



## The Language of Kindness: A Nurse's Story

Christie Watson

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Sometimes we forget what a huge privilege it is to be a nurse. Sitting with the dying, being there at the birth of a new life, helping people navigate through mental illness, disability and rehabilitation. It all gets buried in the mundanity and business of our work lives.

Then you read something like *The Language of Kindness*, and you get jolted out of the everyday and into the reality of what it means to be a part of this amazing profession.

Watson takes us through her story; stumbling into nursing almost by chance, discovering the reality of human suffering all around us, but hidden from most people's gaze. She takes us through all her training placements, her first staff jobs and on to her long-term career as a PICU nurse and beyond.

Each chapter tells stories of human tragedy and hope, littered with facts, figures and details. The minutiae of life in the A&E, the dark sense of humour of the staff room, the exhaustion of completing a third twelve-hour

shift in a row, all get laid bare. We see her care for a baby, so convulsed with brain damage from abuse that she cannot even lift her properly to change her nappy; she converses with a man recovering from depression about his hopes and aspirations; we see her sit with a dying child, and care for a woman with profound dementia; she lays bare the smells, the mess, the pain and despair, as well as the hope, joy and relief with which each day confronts nurses in every setting.

But above all, each anecdote and vignette tell the story of human kindness in the midst of suffering.

This is not a Christian book — although Watson picks up on some biblical texts. You won't agree with all she says, and her warts and all discussion of how health professionals work and relate together may be a bit much for some readers. But it moved me profoundly, reminding me of all that I loved (and hated) about being a staff nurse. If anyone asks you what it's like to be a nurse, get them to read this book before you answer. 🌸