

# Nina Vallega, RN

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The beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic felt like walking into the unknown, and for registered nurse Nina Vallega, as she says it is a moment in time she'll never forget. "We saw all the negative reports in the news, the ever-changing stream of information about the virus, and it made us wonder what we are getting ourselves into," Vallega said.

One of the things that inspires her most is the bravery of her colleagues. "They still show up every single day, and they still take care of these people," she shared.

Vallegra's two children are also keeping her motivated through this fight, one of which kicked off his first year of school during the pandemic.

She says her son is experiencing kindergarten through a computer, adding, "I felt such a loss for him, so that's what motivates me - one day we'll get back to it, and he'll experience it." Bringing back the experience of in-person connection is just one of the goals for frontline health care workers.

"The beautiful thing about this pandemic is that everybody has an opportunity to do something - it's not just the health care heroes or the front lines - it's actually every single person," Vallega said. "Everything that you do - when you're socially distancing, when you're hand-washing, when you're keeping to your own quarantine group, your own family - those things make a huge difference and really affect the kind of care we can give at the bedside."

This most important thing, Vallega said, in all of this uncertainty, is to find the thing that gives you hope. "People need to hold on, and people need to find that reason to hold on and keep doing what they're doing - whatever that reason is."

For Vallega, it's getting her children back in school. "It's not just your own health," she said. "It's the health of your family, your loved ones. It's the health of our community, so we can't just turn our backs to it. All of our actions today and everyday - it all makes an impact."



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