



Introduction

I didn't really want to be a nurse. In fact, I used to curse my mother for pushing me into the accelerated nursing program. I hated the courses and struggled through Chemistry, Pathophysiology and Pharmacology.

While I didn't exactly know '*what I wanted to be when I grew up*', the four women who stood in the living room of my senior year college apartment sure filled in the blanks for me. Even though I despised hospitals and felt totally uncomfortable around sick people, my mother, two new roommates and one of their moms (a nursing instructor at my university) planned my entire life for me that hot and humid move-in day.

"*Well, what does Elizabeth want to do when she finishes college?*" Celeste's mom asked me (or was it that she asked my mom?).

"*She doesn't know yet,*" my mother answered in quick exasperation before I could even offer my ideas of graduate school for a master's degree in psychology.

"*I've got an idea! She could do the accelerated nursing program. She already has most of her credits and there are just a few requirements she'd have to catch up on. If she is so far ahead right now* (which I was since I had taken so many advanced courses in high school and summer classes at college every year) *she could just jump right in and be done in no time.*"

"*And she could be a psychiatric nurse. Since she's going to have a psych degree, then that's the type of nurse she will be,*" my other roommate chimed in.

For the next 15 minutes or so (what felt like a painful eternity to me), the four of them discussed exactly how I would get it done. My roommates, both of whom were on target to graduate that May from the traditional nursing program, were extremely helpful in designing the rest of my life for me.

Well there you have it- how I became a nurse.

My story might be viewed as the exception to the rule since I've heard that so many nurses have felt 'called' into our profession. My recent work has led me to survey hundreds of nurses over the course of several entrepreneurial activities. As recently as last summer I asked dozens of nurses the question: "*Why is it that you became a nurse?*"



"I got really sick when I was in grammar school and I'll never forget the nurse who took care of me. I knew from that day on I wanted to be just like her."

"I hurt myself at summer camp and this beautiful angel came to my rescue. I now realize she was a nurse and I knew I wanted to help other people, just as she helped me."

There were so many other responses, similar to those above. From having a sick family member and watching the compassionate nurse ease their pain, to the honor that comes with having nearly every relative they can remember work as a nurse and just knowing that nursing was the professional course they too, would take. Nurses often answer a 'calling'; knowing from a very early age that this is what they're meant to do.

So then why is nursing in such turmoil? How come we have an army of caregivers who struggle to care for themselves? Why do so many nurses, good nurses- no, *great* nurses- want to leave the bedside? What is it about nursing that makes it so challenging?

This book is very simple; some may find it so simple that in fact, it becomes a challenge. Over the course of the pages that follow, I plan to outline for you the problems faced by today's nurse, offer a straightforward solution to our challenges and share with you proven and effective strategies for creating epic shifts.

I am really excited to help you, your colleagues and our profession as a whole. I believe in nursing and what we do. While I may not have gone into nursing knowing I wanted to be a nurse, the nurse inside of me has come out in a really big way.