

Med Monthly

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**NEEDED:
MORE
RESIDENCY
SLOTS BUT
WHO WILL
PAY?**

NOTES FROM AN EXPERIENCED NURSE TO A NEW GRAD

Words of wisdom
for your new career
from a seasoned pro

By Tera Tuten



You made it — you got through nursing school; and after celebrating your fantastic accomplishment, it's time to start thinking about the future. As prepared as your education has made you, nothing is the same as actually working in the field. This article is full of advice from experienced nurses and even new nurses who have learned what's necessary to survive the realm of nursing.

Choose Your First Job Wisely

Don't jump into any position out there. Your first job will have a huge impact on what you learn and the experience you get, so it's not a choice to be taken lightly. When considering which job to choose, think of the following:

- What kind of orientation do they offer?
- Will it be educational, thorough and flexible?
- What is the stance on continuing education?
- Is there any room for advancement?
- What is the scheduling like?
- What kind of shifts will you be working?

Talk to nurses already working at the hospital or office. Do they enjoy working there? What are the pros and cons? Hearing from someone already in the environment will give you amazing insight into the inner-workings and culture of the employer. Extensively research your job options, but also make sure to keep an open mind. The position you've always dreamed of might not be your first, and if you want a job at the hospital you're applying to, keep in mind that you might have to start doing something else and then work on switching positions. Being flexible will pay off in

the long-run. You can also consider a temporary or travel nurse position to test out different facilities and units before committing to a permanent nursing position.

Find a Mentor

When first starting out, you might have an image in your head of who you'd like to be and what work you'd like to be doing. However, it's immensely beneficial to have a physical example of what you're striving for. A mentor can really help you focus on what you hope to achieve and will also give you a better means to achieve it. If you really respect and admire a nurse, then asking him or her for advice and feedback will only bring you one step closer to success.

When choosing a mentor, make sure it's someone who's very experienced and very knowledgeable about nursing. Don't be afraid to get even more specific; if you have a certain specialty you're interested in or a nursing job you've always dreamed of having, find someone who is an expert in your target area. Your mentor will be able to tell you how he or she got that position and can potentially help you get there yourself.

Once you have a mentor, make sure to ask questions and show that you have a lot of respect for what the person knows and has accomplished. Avoid asking really general questions. Instead of asking, "What's that?" ask about the specific issue and explain why you're confused. If you properly explain what you're interested in learning, your mentor will be better able to educate you.

Take Care of Yourself

You spend all day caring about your patients. Shifts can be long, and the problems can be plenty, so it's easy to

become consumed in your work. It's extremely admirable that you want to help others, but you must make sure that you take some time out for yourself. No one can function on a day-to-day basis without burning out unless they spend some time relaxing and doing things for themselves.

When you leave work, do something you love. If you neglect your own desires to have fun and relax, your dissatisfaction will spread to the workplace, and your demeanor will suffer overall. It may be difficult, but try to find the proper balance in your life. You'll have to find time for your work, your family and yourself, and even though that may seem impossible, it's definitely doable.

Try not to take too much overtime or overwork yourself. Even if you feel like you're being productive at the time, you'll start to stress and the tension can decrease your overall productivity. Exercise and eat healthy, because if your health is suffering, every aspect of your life will begin to suffer. Don't spend all of your time at work — spend ample time for yourself to maintain your personal happiness and thus make your work experience even better, too.

Conclusion

Now that you're out of school, you'll face new challenges, but you'll also encounter new rewards. If you make good decisions, you'll be able to learn all you can and advance in your career without letting stress overtake you. Focus on your goals, how you can accomplish them and how you can stay happy while you're swamped with work. Always keep in mind why you love nursing, and remember to maintain a positive attitude.

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