

# What Caring is All About

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When I was a child, I use to spend all my summers with my grandparents in New Jersey. My mother's dad was a family physician. During all his years in practice he had been mayor of the small town where he lived, the Police and Fire Department physician, and the head of the local hospital. When I was with him I found out what real caring was all about. He took it to extremes at times. One day while helping him in his office, I asked about three large pickle bottles of pills that he kept in his pharmacy closet. One was a bottle of small white pills, and then there was a bottle of octagon shaped pink pills and last was a bottle of brown colored almost square pills. He told me that sometimes people need help even when there is no more that you can do for them. So he explained to me that the pills were for prophylactic care. They were aspirin and he gave them to his patients who needed to know they were getting treated for their diseases whether it would actually help them physically or not. He felt it almost always helped them emotionally and they could get through the process without too much anxiety.

This is what I carried with me for all the years that I worked as a missionary starting Christian schools all over the world, and later it led me to a change in careers in my 40's to Nursing. During nursing school I did round of visits with a Hospice nurse and at that time decided that this is where I wanted to work. I knew it would take a while to get to Hospice because I needed the ability to care for the patients so experience was necessary.

While I can't apply this sentiment as my grandfather would have done, joining the Hospice team as an Admissions RN has allowed me to apply it to many families in a very practical and long reaching way. I get to spend a couple of hours with grieving family members who need someone to listen to them, to touch them on the shoulder and teach them how to care for their family member, or explain what is happening to their loved ones. You are in the process of changing their lives and meeting them at the point of their greatest need.

I have found working with Hospice to be a fulfilling and rewarding experience and there are lessons I have learned that will stay with me for a lifetime.