

15th Euro Nursing & Medicare Summit

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Shéri Brynard

Lettie Fouché School, South Africa

Being the architect of your own destiny

With this presentation, an Afrikaans speaking woman of 33 will inform the meeting in English or Afrikaans how she grew up as a girl with Down syndrome in South Africa. She will explain how her determination to make the best of her situation helped her to cope with her disability and how she, with the help of her parents, handled the preconceived ideas of the people of her time. She will illustrate how a sense of humour and positive outlook on life helped her to achieve against all odds. She made the words and the philosophy of Nelson Mandela “you are the master of your destiny and you are the captain of your soul”, as her own life philosophy. She truly believes that one must never focus on what you don’t have, but be proud of who you are. She strongly believes one must work hard to make the best of who you are. Shéri Brynard gives meaning to her life by trying to change people’s perceptions about people with Down syndrome in South Africa and abroad. She also tries to help the so called normal people who listen to her to focus on the positive things in their own lives. The central idea is that anyone has the potential to become a leader in the field where that person can make a difference, if you use every opportunity to the best of your ability. A legacy is cultivated by making the best of your situation, whatever it may be rising above your constraints by striving for excellence and working hard to realise your true potential. A leader inspires others to do the same and does not give up hope, ever. This is what Shéri Brynard did.

Biography

Sheri Brynard is a 30 year-old South African lady from Bloemfontein who is living with Down syndrome. She has set new boundaries for people with Down syndrome by qualifying as an assistant-teacher in a public school and becoming a motivational speaker nationally and internationally. She became the first, and still is, the only person in South Africa with Down syndrome who has received a tertiary qualification when she graduated from the National Technical College in Bloemfontein. This qualification followed after she was also the first child with Down syndrome, 23 years ago, to attend and successfully graduate from a mainstream school. Sheri was chosen by Down Syndrome South Africa (DSSA) to become their ambassador and also serves as ambassador on the international Down syndrome board. She was also awarded the highest prestige award from the South African Down Syndrome Association for the highest academic achievement received by a person with Down syndrome in South Africa.

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