Are You Cut Out to be an Emergency Department (ED) Nurse?

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For many nurses, the epitome of nursing is to work in the Emergency Department (ED). Witness the popularity of Nurse Jackie or the real life nurselebrity, Katie Duke, whose day-to-day antics in the ED have landed her two TV shows. Have you ever wondered if ED is a good fit for you? Read more to find out if you and ED are a good match.

ED nurses are a special breed. They are highly skilled, compassionate folk who work well as a team. They are open to experience, and agreeable. Here are some more traits common to most ED nurses.

**Game On**

ED is a noisy, fast paced environment with stimulus coming from every direction. There is no normal in the ED. It's noisy and chaotic.

ED Nurses Thrive In Chaos

Unlike their neatnik ICU sisters and brothers, ED nurses don't require a controlled, structured environment. They adapt quickly to rapidly changing conditions. They tolerate ambivalence and prefer change to structure.

**Emotional Intelligence**

ED nurses are high in emotional intelligence. They can establish a rapport with an elderly woman desperately grasping her husband's hand as he is being rushed to surgery, and seconds later, elicit a giggle from the feverish two-year old in the next room.

They can smoothly manage both the wife and girlfriend showing up at the same time situation. They can approach the busy doctor and get him/her to order the pain med they need for their patient...now.

ED nurses may cry inside, but not on the job. They’re not seen as overly emotive types. They remain calm while projecting an attentive demeanor. They have the ability to put highly anxious family members at ease while listening for the vent alarm in the next room over.

**Breadth Over Depth**

They prefer broad to deep. An ED nurse will not study H&Ps from previous encounters to delve deeply into patient history.

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They don't get bogged down in the details and are not interested in non-presenting patient complaints. They aren't there to study; they're there to stabilize.

But they are comfortable with babies to toddlers to middle-agers to seniors.

Heart rhythms are either normal, too slow or too fast. If it's too slow, speed it up. If too fast, slow it down. Done.

Treat 'em and street 'em and.... next, please!

**Fast on Their Feet**

ED nurses make instant decisions, react quickly, and think fast on their feet. Often they do this with minimal information.

Should they see the 58-year-old male clutching his chest or the 24-year-old doubling over with cramps or the 18-year-old with hand wrapped with dripping bloody gauze first?

They can sniff out sepsis and spot an impending code.

They make rapid assessments in under 30 seconds and can manage several emergent patient situations at once.

ED nurses have excellent time management skills because they RACE from pod to pod, and front to back. They efficiently discharge, admit, transfer, treat and triage in record speed.

**Adrenaline Junkies**

Self-proclaimed junkies, ED nurses love the rush they get from true emergencies; a trauma, a pulseless John Doe...and never knowing what's rolling in next!

They thrive on change, and preferably change with an element of risk or harm. ED nurses need high stimulation, charged action, and immediate results.

**Esprit d'Corps: High Fivers**

ED staff are often tight knit, team oriented, and socialize across job titles. They value their team identity and count on each other to survive. They form close ties to their work friends.

They are highly social, known for having a wicked sense of humor, and are witty and sarcastic. They are friends with the EMTs, paramedics, policemen, and prison guards.

Breakfast after your shift? They're in. Volleyball challenge from Respiratory Therapy? Accepted. Game on.
Physical/Kinesthetic

They're physical, always moving, have stamina, and cannot tolerate sitting for a shift. They can rig up practically anything and are creative at dressings.

Always ready to spring into action, they dislike paper work and routine, repetitive tasks.

Street Smart

ED nurses score high in common sense and street smarts. They are down to earth and sensible.

They are not easily conned, and they can spot maligners a mile away.

Does this sound like you? Did you read this and keep thinking, “That's me! That's so me!”

If so, you may be an ED nurse at heart. I hope this helps you find your nursing niche.