



When I started as an Nurse-Family Partnership Nurse Home Visitor and saw the scientific results in the training materials, I thought, Okay, it looks good; but I'll believe it when I see it. Now that I've been part of the program for seven years, I know it works. I love this job. I wouldn't ever want to do anything else.

Yes, it's a hard job. But we love it because we know it's a valuable one. We don't take lightly the fact that we're working directly with people's lives. We know we have a hand in the future.

One of my moms, Charque, went into preterm labor while her boyfriend was in juvenile detention. But she's doing well now. She graduated high school; she's working and thinking about college.

But other situations are much tougher. I had one client I visited for two years, and I'll tell you, I had to physically and mentally prepare myself every time I went into her home. I just never knew what I was going to see. This young woman had fundamental physical and mental health issues, she didn't have a job, her husband worked at a donut shop, her parents were both dead. She had no health insurance, she was smoking, the fridge was always empty, the house was a mess, toys everywhere, and she was spending all her money on toys for the baby.

But as bad as it was, I truly believe if I weren't visiting her, it would've been worse. I got her to quit smoking; I got her on a food stamp program and hooked up with a living skills specialist.

A lot of the young women I see come from homes that are really rough. Some have no positive male role models, so the first guy who comes along and shows them any attention, they think it's love, and the next thing you know, they're pregnant. They don't have anyone to talk to, and people are telling them "you ruined your life."

Well, I'm someone she can talk to. She knows I'm not judgmental; I just listen to what she has to say and try not to tell her what I would do. Of course it can be frustrating—they need to come to decisions on their own, and we back them up, whatever they decide.

You know, we not only help young girls, we're also helping their children. I run into my moms whose babies are now in kindergarten, and they tell me, "Oh, he's reading the books you brought me!" Then I know that, because they enjoy reading, they'll enjoy school—and that means they'll go further in life.



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