

How I Came to Hospice Nursing

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I've always known I would end up doing Hospice work. It's like pieces of a puzzle coming together from years of experiences, tears, frustrations and triumphs. I've wanted to be a nurse since high school. At that time I had a very single minded goal: to go to college and become a military flight nurse. With all the wisdom of a 20-year-old, I left after three years of a BSN program to marry and see the world as a military wife. Looking back as a parent, I cringe at the thought (my parents did think I was nuts!) but as the 50+ year old woman now, it was part of my journey. I saw the world, lived in cultures I couldn't have imagined and learned much along the way.

I ended up putting this into use as a therapist with a focus on trauma. I always received gifts of inspiration from my patients, their survivability under the most horrendous conditions. It became my turn to put this to use after watching the tenderness of an ICU nurse who took care of my mother as she left this world. It was high time to follow the advice that I had given to so many, that it was never too late to capture your dreams.

I entered nursing school at 45. I knew I would end up at Hospice somehow, helping families and patients face the most difficult times. After working in critical care and oncology, this choice was pulled together into one event, one special patient. The patient had been a member of a hospice group herself. I watched her coworkers come and nurture her as I had always wanted to do nursing. I had all but given up on the idea that nursing could actually still do that. God was in that room with the patient, the coworkers and family. Everything came together for the benefit of the patient transferring to Hospice.

The physician involved told me I needed to do this work. I followed my heart and things came together and I have the best job and boss in the world. My patients give me the privilege of joining them in their journey home. The intimacy and the honor they give me are so much more than I could have ever imagined. It makes me think of the last line of my favorite poem "High Flight" that says it all for me. "I put out my hand and touch the face of God."