

Poems From Medical Practice

# D.R. B.R.A.V.E.

DR. BROWN CARES



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## D.R. B.R.A.V.E.

\*A True Event\*

One sunny afternoon,  
My mother guided my path  
Past several excited doggies.  
The workmen saw my plight  
And were amused by  
Assumed fright.

When next a workman  
I passed,  
He grinned at me,  
Having a blast!  
“You are scared of the dogs!”  
He surmised.

“I’m not scared of anything!”  
I quickly responded.  
Let’s set this record straight.  
“Ok, Mrs. Brave!”  
He yelled cajollingly.

“It’s Dr. Brave,  
Thank you very much!”  
I responded willingly.

We gently tossed about  
The term somewhat.  
“Dr. Brave”  
Sounded great.  
Perhaps the name  
Of a book,  
He imagined.  
Perhaps an acronym,  
I decided.

And so I thought about  
My life’s quest  
What makes  
It breathe?  
What makes  
It bleed?  
What really  
Matters?

And so I realized  
That in the midst of  
Love for God and all

Who come across  
My humble path...

Determined I am to be  
Reinventive daily, pursuing

Bold initiatives and new ideas, being  
Resilient and strong,  
Altruistic and autonomous,  
Vibrant and voracious,  
Eloquent and elegant.

I am  
D.R. B.R.A.V.E.

## Turn It On

As I gently rub my hands together, washing off the foamy soap,  
I glance at the tap handles.

They are ivory white with charcoal-engraved writing.

On the left, the handle reads 'hot' and on the right, 'cold'.

As I continue to rub my hands together, I am mesmerized by the two snow-white handles.

I think about the one that says hot. Then about the one that says cold.

Some people turn both handles on—hot *and* cold—so that something warm comes out.

Nothing too challenging, nothing too extraordinary, but something *ok*.

Others turn just the cold handle on—and get water so cold it numbs them.

They are oblivious to the world around them, numb to those in need.

Yet others turn on only the hot faucet. Yes, it may burn you. At first,  
it might seem like too much, but if you take it in small doses, you accept its challenge.

In turn, it will make your hands hot. And hot hands are what we need.

Hands that are on fire to learn about what we as young physicians-in-training can do  
with the challenges in the world around us—

the challenges of our patients, our peers, our family.

With a bright burning fire that doesn't extinguish or quench who we are,  
but illuminates it. Illuminates the artist in us, the singer, the actor, the joker,  
the jest, the politician, the activist, the caregiver, the volunteer, the dancer,  
the musician, the crafter, the list goes on.

Let that hot water place within you a burning, a zeal that drives you.

Drives us all to be all we can be—as people *and* as people who care about other people. As doctors.

I finish rubbing my hands together. I finish rinsing my hands.

I reach out my left hand to turn off the hot faucet, before I turn off the cold.

That way my warm water won't get too hot for me.

The water stops running. No water is running. None at all. Then I realize.

I never did turn on the cold faucet. Not this time.

Don't be afraid. Grab your hot faucet by the hand and swing it into gear.

But the key is, don't be afraid.

Test the water gently in small doses, and allow yourself to take in more at a time.

More each time.

Be a doctor. Be an artist. Be a singer.

Be challenged. Be all these things.

Because all these things are who you are—inside.

## MultiMedia Collection

Accompanying Photograph

<https://www.lyricalmezzanine.com/turn-it-on>

Video of Live Performance

<https://youtu.be/NjslpK12I3Y>

Audio Performance

<https://soundcloud.com/sherry-ann-brown-675802969/turn-it-on-dr-sherry-ann-brown/s-WefAk>

# Culture Shock

This poem is about me, it's about you, it's about culture, it's about shock.  
It's about how this culture emphasizes the individual.  
How it encourages individual thoughts, ideas, ideals, and beliefs.  
See, this culture encourages individual action.

But sometimes, this *individuocentric* mentality  
causes us to forget those around us.  
The other night, I heard someone describe it this way:  
"An individual" exists in isolation; an individual atom, an individual electron is an island...  
but "a person" exists by relationships;  
a cell exists by its relationships with other cells and with things outside the cell.

If only we could look *outside* ourselves, if only we could look past ourselves,  
our difficulties, our challenges, our desires,  
and open our eyes to the detriment around us,  
if only we could shed our  
*individuocentric* mentality  
and exude or embrace  
an *other-centric* one,  
this world would be a *better* place.

See, healing involves change.  
We can help change the way things are,  
but first we have to change ourselves.  
So, I want us to look inside...  
deep down inside ourselves...  
and figure out.. ask ourselves...  
is our MO... is our Mode of Operation...  
*individuocentric*...  
or is it *other-centric*?

Do we want to be healers?  
Or do we want to be healed?  
Perhaps we'll find that it is ultimately in healing others  
that we ourselves become healed.

When we start to get to know someone,  
we can recognize that there is rich culture deep in that person's heart.  
Perhaps by getting a little of their history,  
we can learn what's inside their heart...  
and maybe what's inside that person's heart can connect with what's inside our hearts,  
as we learn from each other and heal our brokenness.

Undoubtedly, our brokenness is different,  
but it's still brokenness.  
Are you whole?  
Are you truly whole?

Perhaps it is in examining others' brokenness  
that we will recognize our own lack  
and embrace our own opportunities  
for change, for growth, and for inherent healing.

# Perception

I'm not telling you about something you've never heard,  
I'm sure you know about the "tip of the iceberg".

You know about perception...  
It's an impression... observation...a realization...  
From a sensation... that leads to valuation.

Do you initially know your patient?  
Without even knowing their history?

You can't get to know someone over night.

As much as you can quickly know will only be the tip of the iceberg.

Above the water is 10%, below the surface is 90.

You can get to know your patient a little bit, you still see the tip.

There's a lot of depth to him. Most of it you can't see. There's a lot of depth to her.  
There are a lot of things they could tell you that you thought you knew.

Your perception of them is just the tip.  
But to get to know who they are inside, you have to take a dip.

Into their heart. Into their culture. Into their story. Learn a bit about their history.

It's about the 10% and the 90. About the perception and the reality.

Some times it can take a long time to get below the surface.

I'm going to leave you with that, swimming around in your imagination.  
Let it permeate your conscience impression:

10% is what you saw of some of your patients up till this point.  
Slowly but surely, you can see more of the 90.

Not by them emerging above the surface of the water, out of their culture, to greet you...  
But by them taking you into their culture... for a moment.

Don't be afraid to step out, to step in.

Like an iceberg, you are less dense than water, you'll swim. Or at least you'll float.

## MultiMedia Collection

Accompanying Photograph

<https://www.lyricalmezzanine.com/perception>

Video of Live Performance

<https://youtu.be/NjslpK12I3Y>

Audio Performance

<https://soundcloud.com/sherry-ann-brown-675802969/perception-dr-sherry-ann-brown/s-9sm90>

## Who I Am

The name plate without the PhD doesn't feel like me.  
I feel like all of this is my identity.  
I busted my butt for the PhD,  
Please don't take it away from me.  
All of me is way more than what you see.  
I know it was an oversight and nothing intentionally.  
(So please please don't take this offensively.  
I just took this opportunity to express myself creatively!)  
I had to think about why it didn't feel like me.  
And that's because I've learned more about God's calling for me.  
I've tasted my destiny.

To live life abundantly and eternally,  
Embracing every aspect culturally.  
To live free.  
To live missionally.  
To view existence through the eyes of the MD and the PhD.  
This is me.  
You have to view me understandably.  
I am not you, you are not me.  
But we can all get along relationally.

To know God and to make Him known is what is expected of me.  
To care for my patients and to make their needs known is what I do with the MD.  
To advance science to save my patients is what I do with the PhD.  
Please don't take that away from me.

As you walk this life with me,  
Let us do it in community.  
I know we've only seen the tip of the iceberg superficially,  
But I want us to get to know each other profoundly.  
As I take a look at you, and you take a look at me,  
I know you won't see the MD or the PhD.  
Because that is not the true essence of me.  
I pray that one day when me you see,  
You will see who I am truly.

You will see that I am just a girl,  
Trying to play among the flowers and change the world.

# MultiMedia Collection

Video Performance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10FkGgPRvq8>

## #BornToLead

One afternoon after work,  
The day before July 4th,  
I watched the movie  
“Independence Day: Resurgence”  
At home.

One moment brought tears to my soul.  
The young captain in his fighter jet  
Watched his mom die;  
He couldn't save her  
As the building caved in  
And took her with it.

Then standing by his locker  
At the battle station,  
His colleague,  
Who had almost killed him  
In flight training  
By his maverick flight decisions,  
Said to him:  
“She wouldn't want you  
To give up now.  
You've got to lead us.”

That reminded me  
Of the fact that  
Every decision we make  
In our lives  
Affects someone else.

When you fall,  
You have to pick yourself up  
And keep going;  
Not only because of yourself,  
And not only in spite of yourself,  
But in spite of how it feels  
Or how challenging it seems,  
And because of everyone else...  
Because of everyone  
Who will lead you,  
Everyone who will lead with you,  
And everyone who will be led by you...  
Because of everyone  
Who looks up to you  
And everyone  
Who depends on you,  
Everyone who lives through you,  
Everyone who lived before you,

And everyone who will come after you...  
Because of everyone  
Who gave their shoulders  
For you to stand on  
And everyone  
Who will stand on your shoulders...  
Because together,  
We will see and move farther...  
And together includes you.

So stand firm,  
Even when you feel weak or tired  
Or feeble...  
Even when you fall  
Or someone else you know falls.  
They wouldn't want you to give up.

You've got to lead.  
Lead yourself  
And  
Lead those  
Who you were  
#BornToLead.

## Destiny Arise

You never were someone  
Who would settle for mediocrity.  
You always sought to be all  
You were meant to be.

So stop sulking  
And open your eyes to see  
It's not their fault  
You're not living up  
To everything that you could be.

They didn't recruit you  
Because you were mediocre.  
They recruited you  
Because you were  
La Crème De La Crème.  
So, don't be surprised  
They won't settle for mediocre.  
They will only accept  
La Crème De La Crème.  
Rise up and meet your destiny.

God has now given you  
Much needed tranquility.  
The peace that you yearn for  
He is now giving you freely.

No more complaining;  
No more shrinking away quietly.  
It's time to once again  
Step out boldly,  
Confidently,  
And divinely.  
Rise up and meet your destiny.

It's waiting for you  
At the pinnacle  
Of the mountain  
Patiently.

## Climbing The Upswing

See the upswing, climb the upswing.  
Even though you're at your nadir,  
Determine that you will see another  
Sun ray.  
Tell those nephrons, "Not today."  
Let your arteries know, "I have a say!"

See the upswing, climb the upswing.  
Even though you're at your nadir,  
Determine that you will see another  
Admission  
Tell those feelings of doubt, "Be in submission."  
Let your heart know, "Continue your mission!"

See the upswing, climb the upswing.  
Even though you're at your nadir,  
Determine that you will see another  
Class.  
Tell those program directors, "All is not lost."  
Let the foundations know, "They're still worth the cost!"

See the upswing, climb the upswing.  
Even though you're at your nadir,  
Determine that you will fund another  
MRI.  
Tell those who question, "You can't diagnose it without it, nor can I."  
Let the little boy with ataxia and seizures know, "I am by your side."

See the upswing, climb the upswing.  
Even though you're at your nadir,  
Determine that you will phone another  
Friend.  
Tell those voices, "Get out of my head."  
Let the knife, rope, or revolver know, "My life I WILL defend!"

See the upswing, climb the upswing.  
Even though you're at your nadir,  
Determine that you will be great together.  
Tell those around you, "Our successes we can savor—  
Let the bumps in the road propel us further."

See the upswing, climb the upswing.  
But don't forget your neighbor.  
Determine that you will help raise them higher.  
Tell those challenges, "We are fighters!"

# Anonymous

*Prelude: To fight a battle every single day, for the rest of your life.*

It must not be a small thing  
To walk into the meeting

Instead of taking a swig from the bottle in your pocket  
Knowing that all your life you've been trying to shake it

Trying to shake your primary coping skill  
Even while you know, you know, it could kill!

But still...

In those lonely moments, when that crisis hits  
Right back into your hand, the bottle fits

Like it was yesterday, you go right back to where you left off  
You try to be strong, but sometimes life just makes you soft

You try to hold on, to hold out, to hold off  
But you just can't shake it, it's like a bad cough.

Well, a cough you can shake, with the right treatment  
Maybe this you can shake too, although it feels like entrapment.

It must not be a small thing  
To walk into the meeting

This may be your last chance to take your life back  
You realized it was slipping through your hands today as you saw your wife pack

Her things and your children's things, and walk out the door.  
Even in your sea of drunkenness, you realized your family life may be no more.

You want them to come back, you want to grow old together  
You want to see your daughter grow up and become a mother

You want to see your son play college basketball  
You want to see your grandchild walk and not fall

So you walk into the meeting  
Ready to give your alcoholism a beating

You talk it out, you talk it through  
Committing to starting your life anew

You listen to another man's tale  
About how hard it was for him to wait for the sale  
Of alcohol from the package store, every Monday morning, at 8  
He would always be up, would never wake up late

No matter how much he bought on Saturday

It would NEVER last till Monday

It would always run out at some point over the weekend  
And he knew it would continue like that, until his very end

So although it was no small thing  
He knew he had to walk into a meeting

He went diligently for years and years  
Then he was cured, he said goodbye to the beers

So he rejoiced, he was clean for many moons  
He went to college, got married, his life was like a cartoon

Filled with happiness and laughter, and lots and lots of fun  
Until one day, things took a turn

For the worse...  
In large part due to his unexpected divorce

And the death of his daughter.

With no support system  
His past came back to haunt him.

He went back to basics, back to his primary coping skill  
Again, still knowing that it could kill

In it he got lost again  
Drinking, drinking again and again

And so he found himself realizing once more  
What he had come to know years before

It was no small thing  
So he walked back into the meeting

He looked over at J, who nodded his head  
Then looked up at everyone, and openly said

“Hi, I am J. I am an alcoholic.”

I come to these meetings, day in, day out  
I've been to so many, frankly I've lost count

But I have not lost sight of the fact that I'm recovering  
This process will always be never-ending  
Until the day I die.  
Until then I will fight

I will recognize that it is no small thing  
And I will walk into my meeting

The way I see it is, it will definitely prevent a lot of sorrow  
If I go to a meeting tonight, chances are I won't take a drink tomorrow

So I come here everyday, have been for nine years  
I tell you, it holds back the tears.

“Let me tell you about tears,” K says.

When I walked in here 7 years ago,  
I was addicted not only to alcohol, but also to tobacco.

I came in, got detoxed, and it was the best time of my life  
For once, I felt free again. I couldn't wait to call my wife.

Then they told me it was over, I had to go home.  
But I said, “no!” Didn't they understand, they were sending me to my doom

Home is where I drank my sorry problems away  
Man, I may not even live to see another day

I held my head in my hand, and thought, “Why?!”  
And I couldn't stop myself, I started to cry.

‘Real men don't cry’, my parents always told me  
But if only they could feel my story

I cried and cried some real tears that day  
I didn't want to go back to living that way

They said to me, we recognize it's no small thing  
We'd like to tell you about this meeting

And so I've been coming here ever since  
Once, twice, sometimes three times a day

Whatever it takes to shake this thing.

“I like coming to these meetings,” Z chimes in. “In fact, I need to be here.  
I need to be around others who understand what I fear.”

Otherwise, I'll stay home and drink for a week  
Not even knowing what it is that I seek

I will take the time off from work when I want  
And no one can tell me I can't

I take the week, I stay home and I just drink  
So much so that I can't even think.

So I can't, can't, take a day from these meetings.  
I tell you, it's no small thing.

“I tried to get into a detox program,” F said. “Tried to quit once and for all.”  
They told me my system was clean, they couldn't admit me at all

So badly I wanted the treatment  
I felt like I was about to go into bereavement

I went out and I bought a fifth of Bacardi  
I closed my eyes and chugged it slowly

I had been clean for some months too  
But I guess, sometimes, you do what you have to.

I got in, I got treated  
I was glad I didn't end up dead.

But I made sure it hurt that time  
So that last time would always be on my mind

Every time I tried to take a swig  
Every time the desire got big

I would remember, I would remember, how much it hurt  
And the desire would eventually splurt<sup>1</sup>

"Yeah, I got drunk once," R said. "Had a blackout, and hit my foreman."  
I lost my job, my self-esteem, but the next day my foreman called and gave me his hand.

He said, "Hi, I'm Chuck. I'm an alcoholic, and I'd like to help you."  
From that moment on, I finally knew what I had to do.

I finally gave in, I realized it was no small thing  
And I came to my first meeting.

I've been coming ever since...  
And a single day I'm never going to miss

I'd like to reiterate, it's no small thing..  
I am so thankful to be able to attend this meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> *Splurt* colloquially means "leave" in some places.

## Nurse Angels

Three nurse angels -  
Like a stool,  
Upon which sits  
Each learner, patient, teacher;  
Each person  
Being held up  
And held together.

Three nurse angels -  
Like a tripod,  
Upon which  
Can be placed  
A camera  
To show  
Each patient, learner, or teacher  
Snapshots  
Of what  
A better life  
Could be.

Three nurse angels -  
Holding  
The hands  
Of patients, learners, and teachers,  
In a room  
Filled with fun  
And laughter;  
A place  
That feels like  
Home.

Three nurse angels -  
Like a shepherd  
With his staff:  
Managing,  
Defending,  
Balancing,  
Helping,  
Lifting,  
Guiding;  
Demonstrating  
And Illustrating  
Care.

To my  
Three nurse angels,  
I want you to know  
That though I go

I will always remember  
The feeling I would get  
When you would walk  
Into the room;  
Plainly and simply,  
I will also feel  
The same feeling  
I expressed  
To you one day;  
It will remain true  
Everyday;  
No matter  
Where I am,  
It will always be you,  
Because...  
My  
Three nurse angels -  
You light up my life!

## Nurse Angels

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DrBrownCares@Gmail.Com  
@DrBrownCares  
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Three nurse angels -  
Patient and polite,  
Teasing and joyful,  
Compassionate and powerful;  
Beautiful examples of  
Support and empowerment;  
Each a rock  
That nurtures  
Selflessly and  
Kindly.



Three nurse angels -  
Like a triangle with  
Three points, corners, or turns  
Looking toward each other  
With synergy;  
Grounded and rooted;  
Each point secured with  
Harmless yet sure screws or nails  
Holding tightly  
The ropes  
Of each side  
Of the triangle;  
Each patient, learner, and teacher  
Can lean in against the ropes  
And be kept safe and stable  
In line with what's best  
For them.



Three nurse angels -  
Like a musical triangle  
To make music,  
An accompaniment  
To the song  
Of each person's life;  
Each patient, learner, teacher.



Three nurse angels -  
Like a stool,  
Upon which sits  
Each learner, patient, teacher;  
Each person  
Being held up  
And held together.

Three nurse angels -  
Like a tripod,  
Upon which  
Can be placed  
A camera  
To show  
Each patient, learner, or teacher  
Snapshots  
Of what  
A better life  
Could be.



Three nurse angels -  
Holding  
The hands  
Of patients, learners, and teachers,  
In a room  
Filled with fun  
And laughter;  
A place  
That feels like  
Home.



Three nurse angels -  
Like a shepherd  
With his staff:  
Managing,  
Defending,  
Balancing,  
Helping,  
Lifting,  
Guiding;  
Demonstrating  
And Illustrating  
Care.



To my  
Three nurse angels,  
I want you to know  
That though I go  
I will always remember  
The feeling I would get  
When you would walk  
Into the room;  
Plainly and simply,  
I will also feel  
The same feeling  
I expressed  
To you one day;  
It will remain true  
Everyday;  
No matter  
Where I am,  
It will always be you,  
Because...  
My  
Three nurse angels -  
You light up my life!



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Who I Am

Video Performance

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DrBrownCares@Gmail.Com

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# NOTES