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# An Interview with Sarah About Her Daily Life, Job, and Ambitions

## Giving It Her Best Shot

As I clear my workstation, I receive a Skype notification from my best friend, Sarah Johnson. When asked to interview someone who does something “significant”, Sarah’s medical career instantly jumped into my mind. With a soft “bling”, Sarah and I are face to face, despite being across the country from each other. “I peeked at the questions and it’s super scary... and then I wanted to cancel because I can’t answer them myself,” we laugh as Sarah explains that she has never truly spoken about her nursing experience in this context before. Though we’ve known each other for 20 years, the conversation that ensued gave me new outlooks and insights to Sarah’s job, daily life and ambitions.

Sarah knew from a young age that she wanted to get into the nursing field. She had a strong desire to cure people and become a first responder in the event of an emergency. Aside from her own motivations, she often observed her mother’s work as an in-home nurse. “When my mom became a nurse, people acted like she was super smart and would always tell her these things that I thought were so cool to know.” Sarah states that people would share “personal, private things; like needing testosterone shots for impotency or the texture of their bowel movements.” Sarah recalls a time when her older brother nearly cut off his leg and her mother took control, “I remember just wanting to be that calm and collected.” Attending nursing school gave Sarah a new found sense of confidence and purpose. She started to feel the certainty that she observed in her mother as a child. Sarah continues to emulate behaviors from her mother, who now works as a hospice nurse.

Sarah feels very fulfilled in her role, but there have been many unexpected things that she has learned. “I’m sure there were moments when I was like, ‘oh, that’s a fun tidbit!’ but I didn’t make an official note of it.” Since Sarah has worked in emergency environments, she has witnessed a wide range of illnesses and injuries. At the same time, what she finds most surprising is how, “frequent and uninteresting it is when you see naked people. You look at it like a piece of paper; it doesn’t even register as a naked body anymore. It’s like you’re just sorting out your taxes,” she says with a chuckle. This viewpoint is comforting for those of us who have ever needed medical care. Sarah is also frequently stunned by how fragile the human body is. From, “a body producing melanoma instead of melanin” to “a small food allergy, a histamine reaction that leads to cancer,” she has learned to appreciate the preciousness of our anatomy.

Sarah has developed a great understanding of life and loss over the years. “The one that literally changed the way I practiced would be this 85 pound man who had been physically abused and neglected by his son,” she remembers his pain and the sadness in his eyes. Sarah mentions that sometimes nurses might have a tendency to look at patients like a task instead of a human being. With this elderly man, Sarah truly saw him for the person he was and the strife he had faced, “I’ve seen a lot of cases of abuse, but this was the kind that they show in movies. It really screwed me up.” She made a point to spend extra time with the man, even rubbing his shoulder and speaking in comforting tones. When the man eventually passed, Sarah felt a great

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sense of happiness knowing that she helped make his last moments pleasant and joyful.

Though Sarah is able to remain stable, some days at the hospital are incredibly trying for her. For instance, she recounts a particular patient who led to a stressful day, “She kept asking me for sips of water and, every time she asked, she would then take the water and spit it at my leg. Every single time.” It wasn’t the patient that was upsetting for Sarah, rather, a coworker who came in the following morning. “The nurse, who I had been friends with, walked immediately to my supervisor and reported me for patient neglect and abuse.” During this time, Sarah did her best to exhibit the calmness and patience that she often witnessed (and continues to witness) in her mother’s nursing style. Out of everything Sarah has ever had to endure, being doubted by fellow medical workers is what she finds the most difficult to cope with. “It’s not the bad treatment that you get from patients or families, it’s when somebody around you then loses confidence when you need support.... it really messes with your head.”

Sarah has had the benefit of experiencing both government funded and private hospital situations. “Federally run based systems are the slickest by far. What we do for veterans should be done for every single person in this country.” In a federally funded hospital, resources for patients (such as band-aids, blankets, etc) are readily available. However, when working for a profit based hospital, the items must be immediately scanned and billed to the patient. Due to this discrepancy, Sarah believes less people are willing to get the treatment they need. “An ambulance ride is at least a couple grand, so people in emergency situations will get into their car and die on the way to the hospital,” Sarah thinks this is a huge downside to our current healthcare system. On top of that, she believes that people could be treated faster if nurses were allowed to make more decisions without the help of a doctor. Sarah reiterates, “When someone codes, it is always easier when the nurse is able to make life saving choices without waiting for permission from the doctor.” After working with both healthcare methods, Sarah thinks that our medical care would be more efficient if it was similar to Canada’s. “Every person on this Earth deserves universal healthcare, not just whoever can afford it.”

At the end of the day, Sarah doesn’t see herself as remarkable or extraordinary. She finds her work rewarding and exciting. In fact, when asked what she would do if she could be nursing anywhere, she replied, “I’d be doing what I’m doing now.” Though she may not realize it, Sarah has touched the lives of many people in need. Just as she wished in her youth, Sarah has come to encompass all of the positive things that she saw in her mother’s persona and nursing career. As our Skype call ends, I am left in awe at the astounding human I have had the pleasure of knowing for the last couple of decades. In all aspects, I am proud to know Sarah Johnson.