

nursing &  
midwifery culture:  
**the good  
the bad &  
the ugly**

**Georgie Coster** looks at the  
importance of celebration  
in transforming our  
workplaces

Culture: the customs and social behaviours of a particular people. And as nurses and midwives, we certainly have our own. What first comes into your mind when you think about the hallmarks of our culture – good things or bad things? At CMF, we often talk about being *counter*-cultural and shining like lights in a dark world. That is undoubtedly important. But if we focus solely on what is bad, might we be in danger of missing the chance to celebrate an awful lot that is good? Reflect with me on our nursing and midwifery culture.

At 7 am on your first day, you don't know them from Adam. By 11.30 am, you've resuscitated a patient together, given somebody their very last bedbath together or tackled an 'I don't even know where to start' kind of code brown together. We do it together. In the hospital and primary care, teamwork is key.

However, the hard fact remains that we live in a fallen world. Long gone are the Genesis days where everything was 'very good'. Now even the 'very good' things that remain are tainted by sin. The byproducts of close teamworking can be truly ugly – gossip, cliques, bullying. Even the way we break into a team in the first place.

I've recently moved to a new clinical area with a much bigger team than I'm used to working in. *How on earth am I supposed to find my place here?* I've noticed something interesting. The moments when I most feel a sense of belonging – like I'm actually being accepted as a team member – are the moments when I moan about the things my colleagues moan about.

To be frank, I've quickly learned what sucks about this working environment and when I pass comment about a particular frustration which is then shared and affirmed by an established team member, we bond. Moaning is a glue that binds us together. I feel like one of them, and as a new member of a gigantic team, that's all I want.

What my pacified insecurities don't understand is that moaning isn't the superglue it makes itself out to be. It's Pritt Stick. Long-lasting, strong bonds in a team are built on mutual respect, trust, and genuine care for one another. That only comes over time. So, let's not rely on venting shared grievances as a shortcut to approval. Let's be those who patiently build genuine and solid relationships, even if that means feeling like an outsider for a while because we intentionally minimise our moaning!

In our culture, there is so much more than teamwork to celebrate: hard work, self-sacrifice, striving for excellence, compassion, courage, dedication, humour.

But every 'very good' thing tends to brokenness. A culture where hard work and sacrifice is prized can lead to neglecting rest and burning out. Striving for excellence can lead to a blame culture, where we're so terrified of being labelled incompetent or even facing fitness to practice allegations that we throw colleagues under the bus to keep our own record clean.

The challenge for us as Christians is to celebrate the good while being aware of the bad and the ugly and swim against the tide when it comes to those things.

## Three ways to celebrate:

**1** **admire**  
Actively look for the 'very good' at work and thank God when you spot it.

**2** **encourage**  
Tell your colleagues when you've seen something in them worth celebrating! Tell them when you've seen them reflecting God's image. Even if they don't know Jesus, they bear their Creator's image in myriad ways. Ask God to show you, and when you find it, tell them.

**3** **celebrate**  
Tell the rest of the team too. When you're eating your lunch in the staff room, are you more likely to praise somebody or to gossip about them? Instead of talking about who has annoyed you today, tell the team who has impressed you, who has helped you, who you've really appreciated.

Celebrate each other. It might be contagious. 🌟

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