

## Why Wellness and Self-Care Matters

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Self-care among health care personnel is an important component of their ability to provide quality health care to patients. Adopting a foundation of healthy practices such as a healthy lifestyle is the very same premise to which Florence Nightingale attested. As a testament to the Nurses' Health Study, it is no wonder nurses can influence health care and make a profound contribution to scientific knowledge. From a historical praxis and lens, criteria that were examined were cardiovascular disease, oral contraceptive use, and cancer, have dictated health practice guidelines for the masses since its original cohort in 1976.

What better way to integrate lifestyle content than in nursing schools. For example, nutrition is recognized by NANDA-I Taxonomy as one of 13 domains to nursing practice (Gaines, 2022). Nutrition is weaved into the nursing curricula in one form or another. From diabetes mellitus to cardiovascular health, nutrition has an impact on health. There are many other lifestyle pillars to consider as well, such as sleep and physical activity. An unhealthy diet, lack of sleep, and lack of physical activity yielded negative outcomes among nurses, staff morale, and nursing care to patients (Bak et al., 2020).

The Healthy Nurse Healthy National Initiatives, vetted by the American Nurses Association (ANA), was developed in 2017 as a response to reports of nurses being less healthy than the average American (ANA Enterprise, 2017). Despite nurses being proactive for their patients, nurses tend to forget about their own self-care. With the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses have been on the frontlines where they endured burnout from being overworked and stressed.



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How can nurses foster wellness and self-care for themselves, and what can employers do to communicate support for one another? To be able to take care of others, you must learn how to take care of yourself; this is all part of the nurse's professional framework.

Wellness and self-care practices for faculty can contribute to a positive culture in the academic setting. This is important now more than ever due to the faculty shortage and the complex academic practice environment (Chao et al., 2020). Nursing schools have been turning away student applicants due to a faculty shortage and lack of clinical placement. The COVID-19 pandemic curtailed the available clinical locations (AACN, 2020, 2022). Salary is another reason there is a shortage of faculty; it is reported nurses earn more working at the bedside than in the academic setting (AACN, 2020, 2022).

To equip nursing students to become proficient nurses, we need positive role models who embody healthy behaviors. We can start by helping and empowering nursing faculty to help themselves and support each other; our constant mantra is 'nurses don't work in

silos.' Our goal is to provide competent and efficient professional care. Strategies, such as faculty workgroups discussing lifestyle behaviors and bringing in content experts, can enhance one's knowledge pertaining to nutrition, for instance, and dispel myths we may not know. There is also a strong overwhelming sense of diet culture that predominates our society, and it is important to get a sense of what our understanding and knowledge are pertaining to health; it is not about weight loss alone.

I had a student who shared in class that in 2020, she lost 30 pounds being on a specific diet in which she felt horrible mentally. When she told her nurse, the nurse stated, "I am so jealous." The student shared that although she lost the weight and she looked "great," she did not feel she was in a good place mentally and always felt deprived due to her diet restrictions. As a society, weight gain has been on the rise. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) reported 12.3% of Americans met their recommended intake of fruit, and 10% met their recommended intake of vegetables. I always tell students that one will always lose weight on a diet because

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there is little to no intake of processed foods in the first place; that is one thing all diets have in common.

In the past two decades, obesity rates in the United States have increased from 30.5% of adults in 1999 to 41.9% of adults in 2020 (Nurses Obesity Network, 2022). As a call to this crisis, nurses from The Nurses Obesity Network serve as role models to provide a multi-modal approach for those suffering from obesity (Nurses Obesity Network, 2022). It bears repeating the COVID-19 pandemic only made the situation worse. Children and teenagers were especially affected due to cancellation of gym class and sports practices, and in turn, increased screen time. It is no surprise almost half of U.S. adults reported gaining weight after the pandemic started.

I became certified in Lifestyle Medicine (LM) in 2020 from the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM), which focuses on 6 pillars: plant-forward nutrition, physical activity, restorative sleep, cessation of risky substances, positive social connection, and stress management (Lianov et al., 2022). Since then, I have been fortunate enough to teach an elective course called "Lifestyle Approaches and Well-Being in Nursing," now in its third semester, to senior nursing students. Although the ACLM is physician-driven, it fosters a collaborative approach among all health disciplines; over 9,000 members are in the organization worldwide (ACLM, 2021). There are many benefits in being an ACLM member. You can become a member of Member Interest Groups (MIGs), and I belong to several, the RN/APRN group being one of them. Many resources provide evidence-based research on the six pillars and are available to me. I utilize the LM textbook and curriculum, which can be used by any health discipline, and I tailor it to the nursing population.

For instance, LM emphasizes SMART goals, but I also introduce the nursing theorist, Dr. Imogene King, who developed the Theory of Goal Attainment in the 1960s. It describes a dynamic, interpersonal relationship in which a patient grows and develops to attain certain life goals. The theory explains factors which can affect the attainment of goals are roles, stress, space, and time. Dr. King described functional status in a patient as a crucial aspect of nursing as nurses are concerned with the care of clients in all facets of their lives. The good news is this year, there was the release of a new publication of a Lifestyle Nursing text-

book, written by nurses such as Dr. Judith Haber and Demetrius J. Porche (Merlo & Berra, 2022). These 33 chapters center on LM and its advanced approaches in nursing. Kathy Berra is one of the editors of the Lifestyle Nursing book.

I always start off my course providing disclaimers to students, one of them being I am not here to vilify anyone's lifestyle habits. This course serves to empower students and focus on the student. Keep in mind, I have known most of these students since they began their nursing curriculum; now, I am seeing them in their last semester. It is wonderful to see their growth, enrich their environment with knowledge, and more importantly, have them share their experiences with said pillars.

The course also includes invited speakers who are experts in their field, whether it be about nurse coaching, nutrition, sleep, gerontology, or health disparities, just to name a few. The course is geared to engage the students and become an experiential learning course as well. For example, I demonstrate the hierarchy of grains, oats being the example. I show them the different types of oats from least to most processed, its nutrition profile, and mineral/vitamin assimilation and absorption. Many students were not aware oatmeal is derived from oat groats, which looks like long grain rice. I have received microgrants from the ACLM where we can host 'lunch and learn' and I had students learn about growing sprouts in a mason jar, which also got approved for a microgrant. This activity has been very enriching for students as they learn about the nutritional content of these vegetables and the idea they can grow these vegetables in a mason jar.

Many opportunities could be made available to students as they learn about wellness and self-care. Adopting any lifestyle behavior involves a change, and most people are ambivalent about making that change. It is a personal choice; therefore, an evaluation of familial and cultural values would need to be addressed to fit the needs of the client. As with any change, a supportive network will facilitate change in one's lifestyle (Lin et al., 2020).

Nurses play a vital role in advocating for the health of their communities. One way to facilitate is to see programs geared toward healthy practices. The Bellevue Clinic's Plant-Based Lifestyle Medicine Program in New York City allows students to observe the patient

intake history with the health care provider; most providers are led by medical doctors, but they recently hired a nurse practitioner on their team. This is especially important for nursing students to see and hopefully inspire them to realize programs are developing to address these lifestyle behaviors. There are specific considerations when addressing diverse populations related to health care access and affordability. As with any organization, there may be individuals who may not support this program; however, it is important to heighten awareness on these benefits because it can improve morale as well as productivity.

There is robust evidence to suggest that unequivocally, integration of wellness and health within the nursing discipline will foster knowledge and support for both students and faculty (Chao et al., 2020; Shea et al., 2018). As health care becomes even more complex, nursing needs to be grounded based on lifestyle behaviors and its impact on health. It is hoped teaching professional students will change their perspective on health and wellness. The six pillars of LM are not a novel idea; however, nurses can proactively engage and manage self-care behaviors and well-being. Furthermore, it underscores the fact that as health care professionals, nursing students will be equipped with the foundational knowledge to counsel patients based on their own learning of health-promoting behaviors and well-being. It is hoped the depth of LM will continue to grow and will be emphasized within academia. **DN**

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**DEAN's Notes** is indexed in Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature.

*DEAN's Notes* is published four times a year (winter, spring, summer, and fall) by Anthony J. Jannetti Inc., East Holly Avenue, Box 56, Pitman, New Jersey 08071-0056. Telephone 856.256.2300. FAX 856.589.7463. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the express written permission of the publisher. Address changes should include mailing label and be forwarded to the publisher.

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### Exercising Students' Brains: Cognitive Micro Skills at Work

- NSNA and NLN Co-Sponsored Preconference Faculty Workshop
- Wednesday, April 12, 2022, from 8:00 am - 3:30 pm (6 hours)

As learners advance their patient care experiences, the cognitive skill of clinical judgment needed to manage complexity and ambiguity, is challenged. Situational awareness (SA) is a necessary precursor to cognitive processing skills that drive clinical reasoning and ultimately develop clinical judgment. Placing students in the center of our teachings and keeping them engaged in the experience allows for situated cognition, or learning in context, a concept at the forefront of contemporary educational reform. This workshop focuses on the use of "what-if rehearsing" a necessary strategy to challenge today's contempo-

rary learner. You will be immersed in the use of a brain-based teaching strategy that provides the necessary cognitive reasoning micro-skill development needed to build clinical judgement.

### Learning Outcomes:

- Define situated cognition and the link to situational awareness.
- Discuss the connections between situational awareness and clinical judgment.
- Explore a process (ARISE) to help learners increase their situational awareness and, therefore, advance their clinical judgment.
- Discuss how the use of micro-skill rehearsing to prepare learners for Next Gen NCLEX.

**Speakers: Dr. Susan Forneris** is a former Professor of Nursing at St. Catherine University, St. Paul, MN and

is currently the Director for the National League for Nursing Division for Innovation in Education Excellence, Washington, DC. She is author of the publication *Critical Conversations: The NLN Guide for Teaching Thinking* and most recently, *Critical Conversations: From Monologue to Dialogue*.

**Dr. Michelle C. Moulton** is the Senior Manager for the Division for Innovation in Education Excellence at the National League for Nursing in Washington, DC. Specialty areas in nursing education include experiential teaching-learning strategies, curriculum integration, "teaching thinking" and debriefing.

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