

Full Circle, My First Year of Nursing

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I have officially completed my first year of nursing. I graduated in November, passed my boards in December, and started my job in January. The first year was nothing less than a roller coaster ride. I went through so many emotions and so much personal growth. This is a long post, but it is a bare bones rehash of my first year, maybe it will help someone who is where I was back in April-May.

January - Newborn ICU Dream Job

I was making cold hard cash. I had an awesome preceptor for orientation. I was signing my name with RN behind it, I was giving meds all by myself, I was a nurse, woo hoo, life couldn't be any better. Everything I had worked so hard for the last 4 years had finally come to fruition. I got my first paycheck and my insurance cards, for the first time in my life I am a PROVIDER! I love being a nurse.



February - Newness Worn Off

There is a lot more responsibility when you are the nurse and there is not a clinical instructor checking your work. The reality is starting to set in.

March - Night Shift Orientation

Another fabulous preceptor! But, I am tired. I scoured allnurses.com for threads on how to survive night shift. I bought Melatonin, an eye mask, and turned off my ringer. I lost a few pounds because of the nausea from staying up all night. I'm not so sure I can do this.

April - I'm On My Own, Holy Crap!

This is so scary, I'm the NURSE, I'm supposed to know all this stuff! One of my patients required an emergency procedure at the bedside, thank goodness for my coworkers at my side supporting me. I am starting to doubt my choice, NICU is too stressful and too much responsibility, maybe I should have done that year or two in med-surg before choosing a specialty. There is a negative nurse on nights who might be a problem, she never has anything nice to say about anyone. I find advice on allnurses.com on how to deal with toxic coworkers. It could be worse, I won't take her behavior personal.

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May - Made A Mistake By Becoming A Nurse

There is too much responsibility for too little money. I had a baby self extubate and I was so freaked out by it. I have made the decision to stick this job out for a year so I will be more marketable, then move on (how am I going to make it 7 more months!!!). I am finally able to eat at night, and I am getting some sleep during the day. Toxic coworker made a not so nice comment about my assignment being undesirable that I overheard, why are some nurses so nasty? Gah, I hate nursing, what have I done with my life!?!



June - Took the NRP (Newborn Resuscitation) Class

Another patient self extubated, this time I knew exactly what to do, that felt so good. I got nominated for outstanding new grad (me???). I got my 6-month evaluation, I am a "strong performer" and I am getting a good raise. I can do this for 6 more months. I got my first primary patient. Her dad asked me if I would be her nurse, he could tell I cared about her the way I talked to him on the phone about her. Aww, I loved that baby and I felt honored that someone wanted me to care for the most precious thing in their life. I am feeling a smidgen better about my career.

July - New Grads Starting On My Unit

When I get a report from them I begin to realize how far I have come since I started. My family took a week-long vacation at an oceanfront house that we would have never been able to afford before. The student loan payments are due now, holy cow, this degree was expensive, I can't quit my job to work in a doctor's office for less pay, I won't be able to afford my student loan payments. I think I might be able to work in the NICU for longer than a year.

August - My Primary Went Home, I Cried Tears of Joy and Sadness.

Words can't express the joy of being a part of nursing a tiny, sick baby to health and sending them home to a happy life. Sadness because I have fallen in love and will selfishly miss that smiling face loving me back every time I work. There is a day shift position opening up, I think I may put in for it, I still can't sleep soundly during the day, getting 4-5 hours of sleep a day isn't working for me.

I scour allnurses.com for day versus night shift threads to help make the decision.

I love the extra money of nights and I LOVE my coworkers. The people I work with on nights have taught me so much, I will carry some of the lessons with me forever.

I start questioning myself, am I a strong enough nurse to deal with the hustle and bustle of days, can I emotionally deal with the drama of days? I talk to my nurse manager and decide to go for it, if days doesn't work out she said I can go back to nights. I just realized that I am 3/4 of the way through my 1-year commitment to this job.

September - Dayshift

What was I thinking! ... families, doctors, rounds, families, social work, nutrition, families, students, LESS MONEY ahhh!

One of the June grads had a baby self extubate, she was paler than the baby, I jumped into action and helped her out. After it was over she thanked me and told me that she isn't sure this is for her, too much responsibility, would she ever know how to handle a crisis.

I told her to relax, she was being too hard on herself (I can't believe that I actually told someone that, me THE queen of being too hard on myself). I am dealing with the hustle and bustle of day shift just fine. *(continue)*

When I do get behind, my dayshift coworkers are always willing to lend a hand to get me back where I need to be. I LOVE my coworkers.

Sometimes I am all caught up and I have the opportunity to help someone else get caught up. This time management stuff is starting to click.

October - Day Shift is Smoothing Out

I am adjusting and things don't seem so bad anymore. I think I was getting depressed from lack of sleep on my night shift stint. I like most of the families and there is a rhythm to the business of the day. I don't have that dread feeling when I go to work anymore.

November - I Like My Job

I don't know what has happened to me or when it happened, but I like my job. I like the challenge and I like taking care of the sickest babies. I sometimes leave work worrying that I forgot to do or chart something and I fear getting a nastygram in email over it. I decide that I am a big girl and if I get a nastygram, so be it, it will only improve my practice.

December - I Feel Confident Some Days

I still suck at starting IV's, but I am an expert at developmentally appropriate positioning. I still get little inklings of worry that I forgot something at work but I have made the decision that I am not going to worry. I do the best I can every day and I am only human.

My primary from the summer came to see me and bring me a Christmas card, she is a chubby bundle of smiles, I wish I could kiss her fat little cheeks. I was so touched that her family made the effort to come to my job on a day I was working to be sure I could see their child. How wonderful is that? What a gift. It may have been the best Christmas gift I received this year.

Our breakroom has been transformed into a cookie and candy palace. Every surface is covered with treats brought by current and past families. It is overwhelming, both emotionally and on the waistline. It is hard to believe that this job has such an impact on people.

I guess it isn't just 'a job.'

I can't imagine leaving this magical place.

I became a nurse because I love people. There is no way I am leaving.

If I leave and go work somewhere else how will I know how all the babies are doing?

I love being a nurse.

The biggest lesson I learned this year is that being a good nurse doesn't mean you have all the answers or know how to do everything. Being a good nurse means that you care about what you are doing, are courageous enough to own your mistakes, and humble enough to ask questions when you don't know something or for help when you need it.

The ability to leap tall buildings would be a plus, I plan on working on that during my second year of nursing.

