

# Nursing School SURVIVAL GUIDE



*Advice and tips for your success... from your Goodwin  
College Student Nurse Association*

*Nursing School*

# **SURVIVAL GUIDE**

Greetings and welcome to the nursing program!

How well we remember the day we received our letters of acceptance into the nursing program...the excitement, the joy, and the absolute and overwhelming fear of what have we gotten ourselves into? Can we really do this?

***Well, the answer is yes, you can, and you will.***

It will not be easy; after all, if it were then everyone would be a nurse. Who wouldn't want the long hours, the stress, and the sacrifice of a personal life? Not to mention after you graduate and actually go to work...

It takes a special person to be a nurse, and you're here because you are that person. You have before you the daunting task of getting through nursing school and passing your NCLEX exam. Although it may seem to be very far away, your pinning will be here before you know it. What you need to do, is simply get from here to there, and the advice and tips within this survival guide are meant to help you do it!

Best of luck,

The Goodwin College Student Nurse Association



sleep deprivation  
imbalanced nutrition  
interrupted family processes  
lack of social interaction  
disturbed energy field

## **Nursing Student Survival Plan**

1) **Take care of yourself.** Eat well, exercise, and remember to rest and decompress!

This is your top priority. Nursing school is hard. It is demanding. It is stressful. To get through it, you must remember to take care of yourself.

### **~Student suggestions for eating well~**

a) Cook meals ahead of time: pick one day a week to prepare several days' worth of meals and freeze them.

b) Learn to love a crock pot: Many meals can be prepared the day before and left to cook while you're in class, clinical, or studying for an exam.

## Crock Pot Quickies...

### Italian roast chicken

5-6 lb fresh roaster  
1 chicken bouillon cube  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 rounded tablespoon of Italian seasoning  
Salt and pepper to taste  
1 teaspoon fresh ground garlic (granulated may be substituted)  
6 small red skin potatoes (washed)  
2 cups fresh green beans  
Savory Roast Pork tenderloin  
3 -4 lb pork tenderloin  
1 each: chicken & beef bouillon cube  
Browning sauce (Gravy Master is best ☺)  
1 tablespoon chopped garlic (granulated garlic may be substituted)  
½ teaspoon rosemary  
Salt and pepper to taste  
6 small redskin potatoes (washed)  
2 cups carrots

Place bouillon cube and chicken in crockpot

Rub chicken with olive oil

Place potatoes and green beans around chicken

Add Italian seasoning, garlic, and salt and pepper

Set on low, and go! Typically cooks in 4-5 hours, but some crockpots take as long as 8.

Place bouillon cubes and pork loin in crock pot

Rub tenderloin with browning sauce

Place potatoes and carrots around pork loin roast

Sprinkle garlic, rosemary, salt and pepper over all

Set on low and go! Typically takes 6-7 hours, but varies by crockpot.

\*More crockpot and quick meal recipes will soon be available in our GCSNA cookbook...coming soon to the Goodwin College campus bookstore ☺

### ~Student suggestions on exercise~

Class, clinical, exams, work, children, housework, yard work...and you're supposed to have time or energy to exercise? What would we tell our patients if they asked us that? ABSOLUTELY!

Often we feel that the time spent on exercising is time better spent studying, but you can do BOTH at the same time. Multitasking is a nursing skill you need to develop, so why not start now? 😊

1) **Beg, borrow or buy a recorder.** Listening to lectures while walking, jogging, or working out at the gym is a great way to retain content and maintain your good health...there's nothing more motivating than listening to the consequences of heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes while you're working hard to prevent them ;)

2) Make flash cards and bring them to the gym to read while walking the treadmill. Post flow charts and lab values up on the wall of your home where you work out. Be creative!

### **~Student suggestions on sleep~**

Never, ever, ever underestimate the value of getting enough sleep. The benefits to your general health are well known, but did you know how much you sleep can affect your ability to remember what you learn? Read on...

Your brain requires sleep to commit your short term memories to long term memories! Check this out...

Brain scans have revealed how information we learn during the day is squirrelled away into long-term memory while we sleep.

During a good night's rest, memories of recent events are shifted from one part of the brain to another, a process that is crucial for developing long-term memories, according to a report published today in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The researchers, lead by Dr Philippe Peigneux at the University of Liege in Belgium, gave two teams the task of learning their way around a virtual 3D town by training them on a computer.

Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which can take repeated snapshots of activity in the brain, they witnessed people's memories of how to navigate being transferred from a region of the brain that deals with remembering directions, the hippocampus, to a part that governs how we move, the striatum.

One of the teams was then told to stay awake all night, playing video games. Two days later, both groups were again given brain scans, and the scans showed that the group which had rested well was using a different part of the brain to navigate around the virtual town, the striatum.

The sleep-deprived team was still using the hippocampus, suggesting that the information had not yet been committed to long-term memory.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2006/apr/18/uknews>

Although pulling an all-nighter to study may be tempting, you are not going to retain the information you learn in this way. Your best bet is to create a study schedule that permits for adequate sleep each night.

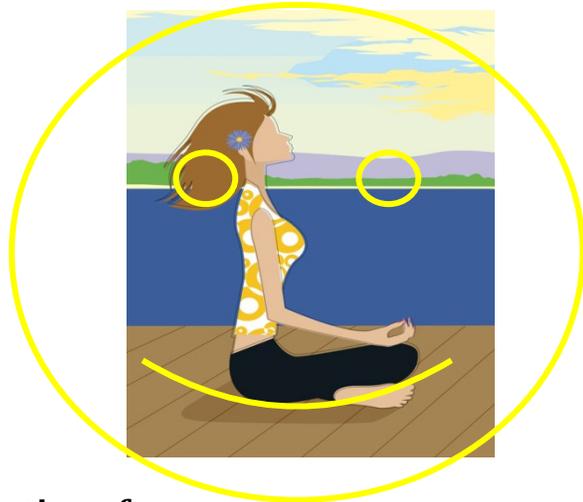
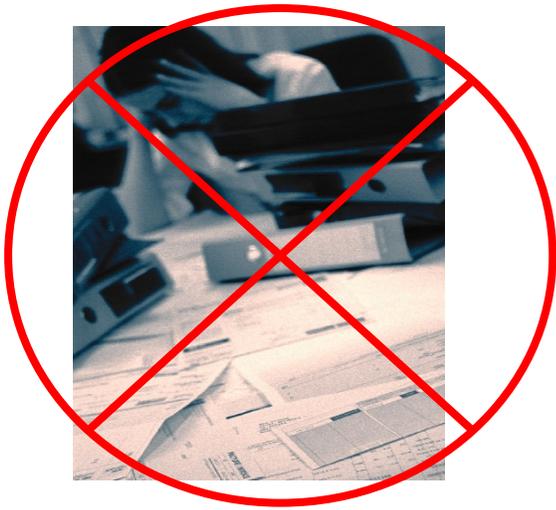


### **~Student suggestions to decompress~**

This one will be the hardest one of all for you to put into practice, but it may be the most important advice you get. When Jan Costello tells you at the end of each semester to take those weeks off to reconnect with your family and friends, listen! Those brief breaks allow you to rest and recharge for the next semester. They are NOT an opportunity to “get ahead.” You will be sacrificing your time with you family during session and having that time in between to reconnect is critical not just to your well-being, but theirs as well.

During semester is harder, but every successful student will tell you that you must “make time for play time.” Every student beginning this program should physically create a schedule. Plan a time for all your responsibilities, including a minimum of three hours of study for each hour of lecture. Several hours each week should be dedicated to “play time.” This can be family game or movie night, me time with a favorite book, or a night out with your best friend. Do not think of it as time away from studying, but as a recharging of the battery to prevent burnout.

Remember ...to take care of others you must first **TAKE CARE OF YOU!**



### ~Student suggestions for success~

There are many different tips and suggestions for studying to ensure successful navigation through this program. The real key to success is to find what works for you. Every student has their own unique learning style, and it is important to develop a routine that works for you! However, if your pre-nursing learning style has been to cram three weeks of material into a two hour pre-test study jam, you will likely need to make some changes.

### ~7 Keys to success~

- 1) Use your brain... all of it! Your brain processes different types of information in different ways, so why would you only try to learn information in one way? Read it, write it, say it, and listen to it. It makes sense to use these different pathways in your brain to better learn and retain information, right? Of course!
- 2) Take rest breaks. When preparing for an exam, plan to take a 5-10 minute break for every 1-2 hours of study. Get up, stretch your legs, look out a window, whatever...this will allow your brain to process the material you are studying and will prevent mental fatigue.
- 3) Sleep... we are back to that again. Many students have reported better retention of knowledge when they did a brief review of material before going

to bed for the evening. It makes sense when you think about how our brain converts our short term memory to long term memories. 😊

4) Make connections! Always think about the material your learning and how it connects to what you already know. Try not to simply memorize facts, but see the connections between them. You will hear the term “thinking and linking” and this is an important skill to develop while studying. If you think and link instead of memorize, you will develop the ability to ferret out the answers to questions you may not immediately recognize. This is critical thinking and it is the key to passing your NCLEX!

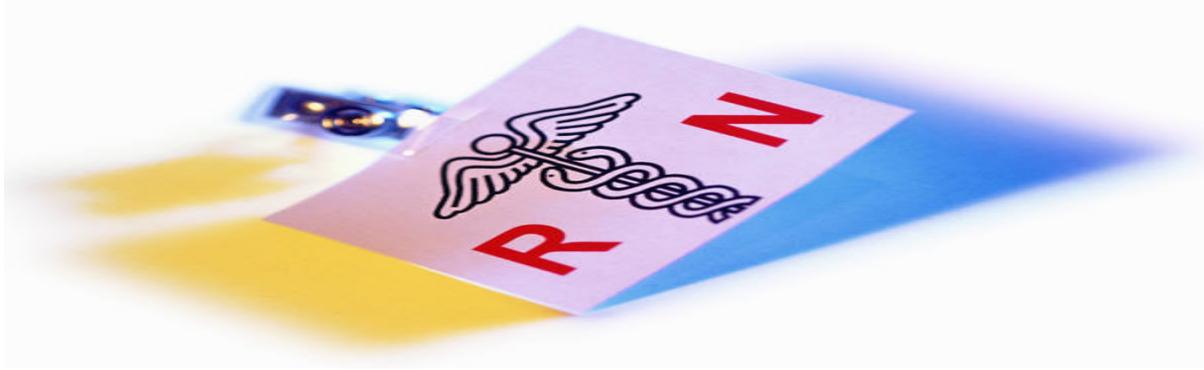
5) Own your test taking strategies (TTS)! The best way to develop TTS is to start doing NCLEX questions NOW. Locate a resource that will allow you to answer NCLEX style questions that pertain to your nursing lecture material. Use them to enhance your understanding of the material, as well as prepare you to take your finals at the end of each semester. Set a goal to do at least fifty questions a week in nursing 100-200, and increase that to 200 questions a week by nursing 220.

6) Utilize the available resources. This program has been put together to help you succeed. Your instructors go the extra mile to be available to you, and there is free tutoring for anyone who needs or wants it. Be your own advocate if you need assistance.

7) Be a part of your nursing community.

~ It is understandable that with the demands of school and personal obligations some would feel like they have nothing left to give. I ask you to see more broadly than that. You are part of something bigger than yourself. You are a Goodwin College nursing student. You are soon to be part of a larger nursing community. You have chosen this path because you want to create positive change within your community. That work starts now, today, this minute. Our student nurse association is helping to improve the nursing program not just for ourselves, but for all the students who will follow us. The GCSNA has established fundraising efforts that have positively impacted seriously ill and underprivileged children in our community. We are in the

process of establishing scholarships to benefit the nursing students who actively participate in the GCSNA. We need each and every one of you to actively participate in these efforts. Attend the meetings, volunteer for fundraising efforts, and choose to be a leader in your nursing community 😊



### **THE CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE**

During the program the focus of every student is often predominately academic as one must pass their exams and prepare for taking the NCLEX board exam. By comparison, passing the clinical element seems far less intimidating! However, it is critical that you prepare for your clinical experiences as you would prepare for an exam. Each clinical offers you the opportunity to put your academic learning to work to develop your skills, your bedside manner, and your growth as a nurse.

#### **~Student suggestions for clinical success~**

1) PRACTICE your clinical skills. While in the clinical setting do your assessment several times a shift for practice. You can listen to lung sounds, bowel sounds, and heart rate more frequently than ordered as long as it is not invasive or uncomfortable for patient. Practice vitals and assessments on family members and friends outside of clinical. The more you do this, the more natural it will become!

2) Seek out and request opportunities to try a new skill. The clinical environment is a learning one and your chance to perform skills in a safe environment. ASK your clinical instructor to find you the opportunity to perform a skill that you have not yet done. It is far less intimidating to gain this experience under the guidance of your instructor!

- 3) Invest in a pocket skills guide. You can take this with you to clinical for easy reference.
- 4) Be a team player. Help your peers, nursing assistant and nurses in your clinical facility when they perform clinical skills. This will increase your knowledge base and clinical confidence, as well as earn you the respect of your peers!
- 5) Observe constantly....watch how other RNs and nursing assistants interact with patients or perform clinical skills. Review charts to see how assessments are documented and nursing notes are written. Listen to how teaching is performed.
- 6) Utilize other tools. Google lung sounds and heart sounds. There are plenty of good internet sites and you tube videos to supplement your learning.
- 7) Ask questions! The only stupid question is the one you don't ask. Clinical is your opportunity to learn the practical art of nursing so be persistent in your pursuit of clinical knowledge!

***“Nursing is an art: and if it is to be made an art, it requires an exclusive devotion as hard a preparation, as any painter's or sculptor's work; for what is the having to do with dead canvas or dead marble, compared with having to do with the living body...”***

***~Florence Nightingale***

