

Advice for Students & New Nurses

[VIDEO TRANSCRIPT – April 28, 2023]

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Lisa Bonsall: Hi, it's Lisa Bonsall, Senior Clinical Editor for Lippincott NursingCenter. I'm here at the Lippincott Nursing Education Innovation Summit and I had the opportunity to speak with faculty and ask them, "What advice do you have for nursing students and new nurses?" Here's what they had to say.

Vicki Moran: I think students really need to come with an open mind and realize what this profession has. There's a lot of unique opportunities. It really starts with the dynamic undertaking of what Florence Nightingale started with, which is the caring element of it. So be mindful of that and make sure that you bring your best self to the table or to the clinical environment when you're caring for patients. And that would be my big message.

Tim J. Bristol: So nursing students, we are in an era of nursing and nursing education where you have to be about two things. Number one, know what you don't know. You don't have time to study as if everything were important. You have to take your vital signs daily. You know what I'm talking about. You have to know daily what you don't know and study based on that. Number two, take care of patients.

Don't just sit down and start going through Dr. Bristol's PowerPoint. Don't just sit down and start reading for 3 hours. About every 20 to 30 minutes, you need to pause whatever you're doing, whether it's watching YouTube videos or whether it's reading a textbook, whether it's going through the PowerPoints from the instructor, the handouts from the instructor. Try to take care of a patient.

Go find a patient. Go find a case study in the back of the chapter in the book. Go find the case study that your instructor handed out to you. Go find a patient scenario, a vSim, a CJSim. You have all these tools that you've paid for where you can actually take care of a patient related to whatever you're reading.

Now, here's the trick. You've been reading for 30 minutes. If you go into that vSim, if you go into that CJSim, if you go into that case study and you can't take care of that patient, there's your first clue that you have no clue what you're reading. That's your first clue that you have no clue what Dr. Bristol's PowerPoints were all about.

You need to stop and try to take care of a patient. And I'm not talking about just so you can pass the next unit exam, just so you can pass NCLEX. But I'm talking about just so you can take care of that patient that's depending on you. It's all about taking care of the patient.

Susan Gross Forneris: I would say that if there was one piece of advice I would give or I wished perhaps I had thought more about as a nursing student, would be to always check myself and ask myself, how do I know this and why is this important? And sometimes that's hard because we really want to feel good about our knowledge.

And so we tend to sometimes gravitate to the things we know. And when we can't answer the question about, So how do I know that? Or how do I know this is accurate? Then we kind of get self defeated. And to me, that should be an opportunity for you to go, yep, that's what I need to go back and check.

Michelle Moulton: One piece of advice that I would share is to take care of yourself. That, you know, when we are feeling tired and stressed and really overwhelmed and like too stretched, we aren't able to think as clearly and we're not able to contribute and learn and absorb all the the depth of information that a nurse needs to know in order to be successful.

So I would say to make sure you're taking breaks, make sure you're connecting with one another, to make sure that you're taking care of yourself so you can do really good thinking because nursing is a thinking profession. There are skills that we do, but a lot of what we do is really under the hood, and if we're not taking care of ourselves, we can't activate our prefrontal cortex as well as we need to. So take care of yourself.

Kenya Beard: So students must graduate understanding how bias influences one's reality and practices. They must not graduate believing that knowledge is enough. They have to always ask and know why is this important? What could happen and how can I prevent it? What would I have to recognize? And what can I do about it? Nursing students should always be able to explain their problem solving techniques with others because only then will we move past, yes, it's important to pass a nursing license. But what's more important is to practice safely and practice in a way that shows that you understand each individual, who they are and what their needs are, and that we don't define that, the individual does.

Katie Jett: It's never been harder to be a student in school and in the kind of health care environment that we have that's so evolving and ever changing. And remember that it's a process that doesn't happen overnight. Take each day slow. Remember that the end game is always what we're aiming for, right? So embrace the struggle. Embrace the process. Embrace your inner leader immediately and know that not only are you intended to improve the health care outcomes of those that you serve in the hospital or whatever care setting, is that you have an opportunity to always be a leader, to advocate, to engage, to elevate our profession. You don't have to have a title to be a leader. You don't have to have a doctorate to be a leader. You just have to want to make the system better.

Joy Goldsmith: I think I would lead with you are going to be surrounded by difference and we talk about cultural difference as something that is kind of over to the side. But it's really all around you and there is no way to have mastery over it. But what is possible is cultural humility, which means that you are the learner and the patient is the teacher.

And you don't have to have all of the answers because the patient and the patient's family will lead you to those answers. You're going to co-create together. I would also say that your most powerful communication tools are nonverbal, and those are the ones that are going to be believed by the patient, by your coworkers, by family members, by your larger team.

And some of those we're aware of. We are aware of what we're doing non-verbally. But a lot of it we're not. And those are the truth tellers. So if our language doesn't match the nonverbal, that's what the people we're trying to connect with are going to listen to, what they're seeing.

Elaine Wittenberg: When you sit in the class and you're listening to communication skills, don't try to do all of them. Find that one thing that fits your natural style, that feels comfortable, that feels like it wouldn't be too risky to try. And the example I always give is I cannot tell jokes, so it would not make sense for someone to tell me, Go in and tell a joke, because I don't do that naturally. But there are other options and other ways that I can accomplish a task communicatively.

Carol Huston: Find a mentor to guide you along your journey. It's not easy to become a nurse. It is a very complex process. You will have the opportunity to touch so many lives, but having a mentor to guide you and direct you on your journey, to protect you from those who who don't want to be supportive or don't want to help you.

I think also helping you understand those hidden organizational taboos, the unwritten culture, understanding who has power and surrounding yourself with people who think differently than you do, who are not clones of yourself. Those are all things that mentors can do for you. I think it's really important to have a mentor who is your cheerleader, who can empower you, who can encourage you to think about doing things that you might never have thought capable of doing without that kind of support.

Bernadette Melnyk: Prioritize your own self care. When we get on an airplane, what are we told when the oxygen masks drop? Put them on yourself first before you put them on your children. Same concept applies to us. We can not keep pouring from empty cups. Wellness and prioritizing it is not a nicety. It is truly a necessity so that we are well, happy, engaged in all that we do.

Anne Dabrow Woods: First of all, remember, no one is practice ready right out of school. It takes time to become competent and learn the skills of being a nurse. Some of the most important things are that you find a mentor who can really help you on your career journey. And secondly, find a coach or preceptor who can really help you fine tune your skills, learn clinical judgment and become the nurse that you want to be.

And finally, don't ever forget to be innovative. I find that new nurses are some of the most innovative people because they look at things with a different set of eyes and they help bring clarity to a situation that those of us who have been in practice for a long time often struggle with. So thank you so much for joining our profession.

And if you ever feel like you're struggling to think about why you went into the profession in the first place, remember it's because you wanted to make a difference. And that is actually what you do every single day when you take care of your patients. Happy Nurses Month.

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