

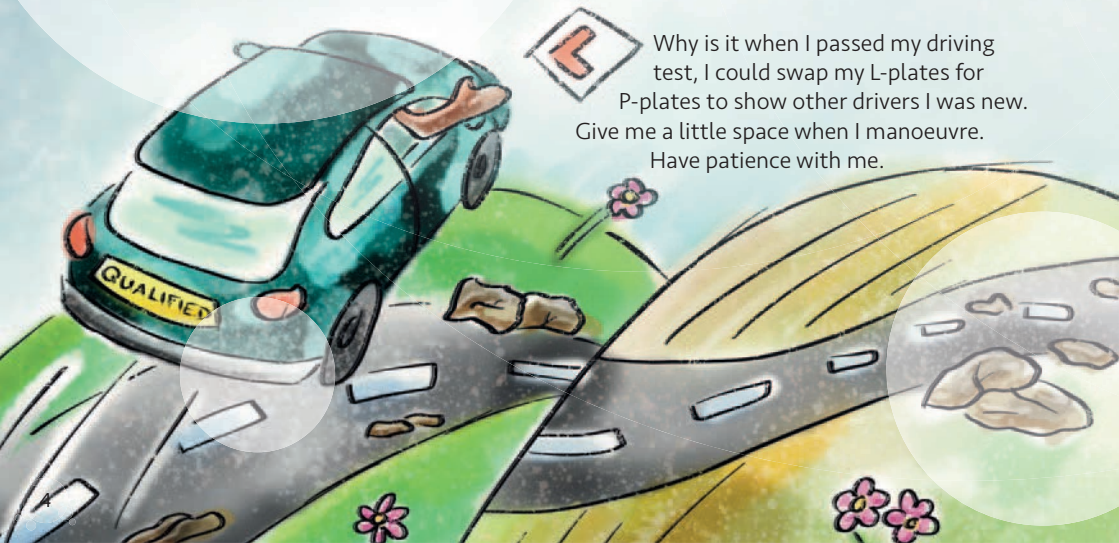
humility

# the L-plates are off!

**Bex Lawton** reminds us that, whatever our career stage, we all still need a little help

When I answered the phone I would say, 'A&E, student nurse speaking'. Which was short for, 'Accident and Emergency, I'm answering the phone because I'm closest and want to be proactive, but don't ask me anything too complicated or expect too much from me. I'm still learning!'. Was it just my imagination? Or did the person on the end of the line use a tone of voice with me like, 'Can you pass me on to your Mummy or Daddy?' when they asked to speak to a staff nurse? Well, the time for hiding behind my turquoise-blue student uniform is over. I have my PIN. And a licence to practise nursing. And I am grown-up nurse.

Why is it when I passed my driving test, I could swap my L-plates for P-plates to show other drivers I was new. Give me a little space when I manoeuvre. Have patience with me.



Show grace. But in nursing our L-plates are ripped off and we're now staff nurses. From nought to sixty in the fast lane. Where are my nursing P-plates? When I introduce myself to my patients, 'Good morning, my name's Bex. I'm your nurse for the day', I want to caveat it with 'be gentle with me, I'm new'. I wonder how long I can say 'I'm new'. Just for the first few months? Six months maybe? The first year? If I had a pound for every time I said, 'Please bear with me, I'll just confer with a colleague', I'd be the richest nurse that ever lived. Trying to give off the air of confidence and professionalism, whilst manically treading water underneath.

But then, I attune my ear to the rest of the team. Even the deputy sisters ask each other questions. Part-time staff check bleep numbers with full-time staff.

Experienced nurses check with newbies how to use the new piece of equipment and ask what the new policy is. So, I remind myself, I don't need to pretend to know everything. I'm still 'a learner' in what happens to be a whole team of learners. And although it's a vulnerable thing to say, 'I don't know' or 'I need help?', I won't be fearful of what others might think of me. I will not put unrealistic expectations on myself.

Lord, will you keep me honest and humble. Thank you for how far I've come. Keep growing me and moving me in the right direction. This is the prayer of a courageous, newly-qualified nurse. 🍀

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