

The circling vulture

Do you see that vulture overhead? It threatens to attack, waiting to peck a piece of flesh from you when you're at your most vulnerable. Everyone has one circling above their head; some are hungrier than others. Mine was at its most predatory when I was a Nurse. In fact, Nurses have monstrously greedy vultures. In this case, the flesh that the vultures love to devour is your time, energy, kindness, and quality time with loved ones.

With a heavy heart I chose to give up my job as a Nurse. For me, I sadly let that vulture pick my bones bare. After 3 years of intense study and months in a relentless job, I hardly recognised myself anymore, I had burnt out. The fiendish bird flapped its frantic wings, blocking a clear path of escape. There was no flesh left, my bones were picked clean. The vulture had gorged and its tummy was swollen with meat. My muscles were torn and my nerves were frayed.

Looking back I'm upset that I let it happen, but It took such small bites, little pecks here and there, swooping down so effortlessly that I hardly noticed that parts of me were being stolen. It is a cunning predator.

I often thought:

'I'll just skip lunch this once; I don't have time to eat today'. Peck went the bird.

'I will just stay one more hour to get these notes finished'. Peck went the bird.

'I'm just too tired to meet my friends tonight, I'll skip it'. Peck went the bird.

'I'll cancel my annual leave again, were just too short staffed at the moment'. Peck went the bird.

Over time I became exhausted from the stress. I had lost hours of time which could have been spent with family and friends. I didn't have the time or the energy for doing the things that brought me joy. There was no balance left in my life anymore. I had lost my fight with the vulture.

It's true what they say 'You can't take care of others, if you don't take care of yourself'. You need to give yourself permission to practice self-care. As a Nurse it came naturally to me to be an advocate for my patients, but why was it so hard to stick up for myself?

Nursing is a wonderful profession, but it is all too easy to lose yourself and put others before you time and time again. You become too tired and too busy to fight off that powerful bird lurking overhead.

I worry for my colleagues, now more than ever during this global pandemic. We need to ask our beloved Nurses (and other healthcare workers too), are you finding time for yourself? Are you finding the right balance? You need to take time out for lunch and fuel yourself, take that annual leave- you deserve a break, remember to do the things that bring you joy. Don't let that greedy vulture feed too often.