

From Finding My Place to Helping Others Find Theirs: My Journey in Nursing

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Where It All Started

When I first began my journey in nursing in India, I could never have predicted where the profession would eventually take me. I knew that I wanted to work in healthcare and make a meaningful difference in people's lives, but at that stage my ambitions were simpler. I wanted to become a good nurse, build a career and make my family proud. I certainly didn't imagine that one day I would be



working as a Registered Mental Health Nurse in the United Kingdom, contributing to the NHS, speaking with future nurses and becoming involved in professional advocacy and the development of others.

The journey between those two points has taught me something important. Sometimes we begin our careers looking for opportunities, guidance and reassurance, and somewhere along the way we become the people offering those things to somebody else.

Various Requirements

My nursing journey began in India, where I completed my nursing education before deciding to pursue registration and a career in the UK. Anyone who has travelled the international nursing pathway will understand that the story is much bigger than simply getting on an aeroplane and starting a new job. There are examinations, registration requirements, documentation, applications, uncertainty and waiting. There is excitement, but also anxiety. You leave behind people you love and a culture that is familiar while trying to establish yourself somewhere completely new.

Leap of Faith

There are moments when you wonder whether everything you are working towards will come together. For me, it did. Becoming registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council and beginning my career within the NHS was an incredibly important milestone. But registration was not the end of the journey. In many ways, it was the beginning of another one.

Mental health nursing continues to challenge me, teach me and change the way I understand people. It requires much more than clinical knowledge. It requires patience, communication and the ability to listen not only to what somebody is saying, but sometimes to what they are unable to say.

You meet people during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. Sometimes there is no quick solution you can offer. Your role may simply be to remain present, maintain safety, listen without judgement and remind somebody through your actions that their life and dignity still

matter. Working in mental health has therefore taught me as much about humanity as it has about healthcare.

Continuous Professional Development

Moving from India to the UK healthcare system also required adaptation. Different systems have different expectations, policies, professional cultures and ways of working. As an internationally educated nurse, there can sometimes be an additional pressure to prove yourself.

You may be clinically experienced and still find yourself learning how an entirely different healthcare system operates. I eventually realised that asking questions does not demonstrate weakness. Learning does not end when your registration is approved, and being a good nurse does not mean pretending to know everything. That lesson has stayed with me.

When I was starting my own journey, I was often the person seeking advice. I looked towards people who had already navigated registration, employment and professional life in the UK. Their experiences made unfamiliar territory feel possible.

Nurse Educator Background

Today, I increasingly find myself on the other side of that conversation. In truth, that part of me began developing even before I came to the UK. While working as a nurse educator in India, I was the coordinator for a postgraduate nursing student pursuing a Master's degree in Mental Health Nursing. At one stage in their journey, they were struggling and beginning to question whether they could continue towards the qualification they had worked so hard for.

I remember encouraging them not to allow the difficulty of that particular moment to make them give up on the larger dream. I tried to help them recognise that completing their Master's degree was achievable and that they were capable of getting there, even when they were struggling to see that possibility for themselves.

Lessons Learnt

At the time, I probably thought of it simply as part of my responsibility as an educator and coordinator. Looking back now, I realise that the experience represented something much more important about the kind of nurse I wanted to become. Nursing, for me, has never been only about what I can achieve personally. There is something incredibly meaningful about helping another person recognise what they are capable of.

Perhaps that student taught me something too; sometimes leadership is simply believing in somebody until they are able to believe in themselves again. Years later, I find myself continuing that same principle in different ways. I have had opportunities to support other nurses, speak with nursing students and healthcare professionals, contribute to conversations around professional development and share what I have learned through my own journey.

It is especially meaningful to me that the student was pursuing Mental Health Nursing — the same field that would later become such an important part of my own professional identity. Being invited to speak to students and professionals today is something I never take for granted. I never want somebody listening to me to think that I am speaking because I have everything figured out. I do not. I speak because I remember what it feels like to be the person with questions.

I remember uncertainty

I remember looking at people further ahead in their careers and wondering whether I could ever reach the same place. That is why supporting the development of others matters to me. Sometimes one conversation can give somebody confidence. Sometimes explaining something that feels ordinary to you can completely change another person's understanding of what is possible for them.

And sometimes people simply need somebody to tell them: keep going. My career has also taught me that nursing leadership is not confined to job titles. Leadership can be advocating for somebody who feels unheard, supporting a colleague who is struggling, sharing knowledge rather than guarding it, encouraging a student who doubts themselves, or using your own experience to make somebody else's path slightly easier.

Of course, healthcare is not an easy profession. There are exhausting shifts, emotionally difficult situations and days when circumstances test both your confidence and resilience. One of the biggest lessons I have learned is that healthcare professionals are human beings before they are professionals.

We spend so much of our working lives caring for others that it can become easy to forget that we also need support, encouragement, kindness and space to grow.

Resilience, to me, does not mean never struggling. It means continuing to learn from what challenges you. It means accepting that one difficult chapter does not define an entire career. It means remembering why you entered the profession while allowing your reasons for staying in it to

evolve. My reasons certainly have. When I started nursing, success might have meant qualifying and finding a good job. Later, success meant becoming registered in another country and establishing myself within the NHS.

What Nursing Means to Me.

Today, success means something broader: becoming a better mental health nurse, continuing to develop professionally, contributing to conversations that improve nursing and using whatever platform I have to encourage others, particularly those at the beginning of a journey that feels overwhelming.

It also means never becoming so comfortable that I stop asking what more I can learn or contribute. Esther from Healthcare Professionals Matter Too asked me, “Is this the end of your journey?” The answer came very easily. No. Not even close.

I am grateful for how far nursing has already taken me, from my education in India to practising as a Registered Mental Health Nurse in the United Kingdom and having opportunities to engage with healthcare professionals and future nurses. But there are still things I want to learn, people I hope to help and parts of myself as a nurse that I have not discovered yet. Perhaps that is one of the most beautiful things about this profession: we spend our careers helping people through change, while nursing is constantly changing us too.

So, to any healthcare professional reading this who is currently waiting for an opportunity, struggling through a difficult stage, adjusting to a new country or healthcare system, questioning whether they belong, or

wondering whether their efforts will eventually lead somewhere meaningful, I would say this: Do not judge your entire journey by the chapter you are currently living. Keep learning. Ask for help when you need it. Accept that your path may not look exactly like somebody else's. Remember where you started, but do not allow it to limit where you can go.

One day, you may look around and realise that you have become the person you once needed. I am still becoming that person myself. And my journey is far from over.