



# A call to stand up to NURSE BULLYING.

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*The following is a guest post from a nurse that for obvious reasons wishes to remain anonymous. Let us call her Nurse X.*

I am a mature age new graduate just coming to the end of my new grad year.

When I entered the nursing profession, I knew I had found my fit, I may have waited until my children were nearly grown to do it but here I was, an RN and loving it.

That was until my last rotation where there are a couple of bullies.

I shouldn't complain because I was pre-warned. Warned by the wards men, the security men, the cleaners and other RN's.

Being mature and having a strong personality I was pretty sure I could cope. I can give as good as good as I get, I can hold my own and am not afraid of conflict. I was ready for these two ladies with the bad reputations. At least that is what I thought.

After only a few months I realised that the bullies are not like those at school. They are superior. Superior RN's who are there to teach me and to show me, and they sure did show me.

After months of belittling comments, humiliating teaching methods and being treated like a naughty school girl in front of patients I nearly cracked.

I didn't (and still don't) feel able to fight back in front of patients, they deserve more respect than to have RN's arguing while attending to their treatment.

I didn't realise that I would feel ashamed of my own inability to tackle these women or that I would try and hide the situation from my own family due to the embarrassment I felt around being a victim.

I didn't realise that I could come to hate my job so quickly and feel powerless and without escape from the torment of these women.

I always thought of the victims of bullying to be weak and shy individuals who could not or would not stand up for themselves. But that's not me, I am not weak, I am not shy, so why did I allow this situation to continue?

When I turned to others for help the overwhelming response to my plight was "oh well that's just her, she is like that with everyone".

No one said "that's terrible, let me help you".

No one said "let's take some time to listen to the problem and see if we can be supportive", no one said "I will speak with her for you or with you and try to improve things".

*That's just her* is the cheap excuse for allowing others to continue with their bad behaviour, an excuse that allows us to look away from a situation that is uncomfortable and do nothing.

*That's just her* says to the victim, "we can all take it, why can't you?".

The statement adds to the sense of shame that I was struggling with under the effects of these women, that I was so weak I would cry on my way home because of how they had spoken to me again and again.

At the very end of my year I have found the courage to request a facilitated conversation with one of these ladies where the NUM [Nurse Unit Manager] will be

present as well as a member from EAP [Employee Assistance Program] so I can express how she has made me feel.

My hope is that her behaviour might change for the next person who takes my spot. But I wanted to share my story to make a cry for help to all the experienced Nurses out there.

Please don't tell a new grad, a student or anyone that the way they feel is irrelevant with this statement "oh that's just her/him".

Please don't look away when a colleague is in distress.  
Please don't excuse the bad behaviour of others.

I know confrontation is hard but surely listening isn't.  
Can we replace the statement with something like "I am sorry this is happening to you" could we be braver still and stand up against the bullies?

Too much to ask?  
Don't we tell our children to do something when they are bullied?  
Let's lead by example, let's create a sisterhood of nurses who stand together against bullying.

It doesn't have to mean an ugly confrontation, it can be a kind word alerting the bully to their behaviour allowing them the opportunity to change.

If change is not possible the conversations can be noted and reported and the appropriate escalation initiated.  
Come on sisters, we can stand together can't we? As a whole load of fresh faced new grads are about to enter the workplace, can we listen to them, guide them and protect them from these terrible feelings?

Please be brave enough to take a stand, to work together to have the conversations that will create a change.



Ian Miller