



Certified Nursing Assistants

"I'm Only a CNA"

In the years that I have been a CNA, I have caught myself on several occasions using the phrase, "I'm only a CNA". I remember once, I answered the phone at work and spoke to a doctor who was insisting I check a patient's chart for him, to which I responded, "I'm only a CNA." My supervisor heard me say those words and later took me aside. She told me I should never think of my job as lowly or petty, and she made me start to think about the worth of being a nursing assistant. While I didn't utter those words to that doctor to demean myself, I later realized that the words themselves served to nullify the importance of the job we do and I've never repeated them.

I've lost count of how many times someone has asked me what I do for a living, only to turn up their nose at my reply. I'm sure I'm not alone--several of the members of our CNA Forum have mentioned the same feelings...being ashamed of being ashamed of our jobs. Granted, the work isn't always pretty, and it's not the most glamorous occupation in the eyes of the world. But, to the people we care for every day, our job is an admirable and much appreciated one.

The next time you find yourselves in the position of being tempted to utter those words, "I'm only a CNA", stop and realize you are so much more to so many people. You have the opportunity every day to impact people's lives in a positive and much needed way. When you stop and think of it, we, as CNA's, get paid for more than simply washing people and making beds and all of the other tasks that go along with the job. We have chosen a profession that demands caring from us. We daily attend the school of patience and compassion. People may think that because becoming a CNA does not require years of school that it is a job that just anyone could do. This is not true! It takes a certain type of person to do the work of a nursing assistant. I am proud to be a CNA! Yes, I may be "only a CNA" in the eyes of some people, but to others I am much more.

I am the one, in many people's lives, who provides them with their basic human needs. What others may take for granted, washing, dressing, bathing, eating-- some people are unable to perform these tasks for themselves anymore, and they depend on me. I am the one who goes to great lengths to maintain their privacy and dignity while helping them do things that only a few years ago they were doing on their own. I am the one they rage at, venting their frustration, anger, confusion and fear. I am the one who performs care, even though doing so will certainly put me in a position of being physically and verbally abused at the hands of those I care for.

I am the one who rides out the storms of my Alzheimer's patients right alongside of them. I am the one who searches high and low throughout the building for a misplaced item that one of my patients is desperately looking for. I am the one who hears "I want to go home" from the lips of my patients sometimes several times a night, and comforts them the best way I know how.

I am the one offering hugs and smiles in a dark and lonely world, where many times, the staff becomes the only family a patient has. I become their source of love, acceptance and friendship. I am the one who tries to quell loneliness and depression in the people I care for, sometimes resorting to singing, sometimes just acting silly to coax a smile. I am the one who makes them know that someone still cares about them.

I am the one who listens when no one else listens. I listen as my patients repeat stories from their past over and over again, and offer my words of amazement or encouragement

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over their accomplishments and memories. I am the one who validates them as a person, who ensures they know they still have great worth as a human being, even though they may be physically or mentally ill and their lives have changed, I always try to offer hope where it is needed.

I am the one who comforts and holds the hand of my patient as they slowly slip away. I am the one who has been there by their side, when noone else was, so they were not alone when they left this world. I am the one who offered a prayer and words of peace, while gently stroking their head and reassuring them it was "ok to let go".

All of these things and more, that is what we are, not just myself but nursing assistants everywhere.

Hold your head high and realize, there is no greater calling than to provide compassion and love to those in need.

 Written by Rachel Giarrizzo, CNA



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