

Book Review

The Resilient Nurse: Empowering Your Practice

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The authors present an excellent resource for nursing students, nursing educators and nurses in clinical practice to enhance resiliency strategies in preparation for facing challenging situations in the healthcare environment within the context of nursing practice. The purpose of the book is to provide a guide in fostering and building resilience by developing capabilities that promote “strong, determined, enthusiastic, and effective responses when facing adversity, challenges, hardships, and disappointments” (p.xiv). The goal is to help empower nursing students (and nurses) to take decisive action, “...implementing changes that will moderate the impact of stress and adversity on workers’ lives” (p.15).

McAllister and Lowe have defined resilience as “a process of adapting to adversity that can be developed and learned” (p. 6) and as such have structured their book in sections to help the reader and nursing student develop and foster resiliency qualities and strategies. There are twelve chapters that utilize case studies, storytelling, analysis of content in relation to the case studies, and reflective learning activities to develop greater insight into the role that resilience plays in our personal and professional experiences. The authors discuss how all of these dimensions are essential to nursing practice. They clearly identify numerous issues affecting workplace culture, satisfaction, and retention in nursing all related to stressors that nurses encounter on a daily basis in the healthcare environment.

Research identified in the text indicates that nursing attrition is significant within the first year of a nurse’s career (up to 27% in the US and Australia) related to loss of university/college support networks, lack of workplace support, work pressure, harassment, exposure to violence, traumatic events, interpersonal conflict, bullying, and intimidation. McAllister and Lowe identify that the greatest source of stress comes from the workplace culture and colleagues themselves through horizontal violence rather than the situational or traumatic crises that we may face. Horizontal violence is defined as “nonphysical intra-group conflict that is manifested in overt or covert behaviours of hostility” (p. 169) in response to workplace stress and feelings of powerlessness and perceived inability to resolve tension or problems directly. Reference is made to the nursing literature that corroborates the importance of recognizing and ending horizontal workplace violence and to research that has been and is being conducted to reduce the impact of workplace stressors from a nursing context. The concept of resilience is woven clearly throughout all chapters to allow for integration of strategies that would help alleviate or moderate responses to horizontal conflict/violence. Building professional

relationships, being positive, developing emotional insight, achieving life balance, becoming more reflective, identifying risk factors and protective factors in response to stressors, sharing experiences, praising success, promoting feelings of pride, being a good role model, and utilizing leadership techniques are resilience strategies outlined in chapter one and which remain common themes throughout the book.

The concept of resilience for the new nursing graduate is discussed from a variety of authors' perspectives. A majority of contributors are from Australia while others hail from the UK, Canada, Georgia, and the United States providing a Western perspective related to the concept of resiliency in nursing practice. All 19 authors are scholars from colleges of public health, schools of nursing and midwifery, as well as from faculties of the arts, social sciences, education, sciences, psychology and counselling. Each contributing author (or group of authors) has utilized extensive reference sources in their writing and in their associated chapter reference lists to ensure credibility of the information being shared. It is important to note, the significance of resilience in nursing students and for educators who are in optimal positions to help develop resiliency in nursing students is not clearly identified or discussed.

Throughout the text, the contributors do not make any direct reference to the stressors associated with nursing students' academic or clinical experiences and the importance of developing resilience within those contexts. They only outline the potential stressors and issues nursing students might face in the healthcare environment following graduation. There is no direct reference to nursing student current coping strategies, potentially immature coping abilities, or lack of experience managing conflict situations. The authors have alluded to nursing students being unprepared to deal with the emotional and physical demands of healthcare environments through various vignettes but have only discussed the positive or effective ways of managing these types of situations.

McAllister, Lowe, and the contributing scholars have not clearly identified previous coping strategies, current life stressors, university-based stressors, or cultural-based/values stressors and how to work through those issues in relation to developing resiliency in the nursing student population. According to Jackson, et al. (2011), "relatively little empirical work has examined the experiences of undergraduate nursing students in the context of negative workplace cultures, and even fewer studies have explored how students develop and enact strategies to counter hostile behaviours in the clinical workplace (p. 102)." The authors' of the *Resilient Nurse: Empowering Your Practice* have missed this important concept in their discussions regarding resiliency development for nursing students', instead their main focus is on the new graduate and building resiliency throughout their careers.

Overall, this book provided a background for the importance of resiliency development for nursing graduates and how to foster the continued growth of resilience throughout our careers. Learning activities at the end of each chapter could be used by educators/readers to enhance critical reflections, integrate resiliency strategies, identify protective/adaptive capacities, and to

identify resources or alternatives to ensure ongoing resiliency growth and support for oneself and one's colleagues in relation to nursing workplace challenges and perceived stressors.

As a nursing faculty member and a nursing professional for over 20 years I can relate to the issue of enhancing resiliency in the nursing workforce. Developing teaching and learning strategies in nursing programs that address resiliency strategies will contribute to empowerment, personal satisfaction and self-care, effective leadership, support for colleagues, and hope and vision for the future as we learn from situations and utilize resiliency strategies to manage adverse events in the workplace. The authors indicate that this resiliency may also effectively change current horizontal violence workplace cultures.

After reading this text there are a number of educational interventions that I can utilize in my nursing course offerings to enhance personal resilience in nursing students and potentially reduce the negative effects of future workplace adversity. Having students develop an initial understanding of what resiliency is, how it is impacted by situational stressors, and what resilient behaviours can be utilized to counteract adversity would facilitate personal growth and awareness and provide a solid foundation for future reflection and action. In addition, having students step out of their comfort zone and challenge their ideas is one of the steps involved in fostering resilience (p. 17). Integrating storytelling as a teaching strategy is also encouraged as the editors have clearly indicated that it is the power of storytelling and being able to recall the story and its associated learning that is most important to remembering concepts concerning resiliency.

Case studies and storytelling can be used in an experiential learning format to encourage 1) critical thinking, 2) the freedom to ask questions, 3) the resources on which to search for and utilize evidence-based resources, 4) the confidence to reflect on those enquiries, and 5) the ability to develop plans for action individually and in group formats will also contribute to the building of resiliency strategies in the nursing student population. Continuing to nurture relationships and networks through group based activities while encouraging novice nursing students' interactions with seasoned nurses (in clinical and in theory based courses) should extend the concept of a 'collegial culture' beyond the university environment into the clinical-based environment (p. 117-118). Fostering these relationships should allow for ongoing development of professional networks and support systems to help ease the transition into the workplace environment. I look forward to being a proactive advocate for resiliency in nursing educational settings; the strategies proposed by the authors provide a solid foundation on which to further enhance my academic instruction.

Disclaimer: The author has disclosed that she has no significant relationships with, or financial interest in, any commercial companies pertaining to this review.

References

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