



❧ Best of Tips ❧

By Nursing Assistants
For Nursing Assistants

CAREER NURSE ASSISTANTS' PROGRAMS, INC.
NORTON, OHIO



Best of Tips **By Nursing Assistants, For Nursing Assistants**

Credits

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INTRODUCTION

Delores Smith, nursing assistant, was a panelist at a workshop in Akron Ohio, when an administrator asked, “What does it take to be a nursing assistant?” Her response was “It takes love to pull back those covers each day.” Delores added “Love, good care and a good laugh now and then” are the special gifts which she gave her residents in her 15 years as a nursing assistant. “You never know what you will find when you pull back those sheets each morning.” This candid comment is typical of Career Nursing Assistants everywhere who approach their daily tasks with wisdom and humor and strive to make life and living easier and more comfortable for residents in their care.

Career Nursing Assistants provide consistent and compassionate care which is not always readily observed by others. These important workers are part of a rich history of care. Nursing assistants have the knowledge of what works and what doesn't in caregiving. They are bridges to the future because they use their experiences to create new ways to provide comfort and care for long-term residents.

Career Nursing Assistants have proven time and again that there is more to care than bathing and feeding. They've proven that care is about responding to how residents feel and what they fear. It's also about trust, security and helping residents find enjoyment within the confines of walls or physical limitations. It's about listening to and bonding with residents, some of whom will die soon. It's about always needing more time and more supplies. And it's about the satisfaction of knowing they did their best at the end of every day.

Career Nursing Assistants provide an unwavering commitment to their residents. The career they have chosen is the "Care of Others," and they have a lot to say about it. This booklet is dedicated to the thousands of Career Nursing Assistants who have contributed their wisdom, humor, love, and devotion to the people in their care.



❁ *Chapter 1* ❁

GUIDELINES AND TIPS ON WHAT
NURSING ASSISTANTS DO BEST—CARE!



Career Nursing Assistants are individuals who have chosen caregiving as their profession by dedicating years of service to caring for others. Because they are dedicated to caregiving positions, Career Nursing Assistants provide predictability and stability which, in turn, enhances the feelings of security for our aging, frail, or chronically challenged citizens. They bring wisdom, patience, humor, and love to the daily lives of these people. Career Nursing Assistants are also considered role models for new nursing assistants, and many are also recognized in their own families as healthcare experts.

WHAT ARE THE GIFTS OF EXPERIENCE?

Nursing assistants provide as much as 90% of the care in long-term care and have unique and very human perspectives about care practices. Since they spend so much time with residents or clients, their experience in the care setting is invaluable. What are these gifts of experience? Here is what nursing assistants say are some of their unique contributions to care and the insights they have gained from their practices.

They tell us the job is about procedures, but the real job is listening and being a friend who also gives baths.

The resident doesn't live in my world; I work in her world.

I enjoy cleaning up my resident and smoothing her bedspread so that everyone knows that a very important lady lives in this room.

I used to think I did what no one else wanted to do, but now I know that my work is a very special thing.

As a caregiver you learn you have so many emotions: patience, compassion, and most of all, love.

To be part of a healthcare team, you have to, most importantly, love all people of every race, age, nationality, and religion.

I WISH I KNEW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW.

I never knew how much my residents would become a part of my life.

I never realized that my mother would get old while I was working as a nursing assistant (32 years of service).

I wish I would have known the number of different supervisors and administrators I would have.

Residents need real friends.

Seating people shoulder to shoulder is not good for communication.

I wish I had known to start my own bladder exercises earlier!

THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF THE JOB

The most difficult part of the job is being able to meet the residents' emotional needs for intimacy, friendship, confidence and social activities.

It's not easy knowing what to say to family members and how they can help.

I'm not always sure how to help withdrawn, disoriented, anxious or low-functioning residents.

Preventing pressure sores is difficult sometimes.

You have to be extremely careful when you're lifting a non-weight-bearing resident.

It's really hard on me when I have to place a resident in restraints.

Dealing with the death of a resident is always so hard.

I've got to remember to take care of myself as well as the resident.

THE MOST REWARDING PART OF THE JOB

This job is very difficult. The way my residents can say simple words makes me smile all the time. I feel good about helping them. I have a lot of memories—good, bad, sad, and fun. Most of all, I am proud of being a nursing assistant for more than 15 years! People love me and they need me. I say “thank-you” for that.

As nursing assistants we all come across residents who take our hearts away. Residents who, by smiling or laughing, can turn a bad day into a good day.

Rewards are given, and kind words are spoken. I feel that even though my days get hectic and I'm tired by the end of them, I have given the best I can give.

Being part of a healthcare team means I am one link in a chain of many, dedicated to giving our residents the care, love and concern they have every right to expect.

TIME-SAVERS AND HOW TO GET ORGANIZED

Get a good report at the beginning of the shift. Be sure to find out anything special going on or any changes in the residents' conditions.

Mentally walk through the day and try to think

about the interruptions you can expect and plan for them.

Walk around before starting work to see if something has to be done right away.

Communicate with the other nursing assistants and arrange trade-offs for help with lifting.

Go to the new residents first to see what is needed and how to work their care into other assignments.

Use your time wisely—know when you can do three things at once and know when something needs your full attention.

Don't procrastinate; work a good two hours before you take a break.

THINGS TO DO INSTEAD OF GETTING ANGRY

Anger or resentment are common feelings because of the complexities of caregiving. Even the best nursing assistants may have periods in which they feel angry. Learning to recognize and cope with anger can help prevent hostile or aggressive behavior. Some tips from nursing assistants on handling anger include the following:

*Look in the mirror and say “I did a good job.”
First say this softly and then louder and louder
until you believe it.*

Sing loudly!

Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Call a friend.

Hug someone.

Go somewhere alone and scream.

Take deep breaths.

Take a walk.

Take a bubble bath.

*Remind yourself that you're part of a caring team
and that you do not have to be responsible for
everything; you only have to do your part the best
you can.*

*Reflect on what made you angry and why, and
how to deal with it in the future.*

Draw a cartoon about the situation.

Keep the situation in perspective.

Remember to laugh!

HOW NURSING HOMES CAN BETTER UTILIZE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CAREER NURSING ASSISTANT

We wind up taking care of the new nursing assistants. This should be a real job. I have a great pattern for teaching the new ones.

We should be interviewing potential nursing assistants because we can tell if they would be good nursing assistants.

We know how to talk to families and could really help explain how our facility cares for residents.

Career Nursing Assistants should be the ones taking care of dying residents because we have experience and can be more supportive.

We need to tell administrators what kind of supplies are best and easiest to work with. They give us those little wipes that are practically useless.

RESIDENTS' FEARS

Nursing assistants are constantly called upon to modify their own approaches to meet the special needs of residents. Residents have lost many of the things that provided security in their lives. The nursing assistant who can recognize and respond to these needs can help the resident feel more secure and have a greater sense of well-being. Some of the fears

of residents include the following:

Roommate dying and being unable to help or get help

Dying alone

Unexplained pain

Feeling afraid to speak out concerning poor care because of possible retaliation

Being dropped while being lifted

Being physically exposed and unable to do anything about it

Being humiliated by caregivers

Being abandoned by family or caregiver

The tub room

Other residents who wander, yell or are hostile

Having money or valuables stolen

Tornado or fire drills

Having to go to the bathroom and not being able to find it

Unfamiliar or abrupt caregivers

HELPING RESIDENTS FEEL MORE SECURE

Some of the ways nursing assistants say they

help residents to feel more secure include the following:

Always telling them your name and calling them by their name

Looking at them directly when you are talking

Taking every opportunity to smile or connect with them

Never yelling or startling a person

Giving them time to answer before going into their room

Trying to keep them dry and comfortable

Listening to and responding to their special needs

Paying attention to the little things

Letting them know when you will return, and making sure you do

Treating them with utmost dignity and respect

Showing them that they are still in the hands of people who truly care. For some residents, nursing assistants are the only family they have. This is an opportunity to show them how loved they are.

HELPING RESIDENTS MAKE FRIENDS

Friendships have been described by *Psychology*

Today as “The convoy that escorts us through the troubled waters of time.” Many residents have outlived friends or are unable to contact them because of hearing or other losses. Helping residents to make new friends is good not only for the resident, but for the nursing assistant as well. Some tips from nursing assistants about how to help residents make new friends include the following:

Get them out to activities or the day room as much as possible. Seat residents so that they can talk with one another.

I always call everyone by name and make sure that everyone knows each other's names.

Put pictures on doors with residents' names and one special thing about them like a hobby or where they came from.

List birthdays on a bulletin board with favorite foods or hobbies. Have birthday buddies for the same months.

You can make meal times fun for everyone by discussing favorite things.

We try to match residents who have similar interests.