

Caring, never giving up, keeping things in perspective

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It's New Years Eve at 4am and my beautiful wife walks into the room, "Mr Wallace (she has total respect for me) We need to go to the hospital now". 6 hours later we have a beautiful little girl called Charlotte in our arms. She actually looked very fat and ugly but you can't really say that about your own daughter.

Unfortunately that evening the doctors discovered a little hole in Charlie's lung and we had to end up spending a week in hospital. Initially it was a little scary but all was well in the end.

However, the care we received in hospital was amazing, the midwives, doctors and nurses were so caring and thoughtful, it did not matter to them if Charlie or my wife needed help in the middle of the day or middle of the night.

They took real care and pride in their job. For many of them it appeared as if this was a vocation as opposed to a job. It made me remember the importance of doing a job you love. You do not want to spend your working life waiting for the weekend. A few of the midwives I met had decided to retrain because it was so important that they did what they were passionate about. It must take real bravery to sack in a well-paid job and to retrain in your 30s or 40s.

You may not know what you want to do for some years, maybe even decades, but the important thing is to get it right even if that means getting it wrong a few times first, why settle for a job, why not strive for a vocation.

At present some of you might even have jobs, it may not make you spring out of bed but it is also imperative you do it to the best of your ability and with good grace, your work ethic is very important, and your employers may well be writing the reference for that dream job in years to

come. By doing a job you love, you don't clock watch, you have fun and you are prepared to go the extra mile for that profession.

The other thing that struck me was how encouraging all the midwives were and this made a big difference to my wife who was struggling to feed young Charlie. Their continued positive reinforcement was a huge help and is something we should all consider when trying to support others. However, you do need to provide the guidance as well as the encouragement. They had a huge never give up attitude. When my wife had not slept for 3 days and Charlie will still struggling to feed, they never once gave an indication that it was not going to happen. They always told my wife that Charlie just needs to learn how to get it sorted. When one method didn't work we changed it and tried again and again with little adjustments until it finally worked.

This is surely how we should address our learning, if a baby doesn't give up on a task over 3 days why do we give up after 3 minutes of trying. What do we do when we get stuck? Do we give up or do we try and make small changes and repeat the process? Maybe we should seek support from peers, pals, teachers, the internet before we even consider giving up. Things such as top grades or creative ideas are not easy to achieve, they take dedication, hard work, research, collaboration, resilience. It is these dispositions which get you to the end point.

One final thing I learnt about being in hospital was that it is important to keep things in perspective. We were only in for a week. It felt like an eternity and initially you feel a bit sorry for yourself. However, there were babies in the high dependency unit who had been there for months with their poor parents coming in everyday. We were told about an Indian woman who had gone into labour on a flight over to the UK, the plane had to emergency land. The mother was rushed to the JR hospital and then spent the next 8 months in the UK. She had no family here and spoke limited English. She could not afford to stay in a hotel. A local hostel took her in for the entirety of her stay for free. It is amazing to see such generosity. Sadly, after 8 months the baby lost her battle.

It is very difficult to keep things in perspective because situations can make you feel so vulnerable and scared but there are always people to support you and there are often people who have it far worse.

No one ever wants to spend time in hospital, but it certainly reminded me of a few important life lessons. Hopefully you might take this on board without the need to visit the doctors! Thanks for listening.