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Student Success in Nursing: Managing Stress, Improving Transition from Nursing Student to Professional Nursing, and Improving Leadership Skills.



Northern Illinois University

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Aim: To help current baccalaureate nursing students manage their stress level, transition effectively to professional nursing, and improve their leadership skills.

Target Population: Northern Illinois University Nursing Students

What is Stress?

Stress is a normal physical and psychological response to life demands. Small amount of stress is good because it provides the motivation to perform well. However, a long-term exposure to stressors or chronic stress might affect productivity negatively (Mayo clinic, 2017).

Why nursing students need stress management

According to a study conducted by Beck and Srivastava, baccalaureate students experience high mean level of stress and psychiatric symptoms than the general population (1991). Another study showed that nursing students present with greater exacerbation of stress symptoms in relation to other students because they are more exposed to ethical conflict which triggers stress levels (Hirsch et al., 2018).

According to studies reviewed by Clark & Pelicci, 24% to 86% of nursing students engage in alcohol use every week, and 54% binge weekly. These rates are determined to be higher than the rate of alcohol use in the general population and it also affects academic performance, care capabilities, and clinical practices (2011).

•What do nursing students consider as stressors?

Stressors are mainly individualized, however, there are some stressors that are experienced by almost all student and some of them include: Amount of course materials, exam grade, increased workload, financial burden, clinical rotation, and nursing school requirement. Some individualized stressors include family, relationship, and job-related problems.

•Effect of stress on the body, mood, and

behaviour: Headache, muscle tension or pain, chest pain, fatigue, change in sex drive, stomach upset, sleep problem, anxiety, restlessness, lack of motivation or focus, feeling overwhelmed, irritability or anger, sadness or depression, overeating or undereating, angry outbursts, drug or alcohol abuse, tobacco use, social withdrawal, and exercising less often. (Mayo Clinic, 2016).

•Stress management technique:

•Regular physical activity, relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, tai chi or getting a massage, keeping a sense of humor, socializing with family and friends, eating healthy, sleeping well, setting aside time for hobbies, such as

reading a book or listening to music (Mayo Clinic, 2016).

Literature reviews:

Clark & Pelicci (2011).

Four practices were identified by Tennant for analyzing life balance and stress management. To be able to use the stress management techniques listed, these four practices need to be utilized.

1. Knowing oneself: This can be used to initiate the foundation for personal change. This involves a process of self-assessment and critical reflection which helps to increase awareness to personal habits, feelings, thought, and behaviors.
2. Controlling oneself: This involves taking actions on habits and behaviors that work against transformative change. It involves learning to set personal goals, manage time, and practice following planned schedules.
3. Caring for oneself: This involves focusing on measures to promote self-healing such as focusing on emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical needs.
4. Recreating oneself: After all the above stages have been established, this is the stage where a person recreates his or herself to follow all the stress management techniques listed above.

Chunta (2017).

In the article, faculty role in promoting nursing student health, Chunta listed some practices that faculty members can encourage their students to utilize to prepare them for the demanding role of a nurse. The practices listed are geared toward personal health and wellness and they include; Eating right: Faculty members are expected to educate their students to eat healthy foods. Increased activity: Students should be encouraged to increase their activity level and a way faculty member can do this is by taking the stair with students on clinical days rather than using the elevator.

Teaching stress management techniques in class. Encouraging sleep, smoking cessation, and vaccination.

Blevins (2018).

In the article, from nursing student to registered nurse: The challenge of transition, Blevins identified some ways that can help in successful transition and they are:

Getting into a nurse residency program: Nurse residency program integrates new nurses into the hospital and the nursing profession through a structured approach.

Continuation of literature review

The Nurse residency program provides an environment where new nurses can debrief, share experiences, and seek guidance on ways to handle situations that are unfamiliar.

Socializing to clinical unit: New nurses are encouraged to socialize effectively with their colleagues in the unit to create a comfortable environment to seek advice and assistance when needed.

Etheridge (2007).

In the article, learning to think like a nurse: stories from new nurse graduate, Etheridge listed some characteristics that new nurses need to possess to think like a nurse and they are:

1. Developing confidence: New nurses need to belief in themselves, their judgement and knowledge, psychomotor skills, and ability to think and draw conclusion from assessment data. Most new nurses are afraid of causing harm to the patient that they do not utilize their critical thinking skills.
2. Learning responsibility: New nurses need to understand that they are responsible and accountable for their patients' care and this should guide them to utilize their critical thinking skills. Also, new nurses need to know that they are responsible for knowing basic nursing skills needed to provide safe patient care.
3. Thinking critically: Critical thinking is a huge part of nurse. This occurs continuously and expands with experience. Critical thinking may take place independently or with other health care team members. New nurses need to think about the implication of each patient care provided. They must explore options and individualize care. New nurses should seek help from their preceptor when needed to provide safe patient care.



Continuation of literature review

Pidgeon (2017).

In the article, the keys for success: Leadership core competencies, Pidgeon listed some skills that needs to be possessed by a leader and they are:

1. Confidence: A leader must be confident in the care they are providing or idea they are integrating for quality improvement.
2. Integrity: A leader must hold a high moral standard of transparency, accountability, and honesty.
3. A leader must continue to motivate and inspire employees to perform better at their job.
4. A leader must be committed to goals and objectives of the organization.

Center for Creative leadership (2017).

The article, the core leadership skills you need in every role, uploaded on the center for creative leadership listed some fundamental skills that need to be possessed by a leader and they are:

1. Self-awareness: A leader needs to understand his or her weaknesses and strength.
2. Communication: A leader needs to be able to communicate information clearly and effectively in the organization
3. Influence: A leader need to be able to influence her employees to achieve favorable outcomes
4. Agility: A leader needs to be in learning mode constantly. He or she must recognize when there is need for quality improvement and implement them. A leader must be able to learn from their mistakes, open to new ideas, learn new skills quickly, ask insightful questions, respond well to new situation, and take advantage of every opportunity to learn new things.

Conclusions

Nursing students need to be able to manage their stress level in school to be able to perform well academically. Learning how to manage stress level will also help during transition to the nursing profession as the new role of nursing is very stressful as well. Nursing students are expected to know the basic leadership skills because at one point in their career they will be assuming the role of a leader.

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