisdom:

1. No question is ever dumb; I still ask questions, almost daily
2. Keep your eyes and ears open; learn from your preceptor and role models
3. Respect one another
4. Keep your chin up, don't let yourself burnout

Congratulations to the Nursing Class of 2020! You are about to make a difference in someone's life.

Sincerely,

Christina Butzine, RN

*Being a
Nurse Means...*

You will never be bored.

You will always be frustrated.

You will be surrounded by challenges,
so much to do and so little time.

You will carry immense responsibility
and very little authority.

You will step into people's lives
and you will make a difference.

Some will bless you.

Some will curse you!

You will see people at their worst -
and at their best.

You will never cease to be amazed
at people's capacity for
Love, courage, and endurance.

You will see experience resounding triumphs
and devastating failures.

You will cry a lot.

You will laugh a lot.

You will know what it is to be human
and to be humane.

-Melodie Chenevert

April 27, 2020

Dear New Graduate Nurse,

Congratulations! You have set a goal and reached this with graduation. Most importantly you will be able to start your nursing career, shortly.

It is at this time of uncertainty, to remember that you are "essential". I would like you to remind yourself or your colleagues every day of why you became a nurse. This is one of the reasons that I became a nurse over 30 years ago and that is you can make a difference.

Remember to praise others, smile to those that need it and find ways to help those that need our assistance. It was these reasons that I became a nurse. I saw these traits in witnessing the nursing staff that cared for my sister at the age of 10 when she had surgery for a ruptured appendix. This event was in 1979 and was a pivotal point as to why I became a nurse.

In sharing the plan of care with patients, watching for the subtle changes and trusting your "gut" at times that makes us the nurses that we are. We LISTEN to our patient's concerns, educate and show compassion by helping them to care for themselves.

I graduated in May of 1989 from Winona State University, in Winona, MN, and started my career at UW Hospital and Clinics (UW Health) in the Cardiothoracic/IMC Surgical Unit. I continued over the next 30 years in many departments including: Surgical ICU, Neurosurgery/Plastics for the Inpatient Operating Rooms, Care Team Leader for Regional Anesthesia, Ambulatory Clinics with Internal Medicine and at present back to Specialty Clinics working with Neurosurgery.

Each position that I have had makes me a stronger person. Building your knowledge and embracing change is good. Embrace this in all aspects of your life!

Wishing you the best,

Donna L. Clift-Prew, BNS, RN

April 27, 2020

Hi New Graduate Nurse!

My name is Kate and I am a nurse at UW Hospital and Clinics (UW Health) in Madison, WI. I graduated from Winona State University in 2009. In 2008, the Great Recession hit and finding a nursing job was harder than any of my classmates and I thought it would be. Winona is near Rochester, MN where the Mayo Clinic is located. The Mayo Clinic hired 11 of my 50 classmates in February 2009. A month later, the Mayo Clinic rescinded their offers. Those who had summer internships from many different organizations in Minnesota thought they would get a job through that and did not. A lot of my classmates had to take jobs in different cities and states, in nursing homes, or on units they never thought they would go to. My start date was moved back at UW Health as they consolidated residency classes, but I was lucky to still have the job I applied for.

I have been a nurse for almost 11 years at UW Health. I started my career on a General Medicine floor (F65) which was great for me and my learning. I had been a home health aide prior to becoming a nurse and really needed to learn the basics. Three years later, I transferred to the Burn Unit and have been there ever since. I didn't know I would love being a burn nurse. I am so thankful that nursing is so broad. I love wound care and love forming relationships with my patients, families and those I work with.

It doesn't seem like it, but you will get a job as a nurse. It's hard because you're in a catch-22. Places only want to hire nurses with experience but how do you get experience? The start of your career may not be how you envisioned it, but you will get to where (unit and/or location) you want to be. My nursing classmates are the perfect example of that. Many of them are in labor and delivery, OR RNs, ICU RNs, peds RNs just like they wanted to be when we graduated.

The experiences you will gain by not working in your chosen location or with a certain patient population will be valuable and give added knowledge when you get to the place you always wanted to be. It could also give you a whole new career path you never thought you'd travel along.

I am sorry you are going through this. It sucks a lot, but you have an extremely valuable degree that will take you to where you want to be.

Feel free to email me at kdillmann@uwhealth.org.

You got this!

Kate N. Dillmann, RN

April 27, 2020

Dear New Graduate Nurse,

First and foremost, congratulations. You have done an amazing job growing into your role as a professional nurse. This has been an exciting and challenging journey and something of which you should be very proud.

I have been a nurse for almost 29 years. What we are experiencing with the Covid-19 Crisis is unprecedented. This is something that I, nor my other colleagues have ever experienced in our entire careers. That said, while this is a sad time for everyone, this is also a time for our profession to shine. We are lucky to have you work with us to be able to benefit from your unique gifts and talents.

I am so excited that you are joining our group of amazing men and women who are committed to professionalism, steadfastness and compassion.

While this next step on your journey will definitely present many new challenges, it will also provide you with many wonderful opportunities.

I wish you all of the best in your new endeavors and am so glad to have you as our new colleague.

Sincerely,

Betsy Laessig-Stary, RN

April 27, 2020

Dear New Nurse Graduate,

Congratulations! You've made it! You did it. You got through Nursing School. Take a second and take that in: You. Did. It!

I'm sure there were times that you felt like you weren't going to make it and that you just wanted to give up. It is so amazing that you didn't. You have every right to be proud of all your accomplishments this far.

You are becoming a nurse at a time that is completely unprecedented in our society and in our world. I'm sure you can remember talking about pandemics in your global health/public health class, but who would have thought that we would all be living in one? This time is definitely challenging – for everyone. If you're feeling lost, confused and alone, know that you are not the only one. Even the most experienced of nurses have gone through a variety of emotions in this time.

As you continue forward with your career, if I could offer just a few pieces of advice:

1. Enjoy each and every day. Some days are going to be hard and some days are going to bring a smile to your face. But each and every day you will find something enjoyable with your job. (And if you don't, I would consider switching to a different field.)
2. You will continue to learn, ALL the time. Nursing is constantly growing and evolving and changing. You will have to adapt with it. That will look so different from nursing school, but you will always be learning.
3. Take care of yourself. Start from the beginning cultivating good habits for self-care and coping. Our job is one of the most rewarding, but also most challenging. There are going to be days that are hard. It's okay to take time for yourself and to take care of yourself. It's okay to say no to other commitments if you don't have the energy. You do get a break at work. You do get to take time off and have vacations. It is okay to ask for help. Find a trusted person on your unit who you can go to. Talk with your manager or CNS. Please do not think you're alone if you're struggling with adjusting or coping with different things we see. You are not.

You are about to embark on a wonderful journey as a Registered Nurse! Congratulations on your accomplishments so far and I hope you find the perfect niche. I know I did, and it makes every single day worth it. Even the really hard ones.

Wishing you all the best!



Mandy Jo Mlsna, MSN, RN, CPN
Pediatrics General Care RN

amlsna@uwhealth.org (Please feel free to contact me with questions-I don't mind!)

April 27, 2020

Dear New Graduate Nurse,

Congratulations on reaching graduation! This is a crazy time to graduate and I can only imagine how much more work you have put into get your degree. Thank you for sticking it out and graduating.

I graduated from Viterbo University in May of 2010 and did not secure a job until August of 2010. Those three months were filled with babysitting, lifeguarding, and teaching swimming lessons. I submitted close to 70 applications for jobs across the country and got two interviews in Milwaukee. The two interviews were within the same week and with the same organization in two separate Emergency Departments. I was able to get a job at St. Luke's ED in Milwaukee with Aurora. I started in August of that year and was so excited to have my dream job! I have been lucky enough to continue working as an ER RN in several different hospitals as a traveler and as core staff. I have also been involved with shared governance in my 5 years at UW Health (UWH).

I am now a charge nurse in the ED at UWH and the chair of Nurse Coordinating Council. Becoming a nurse was obviously important to me, but I didn't feel like I was actually a nurse until I was a few months into my first job. And every day I have continued to grow in my profession. I remember being so upset to not have a job before I graduated, but then my first job ended up being my dream job. I still remember many of my patients I had in my first year. Specially, I had an older woman who had fallen and sustained a large head bleed. Her family chose to withdraw care. Unfortunately, the hospital was full, and the patient was unable to get a room upstairs. Her family did not want to prolong the inevitable and wanted to withdraw care as soon as possible. I was able to sit with the patient and her older sister while the patient died. The hour I sat with her sister showed me what being a nurse in the ED meant: it meant that I could slow down to spend time with families. The ED is a busy place, but nurses can slow down when needed. The sister ended up sending a card to my manager saying how much it meant that I was able to sit with her while she watched her little sister die.

Since becoming an ED RN, I have been lucky enough to get and maintain two certifications in emergency nursing: CEN and CPEN. I thought school taught me a lot but studying for these tests taught me so much! It also reminded me how much we learn at the bedside with our fellow nurses.

There is so much to learn to be a nurse, and you just spend years learning so many specifics. You deserve to have recognition for the time and energy you put into learning such an awesome career. Please know that no matter where you start working, you will have fellow RNs who will give you the accolades you deserve. I cannot wait to meet you, learn from you, and congratulate you. Take some time for yourself and celebrate your accomplishment.

Congratulations again! You are awesome.

Sincerely,

Meghan Reisman, BSN, RN, CEN, CPEN
CTL at UW Health Emergency Department
Chair of Nurse Coordinating Council