

What does luck have to do with it?

At times I say how lucky I am to work in a nursing home. Sometimes I get strange looks because nobody wants to be in a nursing home. But I do.

Okay, sure, I don't want to live there. I have my own home and family and I do not have a need to live there. But my nursing job brings me to the nursing home.

In need of change

My first day on the job at the nursing home was very anxiety producing. I had not worked in almost eight years. Long-term care facilities are very busy and there is a lot going on simultaneously. I felt lost and wondered if I could catch my breath long enough to get a handle on all the duties expected of me. I was completely overwhelmed but determined that I would learn to cope.

It took about six months for my confidence to really begin to build in my daily nursing duties. It was then that I realized the sadness all around me. There seemed to be so much pain, loneliness, and isolation. Disability and debilitation seemed to bar souls of life-giving joy and imprison limbs, confining movement. Once again, I was overwhelmed. But this time the burden was emotionally draining because I could not understand the suffering that seemed plentiful and unrelenting.

I did not enjoy my job. The job itself was difficult, but coupled with the self-misery that I had allowed to happen; I was on the way to burnout and missing an amazing opportunity to open a door into my soul.

A change for the good

One day as I was passing out medications, I noticed some plaques that had been placed beside each resident's door on the wing. Neatly typed was a paragraph or two about the resident's life and a photograph. I read the first plaque and thought, *Wow, I didn't know that.* I read the next one and before long I had read them all. There was so much that I had not known about the very residents that I had bathed, many times fed, and gave medications to. These individuals had a lifetime of living and experiences that I knew nothing about.

My outlook began to change. Who was I to look at a resident's circumstances and decide that it was full of sadness? Who was I to determine how lonely someone felt? Who was I to decide what constituted misery on behalf of someone else? I had it all wrong. I had no right to decide what was best for any of the people who lived in the nursing home. I had no right to project my self-misery onto them.

I began to take a little more time to look into someone's eyes and ask questions about his or her life and maybe ask, "Why the nursing home?" The residents were patient with me, even though they did not know the struggle going on inside of me.



Although slowly at first, I found joy in small ways and focused my attention on one or two residents by getting to know them. Before long, I looked forward to going to work. I still look forward to greeting the residents I have befriended. I have known many of them for years now and some have passed on. Oh, there is still pain, loneliness, isolation, and disability; none of that has changed. But you won't find any self-misery from me. What you will find at the nursing home are wonderful

people who many of them have lived long full lives with much still yet to give.

The initial trial of coming to terms with the hardness and difficulties of disease, age, and the human condition was something that I did not choose on purpose. I have grown so much and am now dedicated to making the nursing home a better place. I could fill a book with funny stories, humorous vignettes, and joyous occasions from the lives and relationships of my patients and friends. The nursing home isn't a bad place and if you are up for a challenge, come and see us and come often; you may find yourself to be a very lucky person.



Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of His, And give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. For His anger endureth but a moment; In His favour is life: Weeping may endure for a night, But joy cometh in the morning.

Psalms 30:4, 5

Our soul waiteth for the LORD: He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, Because we have trusted in His holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, According as we hope in Thee.

Psalms 33:20-22