

Tips to Surviving Nursing School

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You're going back to school ... congratulations! It's an exciting time, and one probably filled with anxiety and anticipation as you may be wondering, "how can I juggle school, family, and work?" I'll clear that up for you right now — you can't! But you can learn to balance and prioritize.

I returned to college for a masters degree when I was in my forties. It was a challenge to balance my life, and at times I felt stretched so thin I was sure that I would snap in two. Still, the back-to-school experience was worth the investment of time and money, and it continues to pay off to this day. Following are some tips based on what I learned along the way...

Finding Study Time

It can be difficult to find study time when you are already busy. So prioritizing is key. Start by making a daily and weekly task list coding tasks according to priority. Try color coding, or using symbols that are easy for you to recognize. For instance, what absolutely must be done? What should be done?

10 TIPS TO HELP YOU STUDY

- 1 Study at the library if you can't study undisturbed at home.
- 2 Schedule your study time at the same time every day so you have a routine. If you have children, have a friend babysit so you have no interruptions. You can always return the favor.
- 3 Form a study group with your peers, set a schedule, and decide what material will be covered. This helps prepare everyone. Make sure you are all committed to using the time wisely. Schedule some down time to stretch, chat, or have a snack – this can help alleviate stress and offers some down time.
- 4 Incorporate your research paper deadlines and exam dates into your daily planner so that they don't sneak up on you. Break large or difficult tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks. For instance, set a deadline for doing the research, outline, first draft, and so on. Avoid last minute mania. You'll do yourself and your nervous system a big favor.
- 5 Promise yourself a reward once you finish an exam, paper, or class, such as dinner out, treating yourself to a favorite book or magazine, or maybe even a day trip somewhere.
- 6 Need tutoring? Consider checking out America Online's Academic Assistance Center (AAC). Volunteer tutors are available in math, history, English, and the sciences, from the elementary to college level. Simply type in the keyword "AAC."
- 7 Need to research a nursing topic? Narrow your research and save precious time by checking out a search engine just for nurses, courtesy of *Nursing Spectrum*. Just type in <http://www.nursingwebsearch.com>.
- 8 Rewrite class notes while the lecture is still fresh in your mind. This will help eliminate gaps in your notes, and give you time to clarify any confusion. Record your study notes, and listen to the tape while doing the dishes or driving.
- 9 Keep a resource list handy of emergency phone numbers or e-mail addresses for your professors, classmates, and study group in case you have last-minute questions.
- 10 Don't procrastinate! Last-minute cramming for a test or paper will only make you more stressed.