



**Emma
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What does your job entail?

As an emergency nurse I see a variety of patients when they are at their most vulnerable, providing treatments, personal care, and emotional support to both the patient and their families. Being a nurse is challenging - prioritising workloads, dealing with fast pace and emergency situations all whilst remaining calm. It is a very rewarding job, helping people through some of the hardest times of their lives.

How did you get into this line of work?

Since leaving school I have always worked in care of some sort. I have always enjoyed talking to people and helping out when I can. As a healthcare assistant I observed the nurses and medical staff and undertook tasks delegated to me. I yearned to gain further knowledge and skills to understand the complex health issues and treatments.

Outline your career to date

When I left school, I worked in a children's day nursery. Following this I did some agency care work in nursing homes before taking up a post in Trauma and Orthopaedics in a hospital as a healthcare assistant. I then joined the team at Antrim Emergency Department as a healthcare assistant where I then went on to study Adult Nursing through the Open University.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

When I left school at 16, I didn't have many GCSE's. I attended night college when working at the children's nursery to bring my GCSE English up to a 'C' and undertook an NVQ level 2 in childcare and education. I also fell pregnant at the age of 16.

I then went on to study an access to nursing course which was an HNC in Healthcare. Whilst I enjoyed this course, I didn't feel like being a Registered Nurse was for me at this point as I really enjoyed the auxiliary care I was doing and my focus was on raising my son.

As my son got older and I started working in the Emergency Department I began to look into studying nursing again. When he started secondary school, I undertook Open University modules that enabled me to apply to complete my nursing. My nursing degree was fully funded by the Northern Trust, and I continued to work as a healthcare assistant, keeping my salary while studying the four year undergraduate nursing course which was solely online. It was challenging and took a lot of self-discipline to complete my studies, but it was a fantastic opportunity. To be able to complete my degree while working and earning a salary is the only way I would have been able to achieve my goal of studying a degree and becoming a registered nurse. With a child to raise and a mortgage to pay, attending a "brick university" and leaving my job simply wasn't an option.

Despite leaving school with few GCSE's, I finished my degree with a First Class Honours.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

First and foremost, to be a nurse you need to care. Care about your patients, care for them with compassion. Support them through the difficult times by communicating well and providing reassurance. Taking the extra few minutes to ask how they are and listen to them. If you have a kind, friendly and caring attitude it makes you an approachable person and serves as great qualities of a nurse.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." – Maya Angelou

This was not advice I received, but it was my opening line on my personal statement when applying to study nursing and it's a line that I stand by everyday as nurse. I don't do my job to be thanked or to be remembered. It's about making the worst days of people's lives that little bit easier by providing care, treatment, time, reassurance and support.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

At the age of 19 I moved to Scotland with my son who was two at the time. We lived there for five years before moving back home to Northern Ireland.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

Ryan, my son. No matter how difficult things got, as he grew up, he was always by my side. He reminded me that no matter what, we had each other. Things don't need to be fancy or expensive or extravagant. Take time to enjoy the little things in life and always remember that family is all you need to get through.

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

Getting pregnant at 16 is not the end of the world, it does not mean you cannot pursue your chosen career. It is hard, and it may take a bit longer, but you can do it. And the best bit is you have a child who grows up to be the best thing that's ever happened to you and drives you to be the best version of yourself.