THE Art OF NURSING
A Nurses Week Event

Yikes! I'm Overwhelmed at Work… 5 Tips to Increase Resilience

At any point in their career, a nurse can experience overwhelm.

A nursing student may feel pressured by final exams, group assignments, and clinicals happening all at once. A new graduate nurse tries to learn the ins and outs of a brand new career. Even the more experienced nurse can feel stressed by electronic charting, policy updates, or simply the sheer number of patients needing care on any given shift.

If you're a nurse and you're overwhelmed… don't panic. This is completely normal. You're not alone. Now that you understand it's OK to experience a bit of stress in your nursing career, you can act.

You can DO something to cope with everything coming your way.

Here Are 5 Strategies to Use When Feeling Overwhelmed at Work

1 *Find a Resilience Buddy.* Form a support team of nurses also interested in healthy coping, resilience strategies, or work-life balance. For me, when I have a partner who's eating healthy or exercising regularly, I am much more likely to stay on track. Look for like-minded colleagues and spread the stress reduction around the workplace!

2 *Pivot and Stay Nimble.* Resilience is being able to back bounce from challenges. Overwhelm is the exact opposite. When you're stressed, you feel as though the weight of the world is on your shoulders. Being able to view obstacles as lessons to be learned is the way to bounce back from challenge. Keep an open mind. Look left, right, and even upside down for answers. Stay flexible as you seek out solutions to the problems on hand.

3 *Tend to What Matters.* While, I know that this can be challenging, it's the only way to handle overwhelm. For example, when I have a lot to do at work… I stop. I stay calm and figure out what's the first step I can take right now. By taking action steps, you move forward. Focus on priorities first. Do one thing at a time and watch the never-ending 'to-do' list shrink quickly into complete success!

4 *Ensure Proper Rest.* One of the best ways to deal with overwhelm is through break periods and rest. Now, I know that when you have a lot going on it feels like you can't take a break. But guess what? This is actually counter-productive to your progress. The only way to ease the stress… is to stop for a bit of time. I'm not talking a major vacation here. A 15 minute walk outside can clear your head. Whatever it takes to bring yourself away from the work for a short time… so you can come back re-energized and ready to go.

5 *Keep an Open Mind.* Overwhelm can occur when we think we know the answers to everything. Let's take a look at a real-world example here:

Let's say the staff is looking to fix a day-night shift communication issue. The group thinks that shadowing each other on the various shifts will improve shift-to-shift communication. They look for literature on best practices related to nurse shadowing. Well, this project team actually needs to take a step back and first ask the literature what the best practices are related to improving communication among shifts. This will provide them with ALL of the possible solutions, instead of just narrowing it down to what the committee thinks will work.

Stay curious; ask questions; and be open to possibility. Relieving overwhelm happens when we keep an open mind and a flexible nature.

> "For fast-acting relief, try slowing down."
>
> ~ Lily Tomlin ~

About the Author

Keynote speaker and virtual conference host, Elizabeth Scala MSN/MBA, RN, partners with hospitals, nursing schools, and nurse associations to transform the field of nursing from the inside out. As the bestselling author of 'Nursing from Within', Elizabeth guides nurses and nursing students to a change in perspective, helping them make the inner shift needed to better maneuver the sometimes challenging realities of being a caregiver. Elizabeth received her dual master's degree from Johns Hopkins University. She is also a certified coach and Reiki Master Teacher. Elizabeth lives in Maryland with her supportive husband and playful pit bull.