VALEDICTORIAN SPEECH

FOR

NATASHA TADURAN

I recently read a quote that said, “Nursing school is a lot like giving birth. Once it’s over you forget just how **painful** it really was.” … And then someone goes and invents even more course work and more advanced degrees!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Hello fellow graduates, teachers, family, friends, and distinguished guests. My name is Natasha Taduran and in spite of my attempt at humor… and I warn you, there **might** be more… I truly am thrilled to have the great honor on this occasion to speak before all of you. I would like to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for all of their hard work and support in seeing to it that this, the first ever graduating class of the RN-BSN program of PBISN has addressed and fulfilled its academic commitments.

I have wanted to be a nurse for most of my life and for those of you that may not know, this is not my first time at the “triage tent at the rodeo”… if you know what I mean… (**Wait for the laugh**) I graduated from this school with my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ degree in the class of 2007. Although it may seem that I am a glutton for academic punishment, I assure you that’s not the case. I saw a void and I found the means to fill it. It’s no secret that in this modern and increasingly technologically advanced culture that things are moving very quickly. Prior standards of education and knowledge no longer serve the modern medical professional as they once did and due to the demand for more highly trained and skilled nurses, this school had the vision to offer a more advanced degree- something that makes me proud to be a part of this school’s alumni… twice… and part of its academic advancement. I’m honored to be a member of the very first graduating class of the RN-BSN program. Believe me, graduates; I know how it feels to be sitting where you are right now. I am sure you’ve all heard clever lines about our profession like “being a nurse takes **PATIENTS**,” or “You can’t fix stupid but you **CAN** sedate it.” (**Wait for the laugh**)… The jokes don’t change but thankfully are skills and knowledge get more refined. So in spite of the somewhat “vintage” jokes, trust me, this is **YOUR** world now, so get ready to meet your public!

At this point I have been an Oncology or Cancer nurse for nearly nine years and my current perspective of nursing has greatly changed from when I first attended nursing school and then began my actual career to now. In the grand scheme of professional longevity, nine years would still be considered as the early years of a career, but in the fields of nursing and medicine, the work is so intense that the exposure to all manner of situations and crises adds up quickly. Looking back at those precious nine years, I’ve reviewed my experiences and I’ve come to the conclusion that I would like to have been given some valuable advice when I first graduated. Of course when we’re younger and less experienced, we tend to disregard practical advice so I hope you will listen to what I have to say. Please do your best to absorb the message while synthesizing the meaning. I know this is such a momentous occasion and festivities are probably waiting for me to end my speech so you can go celebrate, and while I’d like to dwell on your achievements and reiterate how great this moment is for everybody in this room, the truth is that instead I’d love to share some thoughts and observations with the new graduates with the intent that my insights serve as a constructive guide on the points they need to keep in mind when they are finally out in the **real world**, as it is known to so many.

First of all, never stop learning… and that holds true in life and in the world of medicine. You don’t know it all and no one ever will. The very nature of life involves a process of perpetual education. The healthcare field is changing rapidly and you owe it to yourself and to your patients and professional colleagues to be vigilant about keeping yourselves educated and armed with knowledge and competence in order to excel at your craft. This holds true especially when it comes to being precepted by a seasoned nurse, and whether it is when you first start your nursing career, or when you have some experience, **ALWAYS** pay attention, **LISTEN,** take notes, focus, and do your very best to absorb the lesson. If you are wise, remember that you will learn from **everyone** around you. Pay attention and you will see the intended takeaway. And if you’re smart you will find value in every single exchange. Whether it’s with a patient or a colleague, the opportunity of gaining valuable experience is always present. It’s up to **you** to find that value even in the most mundane interaction. It is also okay … in fact it is admirable, to want a good foundation and a great mentor. Those of us truly immersed in the nursing profession will find catalysts for growth… and sometimes they will come whether we like it or not. Be prepared to say **YES**. Nursing school provided a foundation. It is up to you to build a professional career on that foundation. Those first few weeks of training will shape your life’s work immensely and nothing is more devastating than to have to learn from a nurse who doesn’t want to do it at all. As an up and coming nurse it is your mandate to invite more work and to reveal yourself and your earnest intention to be the best at your profession. Now is the time to build your “portfolio” of practical knowledge and experience. There is no job or task that should be refused, in fact, and in spite of the legendary workload we nurses endure, I invite you to get in the habit of doing more than is expected of you. Think of the patients and keep the goal in mind. Remember empathy and always consider how you would want to be treated if the tables might be turned and you were the patient in need of professional and compassionate care.

Second, you are well and ready to take your place in the world of medicine. As much as the whole healthcare field is overwhelming and there’s only so much you can learn within two years in nursing school about your field, what’s expected of you, and the fine points and details needed in administering to patients, know that you are well equipped with the necessary knowledge given by PBISN. I must tell you, when I graduated with my Associate’s Degree, I wasn’t what you might have considered to be at the top of my class. There were times when I cried to my best friend, Rey, because I nearly failed my OB-GYN class and he, a man, knew more about birth and the female genitalia than I did at the time. But regardless of my performance then, the comparison from when I started my career to the present, and looking back at it now and having precepted student nurses from other Nursing Schools, I can tell you without any bias, that you have received an excellent foundation, have been properly trained and given the necessary tools to be the best nurse you can possibly be. The rest is up to you. (**Do you want to make a little joke about Rey and his expertise? You can say…)** … And as for Rey, he continues his study of the female reproductive system…. and let’s just leave it at that (**And wait for the laugh**)

Third, take care of yourselves **first.** As much as our careers allow us to be selfless caregivers, please don’t forget to take time to eat your lunch, drink your coffee, hydrate, and… of course **pee**. Soon you will see how elated your colleagues on the nursing staff become when a patient successfully voids… be even happier when it’s **you**… (**And wait for the laugh**) Please, for goodness sakes, don’t wait until your bladders start throbbing. Other than that, make time to pamper yourselves. You have every right to do so. You take care of sick people all day, it’s good to have days when you can focus on **you**, take mental health days when you can, do whatever it is that you have to do to take good care of yourselves first. It gets increasingly difficult to care for others if you haven’t replenished your own resources. The nursing profession is demanding but many have gone before you and have succeeded. You can do it, and you can do it well. Once again it is up to you and the degree to which you own your responsibilities and “portfolio of knowledge.”

Fourth, appreciate the efforts of everybody with whom you work. The patient’s care is not just made up of nurses and doctors. Acknowledge the unit secretaries, the CNAs, PCAs, social workers, housekeepers, food and nutrition staff, etc. You are part of big team dedicated to making the patient’s stay tolerable and healing, and whether the work involves an inpatient or outpatient setting, every interaction and exchange must be as bearable and as positive as possible. A thank you goes a long way and trust me, the more you do it, the more others will be willing to help you when days get really rough. And you’ll need the help more days than not.

Lastly, I feel compelled to tell you that this career is going to be difficult and demanding. You will never be bored. You may, however, be frustrated and you **will be** surrounded by challenges. You will have mountains of stuff to do and the hours given more often than not will be insufficient to get the job done. You are handed such a great responsibility and it is expected that you will be given very little authority. You will touch people’s lives and trust me; you will make a difference every day you work. Some will be very grateful and some will curse you out. But understand that people will be at their worst and they are at their most vulnerable especially when they’re sick. You are literally their lifeline. And you will endure tough times with them and with any luck and skill; you will also see them at their best. If you’re truly blessed and really observant, you will have a profound sense of your impact on those that really need you. Be prepared to be amazed by a person’s capacity for love, strength, and resilience through adversity. … And I’m talking about **YOU** here… You will experience resounding triumphs and devastating failures. You will cry and you will laugh. You will know what it is to be human and you will learn what it takes to be **humane**. But most importantly, know that you will have one of the most rewarding jobs in the world. The next time that someone approaches you and asks you why you became a nurse as opposed to another profession that’s perhaps a little less physically, emotionally, and intellectually draining, I hope you will react as I do… I say to them, why **NOT** a nurse? Thank you all and I wish all of you the best of luck in your new profession!