

Your First...experience of being an autonomous practitioner.

Rose speaks to Rhonda, about her first experience as an autonomous practitioner.

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Rose [01:00:03]

Welcome back to another episode of your First of Everything. Today I've got Rhonda with me, who's going to talk about her first experience of being an autonomous practitioner. Hello, Rhonda. How are you?

Rhonda [01:00:14]

Hi. Fine. Yes. Yeah, good, good.

Rose [01:00:17]

I'm glad. So tell me about this first experience. What was that like and your first day being an autonomous practitioner.

Rhonda [01:00:24]

So it's a while ago now, but I do remember feeling mixed emotions about where I was in my journey. I remember it being feeling an end of an era of leaving all my student friends and student life and everything that we'd left behind. I remember feeling and excited but very nervous about what was expected of me and excited over where I was going in the journey of my career and also clinically knowing and learning so many new skills and, you know, seeing different environments. So remember, I'm pulling up and going to the main office where we were allocated, where we were for our rotations. I was joined a basic grade rotation at the time, which was one of the only ones in the country that was MC. So it was physical and mental health, which was amazing to be able to have those experiences. And and I was told that I was going to go to a stroke rehab unit or hospital at the time, and we had several in the area at the time. And so I got my details linked in with everybody and drove up to the hospital to be introduced to my new team leader or senior one. At the time, I think it was called, and the new multidisciplinary team that I was going to work with for the next six months there. So starting out there and thinking, okay, this is where it's going to be, this is what I'm going to do. And getting to go there.

Rose [01:01:48]

Yeah. What what did you feel like on that day in that drive? Must have been epic.

Rhonda [01:01:54]

And part of me didn't want to drive there. I was going to pull over for a bit and just ever think about what have I done this, you know, for three years of your life you're focussed on getting past that degree, you're focussed on doing the work that you need to do in getting through the placements. But I don't think you sometimes think about what happens at the end and when you actually start that the next bit of the journey. And I remember pulling up in the car park and think he'll take a deep breath one day, This is it. The only people you just need to go in, introduce yourself and, you know, get the ball rolling. And thinking that and thinking about things, you know, is sometimes a lot more stressful than actually just jumping in and doing it and just having a go. I remember worrying about expectations of what they expected from me and and what they thought I knew and I needed to know everything. You don't need to know everything. And I think the more experience you get in life, especially within your career, the more you understand that you don't need to know everything. You just need to know how to find out about things if you don't know it and and to work with other people well. And so when I walked in and I linked in, I met some amazing people. I met a brilliant nursing team and great physios, technical instructors that were keeping the place and rolling. And I learnt so much. It was a neuro setting with this being a stroke rehab unit and just the knowledge that those colleagues had, but also the fun they had and the sense of humour they had and, you know, the compassion and the caring they had. And that was my first experience of truly holistic and patient care.

Rose [01:03:25]

Really? Definitely. Yeah. I think what you just said there about not knowing everything and not having to know everything, that pressure, I mean, I can definitely relate to that, you know, from that point of view thinking, okay, I just have to know absolutely everything, otherwise I'm not going to be a nurse or, you know, from your point of view, occupational therapist I'm not going to be able to do that. And actually, as you've just perfectly said, you don't need to know everything you learn as you go. Ask for that help, know where to go. And that's the most important thing, isn't it?

Rhonda [01:03:56]

You know, this signposts really and find out where it is. And it's that transparency of you know I still say it to my staff and I've said it to my staff when I was a clinical aide in the past. You need to just be transparent and honest, because once you do that and we know what to work on and we know how to upskill or retrain, we can do that. But, you know, nobody has an area that they're absolutely brilliant with. There's always a particular area that they're nervous about. And I think it's having that honesty to be able to say that and then we can move on from that. You don't need to know everything and you're not expected to know everything. And actually, to me, as you get more experience, you see that through the fact that people are happy to admit they don't know things and can work through and look through. Yeah, definitely what needs to be done. I agree. And I think, you know, we look at the standards now and we look at how, you know, 21st century health care professionals are and everything that's consistently changing.

Rose [01:04:51]

I think more and more the growing need or the growing feeling of the need to know everything is is massively overwhelming, isn't it? Now at the moment. And it is. It's that. It's that. Taking stock and just breathe in and understanding. You can research

that. You can look at that. And I would go one step further and say, actually, the most important things are those communication skills, are those connections being able to connect with another human being and to make them feel relaxed and make them feel safe within that environment so that you can do that treatment effectively. And, you know, when you get in the true person personality of that patient through because they trust you and they're things that sometimes you can't teach. You've got to work on yourself and the other bits you can research and look up and go and courses, can't you to do, of course. And there are going to be days as well when things do go wrong. Yeah. Things. You will walk into a situation and go, I have no idea what to do. But you know what? That's fine. I'll ask you. And I think certainly is what we're massive problem solvers. So it's trying to get back into that problem solving idea. It's keeping your sense of humour, isn't it? Because you've just got to roll with it. And there are days where I like to say slightly everything goes wrong, but as long as you've got that sense of humour and can roll with it and then think of a plan B, always have a plan B as a backup somewhere.

Rhonda [01:06:06]

Yeah, always. And I used to say to the staff as well, and the students always make sure you've got a list of numbers of people that you can ring. So on a Friday afternoon, when things all tend to go a bit wrong and you can't get Ahold of anybody, you can start working through your numbers to just keep going and get hold of somebody, get your support network around you, get people that you trust around you and that you can use as network for further and bigger networks around you as well. Yeah, and we've all been there and we all we all remember and we will all support, you know, of course. I mean, I have a phrase that I say to my students now. I say, at the end of the day, if you if everything else has gone wrong, at least you've got the shoes on the right feet. You know, at the end of the day, if you've got your shoes on the right feet, fantastic. Well, you've done a good job today. Definitely. Anything else. And nobody's died. Nobody's. No, you know, nothing just has happened. At the end of the day, everything is a learning experience. So even if you feel silly or foolish at the beginning, you'll not do it again because you've learned from that and and you can reflect and it's massive, that reflection of you studying your clinical work because that's how you develop as well. And you know, we never stop learning, you know, none of us. No lifelong learners, really.

Rose [01:07:16]

So when you went home that day after your very first day of being in, what did you do? How did you feel?

Rhonda [01:07:23]

You know, I just remember thinking, wow, I've actually got a I'm actually in Oti. I'm actually where I feel that I'm going to do the most I can do and reach people's potential, but reach my potential as a clinician as well. And I just felt really proud of myself. And I still wobbled. I still felt nervous about the next day because you've got the next day that you're going into. And but I was excited and I think you've got to be excited. You've got to use the rotations or the experiences that you go through with your placements to decide where you're what ticks your box and what area will light you up, because you've got to really love it. And if you do, then you'll you will thrive and you will reach your potential and you will blossom. And and the beauty with OT especially is you've got careers within careers. So you've got such a range that you

can just see where you want to go. And then, you know, throughout your career you can decide to take a different route. Completely different, which is lovely as well. Yeah.

Rose [01:08:17]

Is there any advice that you would give to to any student, you know, health care professionals in any and any field of what to do on that first day?

Rhonda [01:08:29]

So if I did it again, I think I would breathe. I think I would take stock. I think I would appreciate the day more. I think I would have lived in the moment a bit more, a bit more mindfulness, I suppose we call it now, don't we? And I think you're so worried about making a good impression that you don't really engage fully sometimes with that day, and I think it would be super easy to feel confident of that quiet confidence inside you that you've got this, you can do this, this is what you've studied for for the last three years. You know, this is what it's all about. This is what you wanted. So just breathe. Go in there and connect with your new workmates, connect with the patients and just start the journey and enjoy. Just enjoy it.

Rose [01:09:12]

Yeah, I think that's lovely. I think, you know, adding to that, a big bottle of water.

Rhonda [01:09:17]

Yes. And a notebook and a notebook with a pen notes to you consistently so you never lose the pen. In the ever growing hole of pens that are lost within the NHS. Pens. Definitely. Literally. And yeah, like you've just said, breathe in and remember, if your shoes are on the right feet, then you're doing well. Definitely tastic.

Rose [01:09:40]

Well, thank you so much for sharing your experience with us and thank you for being just so open. yeah, I really appreciate that. Thank you. Very much.

Rhonda [01:09:50]

Nice to meet you, Rosie. And you. Thank you.

Rose [01:09:53]

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