

Graduate succeeds against the odds!

Australian Nursing Journal April 2012

Two years ago the NMHP was approached by a nurse experiencing a health impairment. She was highly distressed and anxious. She linked her presentation to a recent – and relatively brief – episode of workplace bullying. She was crushed when her contract was terminated 6 weeks into her graduate year. She described the experience as a ‘controlled, well orchestrated and unfair dismissal’.

This woman; matured aged, intelligent, articulate and very successful in a former professional career decided to re-train as a nurse as she had ‘a pull to the profession’. She entered nursing with great enthusiasm and expectation.

Her negative workplace experience commenced almost immediately. Her first taste of full-time, permanent nursing left her broken and almost defeated. This happened early and quickly in her new career.

Jen* shared with me her experience as a new graduate in great detail. Over ensuing months she described how she was subjected to ‘unprofessional, unkind and mean behaviour’ at the hands of colleagues who were in positions of authority and responsibility. It was her belief that ‘my face didn’t fit the organisation’.

Their responsibility was to welcome Jen into the profession. To support, assist and nurture her as her first year nursing experience evolved.

The consequences for Jen were enormous. She was shattered. She ruminated about each negative event. She blamed herself. She was convinced her career was over. She thought she’d wasted her time.

These experiences damage one’s confidence and destroy self-esteem. It impacts those close to them. Her immediate family was emotionally affected and required counseling.

Fortunately, Jen was resilient and once she had told me her story she was able to identify the positives and move forward.

She took several months to re-build her confidence and self-esteem. She was unable to find employment as a nurse for the remainder of that year, and struggled to support her family. At the end of that year Jen secured a position in another hospital and successfully achieved great results. Her commitment to the nursing profession continues today.

In her own words Jen’s message to others is, “stand up for yourself and believe in yourself. Seek legal advice and medical assistance if your health is compromised. Don’t hesitate to approach organizations such as the NMHP which provide professional guidance as well as emotional support in my case”.

Fortunately, Jen was able to ask for help and this, combined with her determination to succeed and practice as a nurse was enough to achieve success.

Unfortunately for some, this type of experience can break them. If you find yourself in this type of situation it’s essential that you ask for help. Approach the NMHP, your GP, family or friends. It doesn’t matter who, just ask!

If you are a leader in your health service consider the impact you can have over our graduate nurses. We’re all in this together! Please support each other, particularly those new to our profession.

For more information on the NMHP go to www.nmhp.org.au. For advice and guidance on matters related to nurse and midwife health call the office on (03) 9415 7551.

*Jen’s name was changed to protect her identity