

BY THE BEDSIDE: ROLE OF NURSES IN MY JOURNEY TO RECOVERY

Carnie Wilson

Nurses inspire me. I see them as fearless, trustworthy, patient, skillful, loving, and dedicated. They act quickly in urgent situations, make critical decisions, and most important, trust the decisions they make. Nurses are confident about themselves and proud of the work they do, which are necessities in a particularly challenging profession such as health caregiver.

Although nurses have many commendable qualities, the force behind their work is a driving need to care for others. When it comes time to help a patient, they have no second thoughts, no reservations, they simply act. It is an outstanding quality, one that makes nurses unique. However, like anyone who spends a majority of time serving others, I believe, sometimes forget to nurture themselves as well. They do so much for patients that they may forget to take time to give themselves the same consideration.

How did I get to learn so much about nurses? First-hand! Nine years ago, I was clinically obese and prediabetic. I suffered from chronic headaches and debilitating shortness of breath. In an effort to save my own life, I decided to undergo gastric bypass surgery and was admitted to Alvarado Hospital Medical Center in San Diego, CA, for the procedure. The nurses there played a critical role in my treatment and recovery. They demonstrated amazing skills throughout my inpatient and outpatient care and provided me with constant support and love. Each time a nurse attended my many needs, they did so with compassion. They were so focused on my recovery, but invariably likeable and approachable at the same time.

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I sometimes believe I have a bond with nurses that goes back many years. When I was in kindergarten, my teacher reported that I would “do a lot better if I would stop helping the other children.” Apparently, I felt a need to nurture and protect my schoolmates back then, and acted on it, to my teacher’s dismay. Some of this may stem from having had weight issues throughout childhood and the attendant medical issues I faced growing up. I may have learned then the need to reach out to others, especially those battling health issues. However, I never really took the time to care for myself. Despite my best efforts, I have always found it challenging to manage my health. I think sometimes we all become so consumed with helping others that we end up putting ourselves last. Imagine that same impact on nurses! Nurses work long days and nights performing selfless acts for their patients. They should embrace the honor of their profession and savor the appreciation for the care they give because they truly deserve it. They should never be reluctant to pat themselves on the back or congratulate themselves after a tiring shift before returning the next day to do it all over again. We, as patients, could not heal or recover without them. And nurses should be reminded of that, always. **CCN**

For the full interview with Carnie Wilson, go to the CCN Web site at <http://ccn.aacnjournals.org>, click on the October 2008 issue, and then click on “Interview.”