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An unforgettable experience: a student nurse can make a difference.

When I made the decision to enroll in nursing school, I didn't think that as a student I would make much of an impact on the clients that I would encounter. The clinical assignments only lasted seven weeks, two days a week. I had a different client each day so how much impact can one really make. I was more focused on passing my exams, learning the concepts and applying critical thinking skills correctly and safely. Days go by that I neglect my own family and friends because I am concentrating all my strength on learning this new information.

It was the third week of my 1st clinical rotation at a nursing home. I was assigned to "Jane Doe" (name withheld for privacy), a 72-year-old female presenting with depression, seizures, a fractured tibia and edema in lower extremities. The nursing staff reported that she was a new admit from another long-term facility and was withdrawn. She seemed only interested in eating, sleeping and eliminating. My partner & I introduced ourselves and began our assessment after she finished her lunch. I was immediately struck by "Jane Doe's" distressed questions over where she was going to go after her leg healed. I recalled that therapeutic communication is helpful during the interview process using such things as open-ended questions and paraphrasing. Using those skills I was able to give "Jane Doe" permission to talk to me about things that went beyond her physical problems. I had built a trust with her. Through her tears she told me as a kid her mother's boyfriend hit her with a broom stick over her head and she suffered from seizures ever since. She believes her sister hates her and that is why she won't allow her to live in her home. I continued to ask questions about their relationship and her sister's health. Then I asked "Jane Doe" if she believed that if she had a seizure or other medical emergency and she was living in her sister's home, would her sister be able to help her. Her answer surprised me. She said, "Oh heavens no." She explained that her sister is not strong enough to help her when she has seizures. Something changed in her face; it was like she heard what she had

said. I said it sounds like your sister wants to make sure you are in a safe environment, just the opposite of hatred.

After this conversation ended, we finished our assessment. As our clinical relationship ended I felt this sense of accomplishment. The thoughts that I had prior to beginning the program about not making connections with the clients were amiss. Not only did I make a connection; I felt I actually made a difference in her life. The next week, I seen smiling “Jane Doe” again, she wasn’t in her room, she was wheeling herself down the hall to show all the nursing staff the crafts she had made.