

The Power of Nurses: Honoring You Beyond Nurses Week



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"The Power of Nurses" is real. While the month of May and National Nurses Week have passed, nurses need to know who we are and what we do should be recognized, honored, and celebrated every day. While nursing is a profession, nursing is also unmistakably a calling. This is not a career people stumble into. It is chosen because something deep inside said, "This is what I am here to do." That calling is sacred, and it deserves to be honored as such.

Before a nurse ever sets foot in a hospital floor, clinic, office, or classroom, we have already given years of ourselves. Years spent in class and clinical rotations, in textbooks and simulation labs, wrestling with health assessment, pathophysiology, pharmacology, and med-surg at night and ethics, research, leadership, and community at dawn. The education alone is formidable. The science of the body and the art of the person are all woven together into a discipline that demands nothing less than the whole self. Our work is a rare blend of education, training, instinct, and calling, and we carry a body of knowledge that is both deeply scientific and profoundly human.

The knowledge and expertise, because nurses are clinicians in the fullest sense – reading labs, anticipating deterioration, catching what others miss. The empathy and presence, because nurses hold the hand that is trembling. We sit with grief. We are the human face of medicine in the most vulnerable moments. We remind the world what compassion looks like in action. The spirit of inquiry, because great nurses never stop asking why – questioning, researching, improving practice, advancing care, and pushing the field forward. The advocacy, because nurses speak fiercely, clearly, and without apology when patients cannot speak for them-

selves. We steady families in moments of fear, and we bring presence and calm into rooms where uncertainty lives. We give care that is skilled, deliberate, and wise, yet so often offered with a humility that hides just how much expertise it takes.

The unseen moments when nurses receive more frustration than gratitude. Exhausted patients snap. Overwhelmed families push back. Systems fail and nurses absorb the fallout. Nurses are, at times, the most essential and least celebrated people in the room. And still, we show up. The sacrifice, because the world rarely sees what nurses carry home – or what we leave behind to show up. Holidays worked. Birthdays celebrated a day late. Missed meals. Missed moments. Missed time with loved ones. The weight of a 12-hour shift that started before sunrise (or with the sunset) and ended long after. Feet that ache. Shoulders that hold too much. And still – the alarm goes off, the uniform goes on, and we go back.

We show up when the work is heavy, when the gratitude is scarce, when the hours blur, when the world forgets how much it asks of us. Nurses have stood in the breach during pandemics when much of the rest of the world stayed home. Nurses care for strangers with the same tenderness we would give our own family. Nurses cry in parking lots and then walk back inside to do it again because our patients need us. That is not just dedication. That is love in an active, extraordinary form.

And then we remember – every act of care given without recognition still matters. We remember why we chose this profession, and we continue to embody its highest ideals: selflessness, advocacy, curiosity, courage, and care. We continue asking questions, pushing for better out-

comes, advocating for change, and showing up with warmth. We continue because "The Power of Nurses" is real.

My fellow nurses, thank you for the labor that is seen and unseen. Thank you for the knowledge you have gained and the wisdom you share. Thank you for the presence you bring into every room, every shift, every life you touch. And as you move forward – tired or triumphant, challenged or inspired – carry this truth with you: you are the backbone of healthcare, the steady force of healing, and the living example of what it means to serve with heart. Keep representing this profession with the strength, grace, and brilliance that only nurses can. The world is better because of your power, your invaluable contributions, your expertise, your compassion, and your profound impact on patient care, health equity, and the community. ■

Having spent nearly four decades in healthcare, 20 years working across diverse acute and critical care settings and 12 years as nursing faculty, Dr. Shoemake is a passionate advocate for nurses, nursing education, healthcare equity, quality patient outcomes, and meaningful inclusion and representation in healthcare.