

## The Life of an ER Nurse

Grades 5-6

Beep, Beep, Beep. The alarm goes off. She climbs out of bed and into the shower. It's 1500hours, or 3:00p.m. She works the nightshift, so this is her morning. Her eyes look tired and her movements are slow. That doesn't stop her though. She cooks us dinner and makes time to do some crafts with me before she returns to work. She puts on her navy blue scrubs and her nurse's cap to cover her long blonde hair. She kisses us goodbye and says "I love you, I'll see you in the morning" as she does every evening before leaving. She is an ER nurse. She is my mom.

She pulls into the parking lot at work and puts on her simple face mask before walking into the hospital. The sign on the door now reads that no one is permitted inside the hospital without a mask covering their face. It's 1830hours, 6:30p.m, she swipes her badge to clock in. As she walks through her emergency department to her locker, she is seeing every stretcher occupied with patients and some even in the hallways waiting for beds. She glances up at the isolation signs on many of the doors. Covid precautions, another covid precaution, and several more covid precautions signs hang on the doors. Her heart sinks in her chest a little. She's worried for her patients. She's sad for their families. She's nervous that she might bring the virus home to us. She's an ER nurse. She is my mom.

Back at her locker, she grabs her bag full of supplies. In her bag is a N95 mask, goggles, and a face shield. She places on her personal protective equipment, also known as her PPE, and out into the department she goes. She is ready for whatever the next 12.5 hours may throw at her. She's ready to fight for complete strangers. She's ready to fight for you and me. She's an ER nurse. She is my mom.

Next, it is time for her to receive report on her patients. Her dayshift coworkers start to list each patient, their complaints, their test results, and their plan of care. She quickly ranks the patients in her mind, sickest at the top. This helps her plan her next move, who she will need to see first and who will require the most support. Many of her patients today are covid positive or probable covid positive. She tries to cluster the care of those patients in an attempt to prevent unnecessarily using the scarce PPE that is available. She quickly starts going to each room, one by one, carefully placing on the required PPE and also carefully taking it off as to not have a break in her PPE and possibly expose herself. She is an ER nurse. She is my mom.

She talks loudly so that her patients can hear and understand her through her thick N95 mask and her face shield. Behind her mask, she still smiles at them in hopes that they can see the smile through her eyes. She provides them with not only the medical support that they need, but the emotional support as well. Due to the covid restrictions, many patients can't have any of their family at the bedside. She tries to comfort them with her touch, through her gloved hand, because she knows that a nurse's touch may be the only touch they feel in the coming weeks. She's an ER nurse. She is my mom.

She assesses their vital signs. She checks their mental status. She listens to their lungs, their heart, their abdomen. She's carefully looking for any abnormality or anything that may cause the patient to decline. She places them on the cardiac monitor. She inserts intravenous lines into their arms. She draws their blood to be sent to the lab. She hangs their intravenous fluids. She administers the medications that are needed. She continues to monitor them, watching and hoping for even the slightest improvement. She is an ER nurse. She is my mom.

It's almost 1900hrs, or 7:00a.m. It's nearing the end of her shift. A weight is lifted off of her shoulders. This shift was better than most of her other shifts. There were no cardiac arrests. No

ones heart has stopped. No one has stopped breathing. In the life of a nurse, this is a good shift. She gives report to the dayshift nurses as they come onto the unit. She removes all of her personal protective equipment, changes into clean clothes, clocks out, and jumps in her car to head home. She walks in the door, gives me a huge hug, then drives me to school. She is an ER nurse. She is my mom.