

# Healing from a Clown

Jeffrey Patnaude, a recognized authority in leadership development, tells the following story in *Chicken Soup for the Soul at Work*:

The nursing staff at a certain hospital was having trouble with an aged man's difficult temperament. He refused to allow anyone into his room, and was often so negative that staff members could not even administer medication.

One day, an insightful nurse decided to ask a friend of hers to make a difference in this man's life.

That evening, while the man lay quietly glowering in his bed, the door slowly opened into his dimly lit room. As his eyes shot toward the doorway, ready to command a dismissal, he was struck by a figure that stood silently staring at him. It was not the usual "intrusive" staff member, but instead, a circus clown.

His features shimmering with face paint, the character sprinted to the patient's bedside. "Move over!" he shouted.

Startled by the order, the old man slid aside as the clown climbed into bed with him. Adjusting the blankets, the clown settled in. He began paging through a book he had brought.

"I'm going to read to you," the clown said. Then he began: "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown, and Jill came tumbling after."

The clown continued on through the collection of Mother Goose as the man listened intently, his body calming with each page.

By the end of the reading, the once sullen old man lay nestled against his playful visitor, feeling a sense of peace no staff member had ever witnessed. The clown kissed the man on his forehead and said goodbye.

That night, the patient quietly and effortlessly moved into the next life, his face showing contentment and peace.

What happened in that hospital room is a principle the associates of Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home have learned: *When we demonstrate love and laughter with those we serve, we activate the highest degree of healing, which is inner peace.*



– Beecher Hunter