

CHRISTY-JOY'S LESSONS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Lessons

1. Studying to be and practising as a nurse and midwife took me on a humbling journey of self-discovery, growth and community service.
2. My compassion, love, faith and humanity unconsciously led me to cross expected professional boundaries and become a friend to pregnant mothers and people living with HIV.
3. To prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission, it is safer for mothers to exclusively breastfeed for a baby's first six months when there is limited access to clean water, or fuel to boil water and sterilise bottles.
4. Compassion fatigue is when people begin losing compassion and patience for the people they are caring for, due to being exposed to so much pain and suffering.
5. I tried to carry too big a load and burnt out – my compassion fatigue helped me understand the need to care for carers and to train health care workers to handle emotionally demanding work environments.
6. I have learnt that it is okay to mix medicine with feelings, as long as you learn when to say 'no' and how to look after yourself too.
7. To sustain compassion, you have to be a little 'selfish' sometimes too – I was able to free myself when I

realised that looking after my own health was vital for my survival.

8. As nurses, doctors and counsellors, we have a responsibility to think, speak and act sensitively with those we serve, including people living with and affected by HIV.
9. Telling my story has made me vulnerable, relieved and hopeful that my story can encourage you to also share your experiences as a carer.

Questions

1. What do you think is the best way of maintaining the balance between professional boundaries and the need to interact as human beings?
2. As a nurse or counsellor, how can you better support people living with or affected by HIV?
3. How can we more appropriately train carers such as nurses to interact more humanely with patients and better manage their own emotional energy at work?
4. How can telling your story help you to make health care workers and other people more aware and attuned to life with HIV and other health challenges?
5. Think about the areas of wellness in your life and how they affect each other, for example, your emotional, spiritual and workplace wellness. Which areas of wellness help you live your life fully?