It is such a great honor to have this opportunity to speak in front of all of you. For those who don’t know me, my name is Natasha Taduran. I graduated in PBISN class of 2007 and I’m honored to be a part of the very first graduating class of the RN-BSN program. I have been an Oncology or Cancer nurse for nearly 9 years now and my perspective of nursing when I last graduated to now has greatly changed.

Looking back at those precious 9 years, I’ve come to the conclusion, that I would like to have been given these points when I first graduated. I know, this is such a momentous occasion. And while I’d like to dwell on how great this moment is for everybody in this room, I’d love to prepare the new graduates more than anything on the things they need to keep in mind when they are finally out in the real world, so they say.

First, never stop learning. The healthcare field is changing rapidly and you owe it to yourself and to your patient to keep yourself educated and armed with the knowledge and competence in your craft. This holds true when it comes to being precepted by a seasoned nurse when you first start your nursing career, it is okay to want a good foundation and a great mentor. Those first few weeks of training will shape your career immensely and nothing is more devastating than to learn from a nurse who doesn’t want to do it at all.

Second, you are well and ready. 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 nursing and about taking care of patients, know that you are well equipped with the necessary knowledge given by PBISN. I must tell you, when I graduated my Associate’s Degree, I wasn’t what you called the top of my class. There were times when I cried to my bestfriend, Rey, because I nearly failed my OB-GYN class and he, a man, knows more about birth and the female genitalia more than I did. But regardless of my performance then, when I started my career and looking back at it now and having precepted student nurses from other Nursing Schools, I can tell you without any biases, that you have been properly trained and given the necessary tools to be the best nurse you can possibly be.

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, oh and pee. 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 days, do whatever it is that you have to do to take good care of yourselves first.

Fourth, appreciate efforts of everybody where you work at. The patient’s care is not just made up of nurses and doctors. Appreciate the unit secretaries, the CNAs, PCAs, social workers, housekeepers, food and nutrition staff, etc. You are part of big team to make the patient’s stay, may it be in an inpatient or outpatient setting, as bearable as possible. A thank you goes a long way and trust me, the more you do it, the more they are willing to help you when days get really rough. And you’ll need the help most days than not.

Lastly, I feel compelled to tell you that it’s going to be difficult and challenging, this career. You will never be bored. You are mostly frustrated and you will be surrounded by challenges. You will have mountains of stuff to do and the hours given will mostly not be enough. You are handed such a great responsibility and expect 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 most vulnerable especially when they’re sick. But you will also see them at their best. You will never cease to be amazed by a person’s capacity for love, strength, and resilience through adversities. 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 to be humane. But most importantly, know that you will have one of the most rewarding jobs in the world that the next time you get asked why you became a nurse and why not something else… I say to them, why not a nurse?