QUESTION

How can a personal connection build confidence in your graduate nursing journey?

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Wendy was admitted in December. Our transplantation recipients are expected to stay with us for a minimum of four weeks, and this long hospital stay permits us to become familiar with the patients. However, it takes an openness and readiness with a listening ear and watchful eye to form a bond with a patient.

I often was Wendy’s nurse during her stay. I made it a priority to spend time with her, getting to know her and understand her better so I could provide high-quality care. I learned so much about Wendy’s preferences through communication. For example, I learned that she did not like to take a lot of pain medicine and that I could help manage her anxiety by explaining every medication she took and the procedures that were planned and answering each of her questions with verbal and written materials. This bond was built through strong communication.

Taking the time to listen to Wendy taught me about the strength we have as oncology nurses. Simply put, she gave me confidence in the care I provided her. I continue to listen to all of my patients—to get to know them, anticipate their needs, and support their preferences. Building a relationship with my patients has helped me to focus my assessments. I have noticed that I am better prepared when I enter a patient’s room and a stronger patient advocate when the team asks my opinion on my patient’s plan of care. Most importantly, my new skill has given me the confidence I did not possess in my first few months of nursing. As a new nurse, I would have never expected listening and making a personal connection to be one of my most prized lessons. I can say that the most remarkable component to my young nursing practice is the unbreakable connections that I have made with my patients and how these connections have helped to strengthen my confidence.

KEYWORDS
communication; confidence building; patient connections; nursing practice

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RESOURCES
- American Cancer Society
  Listening With Your Heart provides tips for professionals ready to embark on a caring journey.
  https://bit.ly/2w4OufY
- National Cancer Institute
  Communication in Cancer Care (PDQ®) offers tactics for developing a supportive and therapeutic patient-centered relationship.
- Oncology Nursing Society
  Many resources are available for nurses to learn communication skills and to support patients and family members across the cancer trajectory.
  www.ons.org