

# Liz Rapp, CCLS

BACHELORS IN PSYCHOLOGY

5 YEARS EXPERIENCE

*“Glitter makes everything better”*

## **Can you tell me a little bit about your hospital and the units you cover?**

I work with the pediatric patients in an adult ER.

## **What's your typical unit census and about how many patients do you see per day?**

The adult ER has 40 rooms. I see anywhere from 8-12 patients on average per shift. With the large and quick turnover rate, it varies daily.

## **What does your average day look like?**

I am required to set up my small designated area at the main nurse's station counter each shift. After I'm settled, I check the census and prioritize rounds. After rounds are complete, including any new patients, I check email, do office work, write thank you notes, etc. Due to the nature of the ER, I need to be able to drop and go to patient care at a moment's notice. Often, I may start a project and get called, not returning to the project for a few hours...or days. No matter where I am in the hospital, it is important that I'm able to keep an eye on the ER census since a trauma could arrive at any time. At the end of the night, I clean toys and pack up my station. Everything goes into a locked cart and the cart is wheeled into a locked cabinet in the back room. My shift is from noon-9:30pm.

## **What is your favorite distraction item and how do you use it?**

Bubbles! There are so many ways to play with bubbles! Being creative and experimenting with what works for each child is a challenge I enjoy. Bubbles for deep breathing for the anxious patient. Bubbles for the fun of it! Bubbles for breathing treatments for littles and bubbles for distraction. Bubbles to make staff smile. Bubbles for the child to blow from the wagon on the way to CT. Bubbles for everything!

## **What's the best part about your job?**

By far, working with kids who come to the ER scared and anxious is my favorite. I love building rapport and seeing the trust that I earn. I enjoy explaining the procedures and involving the patients in medical play as time allows. I enjoy helping the kids see their own strength and encouraging coping during procedures (ex. sutures). When they leave with a smile on their face, I know I did my job!

## **What's the hardest part in doing your job?**

Meeting resistance. I know the benefit of Child Life, my coworkers see the power of distraction, but for an outside person coming in, it is often challenging to see the end picture. I really dislike when I am scoffed at by parents and visitors. Education is a big part of my job in ER...more so than when I worked Peds.

## **What's a facet of your job that people wouldn't expect?**

The burnout rate for a profession that is seen as all “rainbows and glitter.” It's real.

## **What's something you wish you knew when you started on this unit?**

The effort required to build strong coworker relationships in an environment where Child Life was unknown. Building rapport with staff is just as important, if not more so, than building rapport with patients. We are a team. A solid child life program has strong staff support.

## **Do you have anything else you'd like to share about your job, tips for students, or thoughts?**

Boundaries, boundaries boundaries!!! Don't give and give until YOU give out! Take time for yourself. Do your best to leave work issues at work. A strong self-care routine will do nothing but benefit you. Have a safe place where you can cry. If you bottle the emotion inside, especially in an emotionally draining environment like ER, you will quickly lose your empathy.

## ***If you want to have a Child Life career, establish solid boundaries now. A few of mine are as follows:***

- Leave **ON TIME** as much as possible; have a work/life balance
- No texting/phone calls about work during “off hours”
- Learn it's okay to say 'no'
- Don't take on more than you can handle
- Never let anyone make you feel guilty for taking a day off
- Know when your job is done (it comes with experience)

