

A LIFELINE

By Mah Yen Ling

Suresh Rajasekaram

Age_ 31

Occupation_ Registered Nurse at National University Hospital (NUH)

ITE Courses_ Nitec in Nursing

Year of Graduation from ITE_ 2008

College_ ITE College East



Get to know him.

From an aimless rebellious teen to a dedicated healthcare worker, Suresh turned his life around when he took the leap of faith to enrol in nursing in ITE. Suresh currently works in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in NUH, where he is faced with life and death daily.

> What were your #lifegoals while you were in ITE?

Initially, I didn't have much hope as I thought I was not cut out for studying. But I was surprised when I scored two 'B's for my exams in the first semester. This small achievement motivated me to study hard. From then on, I knew I could study if I put my heart and mind to it, so I gave my all in my studies. Subsequently, I got 'A's and continued to maintain good grades throughout my time in ITE. Yet, it was not only about academics. It felt good that I could care for and serve others, and make a difference in their lives.

> How has ITE helped you in your journey?

My ITE education prepared me well for the hospital setting. My lecturers were very strict on punctuality and maintaining good hygiene and a professional image. Being in ITE also trained my resilience. I had to wake up at 5.30 am to make it for the 8 am class. Every day, I spent three hours commuting from the west to the east, to attend school but it was worth it. I developed a strong interest in the things I was learning at ITE. With interest and hard work, I graduated among the top five per cent of my cohort. Whatever I had learnt in ITE also allowed me to perform better than my peers when I progressed to a polytechnic.

> Is there someone in ITE who inspired you?

Mr Tay Wei Sern, the current Deputy Director for Health Sciences, literally gave me a lifeline. He interviewed me before allowing me to enter ITE. He had an eye to look beyond the superficial - my coloured hair, pierced ears and half-hearted answers - into my soul. He saw the potential in me and gave me an opportunity to shine. Had I not passed that interview, I don't know what would have become of me now. I see Mr Tay as my mentor and friend. We still keep in touch. I invited him to attend all my milestones ceremonies, so he has shared many of my proud moments.

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Going to ITE is the best decision I have made! There is untapped potential in everyone, waiting to be discovered. Start believing in yourself. You can excel through strong determination and plain old hard work.”



> As the President of NUS Nursing Alumni, what do you do?

My duty is to help 12 batches of NUS Nursing Alumni re-connect through events. I organise career development talks and seminars. It is a challenge as most of them work in shifts, so it is nearly impossible to find a common time. These alumni can also be working in different functions and countries. Being a nurse doesn't necessarily mean working in a hospital. Some can be doing policy work in ministry, while others are entrepreneurs providing private healthcare services.

> Why do you like about nursing?

There is tremendous satisfaction working in this line. In ICU, it is an art to convey accurate information in layman terms to a patient and his/her family members. It is a skill which I have been honing for four years. Patient management is not for the faint-hearted. I'm someone who will not shy away from a challenge. Fear is very real in the hospital, especially in ICU. Patients don't know what to expect and are genuinely scared. The one person who can guide, support and provide correct information is the nurse. I strive to be that pillar of support for the patient and his/her true friend in that precarious moment.

> How do you motivate yourself?

I cannot believe I have come this far, without 'O' and 'A' Level certificates! Yet I still have a long way to go in nursing. Even if I meet any roadblocks, I know I can do it as I had been through tough times. I'm motivated by my ultimate goal to help raise the image and standard of nursing in Singapore. No doubt that the public image of nursing has improved compared to 10 years ago, but there are still many misconceptions among the community. Nurses don't only take orders from doctors. In fact, they can now make clinical decisions on their own.

> What are your #lifegoals now?

Since there is a shift in focus from critical care to community care now, I'm looking at opportunities to further my nursing career after completing my bond. I'm considering either to pursue a PHD abroad or be a Nurse Educator locally. You can be a good nurse, but it is another ball game to impart your skills to the next generation. I feel that nursing is an entity on its own and deserves more recognition in the public eye. In my own small ways, I would like to increase the public awareness on what nurses do.