My Journey to Nursing

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My journey to nursing has been a long one, an experience that is far from over. As a kid I always knew that I wanted to make a difference. Life was really hard growing up, I watched my mom struggle to raise myself and my other siblings and, I think the experiences in my life have humbled me in many ways. I didn’t have much stability growing up, we were constantly moving and it was definitely hard on my mom, having to take care of us on her own. I was able to see a lot of hardships, in my family, and also in the other families in the various neighborhoods that we lived in. As a youngster I always remember seeing things on T.V, or maybe a newspaper and feeling sad that I couldn’t help, but I was a kid what was I going to do to help the violence, destruction and sickness in the world around me. However, even if I couldn’t help overcome all the problems of the world, at least I wanted to be able to make a difference someway, somehow.

It was probably in my High School years that I realize that I wanted to be a nurse, so that at least I would be able to help people on a personal level. After graduating High School, my journey began at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, where I started taking classes towards a nursing degree. However, there was a small problem, the kid in me wasn’t allowing me to take school seriously at the time. I was making a small salary at my first job at Walgreens Pharmacy, to pay my tuition, but I wasn’t focused on school. I wasn’t earning the grades in school that would allow me to pursue a nursing degree. I remember one day I went to go see a guidance counselor and she kind of dropped that ball on me, and she told me that my grades weren’t good enough, to get into a nursing program. My heart was broken, I felt like my hopes and dreams were shattered, how was I going to help people now? I was seventeen or eighteen at the time and I thought my world was over.

My world wasn’t over, however it was far from over. This woman although I don’t remember I her name, she gave me some of the best advice. If I could go back and find her now, I would give her the biggest hug and thank her wisdom. I think she saw in me a kid that wasn’t really sure about what she wanted to do. She basically told me, well if you want to be a nurse that’s great, but first maybe you should pursue something else. She recommend that I take an Emergency Medical Technician course that BMCC was offering. At the time I thought maybe she didn’t think I had what it took to be a nurse, but looking back I realize she wanted to give me a path to something else first. She explained to me the challenges of nursing and she said as an EMT you would gain lots of experience to help you in the future, when you’re ready to pursue a nursing career and she was so right.

I took her advice and I was really excited about my decision. I signed up for the Emergency Medical Technician program at BMCC. It definitely was a challenge because I was learning something new that I wasn’t exposed to before. I remember the textbook was almost as big as my pathophysiology course textbook, but I was eager to learn so I took my book everywhere I went and I read as much as I could. I was so excited to know that I would be out the in the world making a difference , I was going to be able to take care of sick and injured people and I couldn’t wait. So I work really hard, got good grades and then the moment came when we had to be tested on certain skills, before we could get state certifications as Emergency Medical Technicians. The moment came and I did it, I was certified as an EMT in May of 2006 and I was so excited and proud of my accomplishment. I was even more excited that I was soon going to be out there, and able to help people.

Although I had passed my course and I got my certification as an EMT, I did have a few obstacles in now getting work. I was finally able to land a job at a private ambulance company, American Medical Response which no longer exists in NYC today. I worked at a few private ambulance companies thereafter but my ultimate goal was to work as an EMT for the NYC Fire Department. Many people don’t know the difference between the private ambulance companies and the FDNY. The emergency medical personnel who work for the private companies function more like a transport service although they can provide emergency care to patients. Working for the FDNY you are servicing the 911 system for NYC so you receive training and education to be able to care for patients in the prehospital setting experiencing various emergencies and that’s what I wanted to do.

My dream came true when I received a phone call that I was selected to become an Emergency Medical Technician for the FDNY. I went through vigorous training at the EMS academy and after graduation I worked out of EMS Station 38 which sits at the base of Kings County Hospital. That’s where I stayed for almost 7 years. I cared for patients in various traumatic and medical emergencies and I gained experience of a lifetime that I will forever carry with me in my nursing career. I’m constantly reaching for bigger and better things that’s why after my second year of working for the FDNY, I began pursuing a nursing degree and I this time it felt right. I gained so much experience and knowledge in my years taking care of care so many patients, it was a path I definitely needed to cross.

I worked my full-time job as an EMT and although it was rough, there so much blood, sweat and tears that went into this journey. I became a Registered Nurse in April 2014 and I couldn’t believe it, but I did it. After filling out hundreds of job applications, I finally landed my first job as a float nurse at Coney Island Hospital. I had to say goodbye to that chapter in my life as an EMT which was a big part of my life that taught me so much. I learned how to be a good health care professional in the back of an ambulance, working on the streets of Crown Heights, Brooklyn. I am so grateful that I had that opportunity in my life. Now here I am today, almost near the end of my BSN in nursing and also working as a float nurse. This has also been an experience in itself and quite a journey. This journey to, will take me somewhere else and excited to see where that will be. Every moment is an experience and looking forward to all that life has to offer.