LPN to RN

6th Edition

Transitions

Achieving Success in Your New Role

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6th edition

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in Mexico

LWW.com

To the compassionate souls embracing the noble journey of nursing, may your hearts be as resilient as your hands are gentle. May you find strength in every challenge, solace in every care, and fulfillment in the healing touch you bring to those in need.

I hope you will find inspiration within these pages to fuel your unwavering commitment to healing, kindness, and the profound impact you will make on countless lives. This book is dedicated to the caregivers, the healers, and the future leaders of the healthcare world. Your journey begins here; may it be filled with compassion, courage, and boundless love.

—Linda Lee Phelps

Preface

Choosing to reenter the rigors of academic life is a monumental decision for any LPN/LVN returning to school. Doing so is both a personal and a financial investment and can be characterized by extreme highs and lows. This new path challenges the aspiring associate degree nurse (ADN) to operate in a sometimes chaotic new world that calls for nonlinear thinking, balancing many simultaneous challenges, and a global perspective. It also requires the nurse to be an independent practitioner while functioning collaboratively within an expanded and more specialized healthcare team. *LPN to RN Transitions: Achieving Success in Your New Role*, 6th Edition, serves as a guide to prepare students for a successful journey.

The previous five editions of this book were authored by Nicki Harrington and Cynthia Lee Terry. Their dedication and expertise helped countless LPN students successfully transition to an RN program. The 6th edition welcomes a new author, Linda Lee Phelps. This updated edition incorporates contemporary research, evidence-based practices, and real-world scenarios to reflect the dynamic nature of healthcare. Each chapter guides students through the complexities of role transition, addressing the challenges and opportunities unique to this professional evolution. The inclusion of cutting-edge information, current healthcare policies, and advancements in nursing education ensures that learners are well prepared for the realities of modern nursing practice. This text is designed to be used by students in a variety of adult learning settings, including independent study, classroom collaborative workgroups, online discussions, and interactions in virtual learning spaces. Whether you are a student embarking on this transformative journey or an educator guiding others through it, this textbook was developed to be a comprehensive and indispensable resource, providing the knowledge and support needed for a successful transition from LPN to RN.

Today's nurse must be resourceful, inquisitive, politically active, and must consistently seek additional knowledge, competencies, and career growth to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world. Through the lens of changing societal trends, students are asked to think critically about their personal and professional viewpoints and values. This text encourages the application of evidence-based research, critical thinking, and clinical judgment as the student confronts challenges as a critical member of the healthcare team. The content of this book promotes learning for diverse student populations with a variety of learning styles and experiential backgrounds. In addition, it provides students with useful tools and practical strategies for balancing their job, school, and personal lives while achieving their educational and professional goals.

FEATURES

This textbook has been thoughtfully revised and updated to provide aspiring nurses with the latest information, insights, and best practices in the field. Features that students and educators value include case studies of student experiences at the beginning of each chapter, which assist the reader in realizing that the journey to associate degree

nursing is not an isolated one—it is shared by other students of all ages and life backgrounds. Students may recognize their own experiences in one or more of these case studies and realize that others face similar challenges.

Strategies used throughout the text to help the student with role transition to the ADN program include interactive student exercises and the development of a personal education plan based on the student's own experience along with their program's philosophy, curricular framework, and student learning objectives. The "Thinking Critically" feature provides students with opportunities to reflect on presented material, to examine application of theoretical content to the clinical practice setting, and to share perspectives with peers and in a group setting. Other helpful features are learning outcomes, sample NCLEX-RN style questions, and "On the Web" boxes that refer readers to useful resources.

Each chapter employs evidence-based practice techniques to enhance clinical judgment and to foster success in the transition to the professional role. Updated resources, websites, case studies, and real-world examples provide students with the opportunity to further explore individual topics and to enhance their learning by incorporating the latest advancements, research findings, and educational methodologies. These revisions ensure that the content is relevant, engaging, comprehensive, and aligned with the changing landscape of the nursing profession. This book serves as a dynamic platform for students to deepen their knowledge, to foster critical thinking skills, and to stay abreast of the evolving developments within nursing, ultimately preparing them for success in their academic and professional journeys.

TEXT ORGANIZATION

Unit I, The Transition Process, empowers learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the transformative phase in their nursing careers from LPN/LVN to RN. Updated college success strategies address a more diverse, multicultural student population. Support and resource information is included for underrepresented communities, individuals of color, men, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and students for whom English may not be their first language.

Chapters 1 through 6 explore the significance of continuous learning in the evolving field of nursing. As aspiring RNs embark on this journey, understanding the intricacies of role development becomes paramount to their success in assuming the responsibilities and expectations of an RN. The text explains how students can assess their preferred learning styles and also covers emotional intelligence, study skills, and organizational skills. Recognizing that each individual's journey is unique, each chapter equips students with the knowledge and skills essential for success in their educational pursuits and provides guidance on tailoring a plan that aligns with personal and professional goals.

The concepts of "role overload" and "role transition" are expanded to provide additional support for contemporary students experiencing financial difficulties, extended work commitments, and personal challenges exacerbated by the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the prevailing economic conditions. Support resources are included for students reentering academia who may face challenges navigating web pages and virtual learning spaces. Resources and coping strategies are explored for veterans pursuing nursing programs who may face additional challenges as they adjust to both the student role and civilian life.

Chapter 7 has been extensively updated to provide students with the latest information and insights essential for success in taking exams in the revised Next-Generation NCLEX (NGN) format. The NGN marked a transformative shift in the nursing licensure examination as well as a crucial evolution in nursing education and practice. The NGN was introduced with the primary objective of enhancing clinical judgment skills among nursing professionals and better aligning the examination with the realities of contemporary clinical practice, ultimately advancing the level of public safety in healthcare. The updated chapter not only describes the modifications to the examination but also describes the new perspectives, case studies, and scenarios that mirror the challenges and nuances of real-world clinical practice.

Unit II, Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Practice, explores the core competencies and knowledge essential for the modern that allow them to handle the complexities of professional practice. The nursing student learns to navigate the regulatory frameworks and standards that guide nursing practice, and they gain valuable insights into ethical considerations that form the foundation of nursing practice. Students are encouraged to examine the cognitive processes that are integral to nursing decision-making. They hone advanced critical thinking skills and clinical judgment skills that nurses must possess to respond effectively to complex situations in the dynamic and fast-paced healthcare environment.

UNIT III, Role Concepts Essential for RN Practice, is divided into three parts:

- Part A, "Provider of Care," explores the essential role concepts for RN practice, emphasizing assessment, communication, and teaching as integral components of the nurse's role. Chapter 10 examines the foundational aspects of the nursing process, focusing on the critical role of assessment in delivering comprehensive and patient-centered care. Students explore the process in which nurses translate assessment findings into meaningful actions that address the holistic needs of their patients. In Chapter 11, from active listening to conveying empathy, students learn various communication strategies essential for establishing trust and fostering collaboration in diverse healthcare settings. Chapter 12 discusses the nurse in the pivotal role of educator. From assessing learning needs to developing effective teaching plans, students explore a comprehensive framework for nurses to impart knowledge and to empower individuals to take an active role in their health. With a focus on individualized teaching strategies, students discover how to adapt their educational approach to diverse patient populations, fostering a collaborative and informed healthcare experience.
- Part B, Manager of Care, provides an in-depth exploration of the managerial aspects of nursing, focusing on individualized client care, efficient time management, conflict resolution, and managing resources. These chapters empower the nursing student with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in their role as a manager of care, navigating the complexities of healthcare delivery with competence and professionalism. In Chapter 13, students discover the intricacies of managing unique client care, taking into account factors such as cultural background, age, and specific health conditions, and emphasizing the nurse's role as a dynamic and adaptable caregiver. From personalized care assessments to the coordination of interdisciplinary efforts, students explore practical insights into optimizing the quality of care delivery. Chapter 14 discusses efficient time management, conflict resolution, and managing resources, which are all paramount in allowing nurses to prioritize tasks while ensuring quality patient care. Students gain valuable insights about how to identify, address, and resolve conflicts, fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment.

- Part C, Member of the Discipline of Nursing, encompasses the professional, legal, and ethical dimensions that shape the nursing discipline. These chapters equip nursing students with the knowledge and ethical decision-making skills necessary to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, legal accountability, and ethical conduct within the dynamic and evolving healthcare landscape. Students explore the core tenets that define the profession, including standards of practice, continuing education, and professional development. These chapters emphasize the importance of upholding ethical standards, maintaining competence, and engaging in collaborative efforts to advance the nursing discipline. Students gain insights into the diverse responsibilities that characterize their professional commitment, from understanding the scope of practice to contributing to the evolution of healthcare policies. To gain an understanding of legal accountability in nursing practice, students navigate legal frameworks, licensure requirements, and the implications of negligence and malpractice in nursing. In addition, these chapters examine ethical considerations that are intrinsic to the fabric of nursing practice such as end-of-life care decisions, resource allocation, and cultural competence.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

A note about the language used in this book. Wolters Kluwer recognizes that people have a diverse range of identities, and we are committed to using inclusive and non-biased language in our content. In line with the principles of nursing, we strive not to define people by their diagnoses, but to recognize their personhood first and foremost, using as much as possible the language diverse groups use to define themselves, and including only information that is relevant to nursing care.

We strive to better address the unique perspectives, complex challenges, and lived experiences of diverse populations traditionally underrepresented in health literature. When describing or referencing populations discussed in research studies, we will adhere to the identities presented in those studies to maintain fidelity to the evidence presented by the study investigators. We follow best practices of language set forth by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association,* 7th Edition, but acknowledge that language evolves rapidly, and we will update the language used in future editions of this book as necessary.

A COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

To further facilitate teaching and learning, a carefully designed ancillary package has been developed to assist faculty and students.

RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTORS

Tools to assist you with teaching your course are available upon adoption of this text at http://thePoint.lww.com/Phelps6e.

- An **e-book** gives you access to the book's full text and images online.
- A **Test Generator** lets you put together exclusive new tests from a bank containing hundreds of questions to help you in assessing your students' understanding of the material. Test questions link to chapter learning objectives.
- **PowerPoint Presentations** provide an easy way for you to integrate the textbook with your students' classroom experience, either via slide shows or handouts.

Multiple-choice and true/false questions are integrated into the presentations to promote class participation and allow you to use i-clicker technology.
- An **Image Bank** allows you use the illustrations and tables from this textbook in your PowerPoint slides or as you see fit in your course.
- Sample **Syllabi** provide guidance for structuring your course.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

A set of free resources is available to help students review material and become even more familiar with vital concepts. Students can access these resources at http://thePoint. lww.com/Phelps6e using the codes printed in the front of their textbooks.

- **NCLEX-Style Review Questions** for each chapter help students review important concepts and practice for the NCLEX.
- **Journal Articles** offer access to current research available in Wolters Kluwer journals.

Acknowledgments

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the incredible individuals who made the creation of this book possible. To family, friends, and mentors who provided unwavering encouragement and support throughout this journey: Your belief in me has been a constant source of strength. To my students: Your curiosity and enthusiasm inspired the content; I learn from all of you every day. To my colleagues: Your collaboration and valuable insights greatly enriched the material.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the previous authors of this book, whose dedication and expertise laid the foundation for this edition. To Nicki Harrington and Cynthia Lee Terry: Your insightful content inspired me in this journey.

Special thanks to the dedicated editors and reviewers at Wolters Kluwer, especially Meredith Brittain, whose expertise and diligence shaped the manuscript into its final form: Your attention to detail and commitment to maintaining the highest standards have undoubtedly enhanced the quality of this book; I am deeply grateful for your patience, encouragement, and constructive feedback, which not only improved the manuscript but also enhanced my writing process.

—Linda Lee Phelps

Contents

Unit I

The Transition Process

Lifelong Learning: Returning to School

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the importance of lifelong learning in nursing.
2. Describe the process of reentry into the role of student.
3. Outline the stages of the return to the student role.
4. Design a plan for working effectively with your instructor.
5. Describe diverse learning styles.
6. Assess personal learning style.
7. Compare personal learning style with those described by theorists.
8. Develop beginning strategies for being successful in college.
9. Summarize learning resources that enhance the student's ability to be successful.
10. Examine methods to manage time effectively.
11. Give examples of effective study skills and strategies.
12. Design a win/win agreement with significant others for successful time management.
13. Design an individualized plan for a successful return to school.

KEY TERMS

abstract conceptualization	curriculum threads	netiquette
active experimentation	disintegration	program philosophy
active learner	diverse learning styles	reflective observation
assertiveness	educationally mobile	reintegration
clinical reasoning	evidence-based practice	resolution
concrete experimentation	honeymoon stage	returning to school syndrome (RTSS)
creative thinking	interprofessional collaborative team	student learning outcomes (SLOs)
critical thinking	learning style	win/win agreements
	lifelong learning	

Case STUDY

Sandy Martin has been a licensed practical nurse (LPN) for 10 years. Although she has always wanted to go back to school for her registered nurse (RN), marriage and a full-time job at a skilled nursing facility have kept her more than busy since graduation. In addition to raising two children, she has a mortgage, aging parents, and all the responsibilities that come with life. She never seems to have time for herself. Finally, with her two children

now in middle and high school and the nursing shortage at its highest in years, Sandy has decided to reduce her full-time work schedule and go back to school part time to seek an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN). However, as Sandy waits to talk to the nursing advisor about class requirements and prerequisites, she begins to worry. Can she really meet her current obligations and earn her degree? It is going to take her at least 3 to 5 years to finish her degree, which is a bit discouraging. Also, will she have retained enough information after all these years? From the time she was studying to be an LPN, she remembers the struggles she had with anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology, as well as her fear of clinical rotations and assignments. She also worries about whether she will "fit in" with the younger students. She hopes the nursing advisor will be able to help alleviate her concerns and help her through this journey.

Remember when you first made the decision to be a nurse? For many people, the desire to be a nurse revolved around wanting to help people who could not help themselves and putting caring into action. However, with your experience in the world of nursing as a licensed practical nurse/licensed vocational nurse (LPN/LVN), your vision and opinions of nursing may have changed somewhat. Perhaps your view of nursing differs from the views of other nurses. Your reasons for returning to school reflect changes in your life. Your reasons may include the desire to have more job opportunities, increase your job satisfaction, and expand the scope of your responsibilities, or you may be seeking self-improvement.

The fact that you are returning to school reflects the positive impact of the many changes that have occurred in your life and in society. At one time, attaining a license in practical/vocational nursing was seen as a terminal process; an LPN/LVN would not seek higher education. If an LPN/LVN wanted to continue their nursing education, it often meant starting over. Conversely, changes in the educational system have enhanced your ability to further your education, building on your prior knowledge, skills, and experience. The attrition rate of RNs is high, with many leaving in the first year of practice because of high-stress environments, lack of acceptance by peers in the clinical setting, and undesirable quality of working life (Mayes & Cochran, 2023; Norful et al., 2023; NSI, 2023). However, your foundation as an LPN/LVN has given you a preview to what registered nursing practice will be, and your choice to pursue professional registered nursing licensure and an associate or baccalaureate degree in nursing has been made with this basis of knowledge of the workplace. Such experiential knowledge is already a foundation for your success in the ADN or Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (BSN) program you are entering in pursuit of a higher, professional degree. It must be noted that this too will not be a "terminal" process; professional development is an ongoing part of a professional RN's role. You may find you want to eventually pursue a graduate degree or specialize in a clinical specialty that requires advanced training. The unlimited possibilities for career diversity and advancement helps keep nurses vibrant and excited about the profession.

LIFELONG LEARNING IN NURSING

The National League for Nursing identifies **lifelong learning** as integral to the profession. As an RN, you will progress along a continuum of developing greater and greater clinical expertise. Your nursing judgment will expand as you engage in **evidence-based practice** as a professional nurse and work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals to refine and strengthen patient care.

Today's nurse must be committed to lifelong learning and the use of new evidence and best practices to continuously provide high-quality care to patients. As you embark on your registered nursing educational path, lifelong learning and changes in practice based on new evidence will be essential not only to your ability to exercise best practices but also to the ongoing revitalization of your professional identity.

Advances in the healthcare industry, technological advances, societal trends, nursing research, and changes in practice due to evidence-based research processes all require the professional nurse to engage in lifelong learning to update their knowledge and practices. As you return to school, you will likely find a new learning environment where faculty use teaching strategies that help you develop your competencies as a lifelong learner. You may find the learning environment different than when you were a student in an LPN/LVN program. Today's learning environment includes the use of case studies, group activities, clinical simulations, technology-supported activities such as online threaded discussions regarding patient care, and other computer-managed educational systems. Additionally, the use of student portfolios assists today's nursing students in reflecting on their practice, connecting theory to that practice, employing **critical thinking** and **clinical reasoning** skills, developing judgment, and raising questions for ongoing evidence-based practice advancements. This new learning environment may cause you anxiety, but this text and the strategies you employ working with your nursing advisor will ease your concerns in returning to school. Such skills and competencies include those identified by Longworth (2003) and shown in Box 1.1. These needed skills and competencies are still true today.

THE REENTRY PROCESS: OVERCOMING BARRIERS AND FEARS

Although you may be as hesitant as Sandy Martin about the prospect, your return to school is important. It is also a challenge and an adventure. Whether you have been out of school for only a brief time or for many years, you will probably have fears; however, these should diminish after a few months. Returning to academic life is not easy. The thought of new risks or the return to old roles may be frightening.

Another factor that may cause anxiety may be your desire to be highly successful in the educational process while also wanting to be successful in other roles, such as an employee, a caregiver, or a spouse. Each person has individual issues as they return to school, but you may find you have many things in common with others. It is important to examine what it means to return to school and to determine what strategies will best help you cope, succeed, and achieve satisfaction in the process.

When you return to the role of student nurse, you may have barriers and fears to overcome. The Thinking Critically activity in this section allows you to examine your own issues, and Chapter 6 provides you with an opportunity to develop a personal

BOX 1.1

Basic Skills and Competencies for Lifelong Learning

- Information handling
- Presenting–communicating formally
- Discussing–communicating informally
- Learning to learn
- Listening and memorizing
- Entrepreneurial skills
- Making-practical skills
- Critical judgment and reasoning
- Decision-making
- Problem solving
- Self-esteem, self-management, and self-awareness
- Empathy and tolerance for others
- Creativity, a sense of humor
- Meditation skills
- Flexibility, adaptability, and versatility
- Thinking, vision, and planning

Adapted from Longworth, N. (2003). *Lifelong learning in action: Transforming education in the 21st century* (p. 140). Routledge/Falmer.

education plan (PEP), individualizing it for your success. Establishing short- and long-term goals will both motivate and inspire you in your return to school.

AGE

One perceived barrier in returning to school may be your age. You may believe that it has been too many years since you were in school. You may also fear that the other students will be much younger and that you might have little in common with them; you will find that this is almost definitely not the case. You may think that your academic ability is less than what is needed and worry because you have not had to study intensively for a long time. Attaining a college degree may seem like an out-of-reach dream. As an older student, you may fear that the math and science knowledge you once had has diminished over time or that younger students will think you are inferior or out of place.

Although you have been an LPN/LVN for some time now, you may feel that your extensive experience is not being valued; you may be seen as a new student nurse and feel like you are "starting over." Established nurses sometimes bully and ostracize new nurses, which Anthony (2020) describes as the phenomenon of lateral and horizontal violence. This phenomenon can contribute to a lack of self-confidence and a sense of discouragement and anxiety for an older student entering a new clinical setting.

ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

You may be fearful that your ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation may set you apart from others and that you will have little in common with your classmates. However, as you return to school, you may find that faculty and staff have become more diverse and

that this diversity is more greatly valued than it was at the time of your LPN/LVN training; the diversity among both students and faculty has expanded to mirror the diversity of the general population, including males, those from underrepresented groups, and LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or queer, intersex, asexual, and allies) representatives. Remember that everyone brings unique strengths and perspectives to nursing and education. Navigating the diverse landscape of education can be a rewarding but sometimes challenging experience. Here are some suggestions for students to effectively handle differences in culture, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status as they enter academia:

- Learn about the cultures and backgrounds of other students to better understand cultural norms, values, and communication styles.
- Participate in events that celebrate different cultures such as festivals, conferences, seminars, and workshops.
- Participate in initiatives or student organizations that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Engage in open and respectful communication to bridge cultural and ethnic gaps.
- Be willing to listen and learn from others' perspectives.
- Seek mentors and faculty from diverse backgrounds; they can provide valuable insights and support as you progress through your academic journey.

By actively engaging with diversity, you not only enrich your own learning experience but contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and welcoming academic environment for everyone (Bradbury-Hael & McGarvey, 2024; Luhanga et al., 2023).

The percentage of nurses who are men has slowly increased from less than 1% in 1966 to around 11.2% in 2022 (Smiley et al., 2023). Today, male nursing pursue both clinical specialties and higher degrees for nursing faculty positions. Male students in nursing have experienced such challenges as a lack of information and support from guidance counselors, lack of role models on campus and in the workplace, the stigma that nursing is not viewed as a respectable profession for men, and the lack of teaching strategies among nursing faculty for male students (Guy & van der Krogt, 2021; Kane et al., 2021). National organizations such as the American Association for Men in Nursing (AAMN) provide a voice for male nurses. AAMN attracts and supports expert practitioners based on characteristics and principles, not racial or gender demographics (AAMN, n.d.). Through local chapters, AAMN showcases narratives of men in nursing and provides personalized resources (AAMN, n.d.).

The nursing workforce has also become more ethnically diverse; according to a 2022 survey conducted by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) and the Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers, nurses from underrepresented ethnic groups represent 19.9% of the U.S. registered nurse (RN) workforce (Smiley et al., 2023). Academic settings have also benefited from such diversity because students have more opportunities to learn from each other's experiences and worldviews and to relate to a more diverse client population. Students from underrepresented groups, including those who identify as LGBTQIA+, may have experienced classroom bias from both faculty and peer students, as well as a sense of isolation in classroom and clinical settings. As both collegiate settings and the nursing workforce become increasingly diverse, these barriers are lessening. Additionally, there are more resources for the diverse nursing workforce; examples include *Minority Nurse* magazine and website (http://minoritynurse.com), and websites with resources to support nursing practice for

LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities, such as The American Academy of Family Physicians (https://www.aafp.org/family-physician/patient-care/care-resources/lbgtq. html). Various journal articles, associations, and websites can be found through any online search engine for a wide array of diverse issues that may be of interest to you. Your faculty advisor, counselor, and college librarians are also good resources to assist you in finding literature on your specific areas of concern. These individuals have participated in professional development activities to expand their understanding of, and support for, students of diverse backgrounds.

FEAR OF NURSING FACULTY, TECHNOLOGY, AND TODAY'S CLASSROOM

As a returning student, you may be anxious about interacting with nursing faculty. This fear may be related to previous experiences with nursing instructors or stories you may have heard from other students. Note that nursing faculty have become increasingly diverse and have participated in professional development themselves to diversify their teaching strategies to meet a wider range of students' learning styles and needs and to foster critical thinking. Some instructors may intimidate you or expect you to know more than you do. Some may treat you as a novice, whereas others will treat you as the adult learner that you are, who brings to the learning environment many life experiences and practical nursing knowledge. You will undoubtedly find that you relate well with some of the faculty and have difficulty relating to others. Nursing faculty members are similar to you—unique and imperfect but dedicated to their profession as nurses and nurse educators.

Ellis (2022b) describes the need to enroll instructors in your success. In each class, it is important to get to know your instructor. Introduce yourself and set up a visit during the instructor's office hours. Get to know the instructor's style and how they wish to be contacted should the need arise. Always be respectful, show interest in class, form your own opinions of the instructor (instead of listening to those of other students), draw your own conclusions, accept criticism, and submit professional work. When communicating electronically (e-mail, text, etc.) with your instructor, be professional and respectful. Always proofread your correspondence to ensure accuracy and respectful language, and use proper **netiquette** (e-mail/text etiquette). If you are unsure what that involves, contact your advisor or college library staff for a resource to review the details of effective, professional electronic correspondence.

You may be intimidated by today's technology and classroom environment. Perhaps your LPN/LVN program theory content was delivered in an all-lecture format. Today's registered nursing students are active participants in teaching–learning environments that use computer technology, internet research, collaborative work groups, online classrooms, discussion boards, case studies, learning contracts, portfolio development, role-playing, debates, and other interactive processes to foster critical and **creative thinking** and to develop lifelong learning skills. The instructor's role is to impart professional experiential knowledge and facilitate learning, to ensure relevance and inclusiveness of the diversity of learners, and to assist students with attitudes and techniques to strengthen their motivation to learn. A variety of learning styles will be addressed, and you may find yourself at ease with some learning activities more than others. However, it is helpful to gain experience with a variety of teaching and learning methods to diversify your learning style. (For more on learning styles, see the "Diverse Learning Styles" section later in this chapter.)

If you are expecting to merely listen to lectures and passively take notes, it may take you several months to become comfortable in this more active student role. Important skills for today's classroom environment include strengthening your computer literacy (including becoming familiar with current technology and conducting research online using library databases and web-based search engines), learning how to write professional papers, and working in teams with classmates on group projects. Often, the LPN/LVN returning to school to become an RN enters the program thinking they will only need to learn more complex treatments and procedures, yet you will be asked to think in a whole new way. As an **active learner**, you will be expected to draw on knowledge and research from a wide array of subject areas and case studies to synthesize, think critically, problem solve, and exercise judgment in nursing diagnoses and determining client care needs. This preparation for transition from a practical to a professional role will be covered in more depth later in this book.

FINANCIAL AND/OR FAMILY CONSTRAINTS

Another stressor to your return to school may be financial constraints. Tuition, fees, books, student uniforms, and commuting costs are large burdens. The necessity to remain employed and/or to find and finance childcare may add to these pressures; many returning students are also single caregivers and/or the sole breadwinner or family caretaker. The COVID-19 pandemic and its extremely slow recovery may have exacerbated your financial constraints as a retuning student. Reduced employment opportunities, possible job loss, increased financial strain due to healthcare expenses, and financial uncertainty may have influenced the decision to delay or alter educational plans. The economic crisis that followed caused some families to "double up" in housing, and extended family members and/or multigenerational households have become more prevalent. Financial obligations have expanded, credit standards have tightened, and accessing loans has become more difficult. This may cause you additional strain as you return to school and may cause you to have to work more hours, impeding your ability to devote study time needed to be successful as a returning student. Fortunately, many financial assistance programs are in place for students, and many scholarships are available for nursing students in particular.

In addition to financial constraints, returning students at times experience family constraints. Children, spouses, partners, or other family members may need your time and support. Although accommodating of your desire to return to school, they may also want life to remain unchanged. Another related factor is that life does not stop while you are in school. Illnesses, life events, and crises may occur. Although you have likely planned for many things, the unexpected and unplanned may occur over the next months and/or years as you pursue your degree. College campuses have many resources for students, including scholarships and programs targeted to assist first-generation college students, students of color, and students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Federal, state, and local support programs with which you may not yet be familiar are commonly found in colleges; these include TRIO (a government outreach program to low-income households for which you need to meet one of the three qualifications to be eligible), Student Support Services, Puente, and MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement). Special support services are also available for veterans and for students needing physical or learning disability accommodation. Talk to your nursing advisor or college counselor if you are in need financial or other support services.

Unfortunately, many students wait to seek such resources until they have missed classes or clinical, or have received failing grades. Seeking help early can make the difference between success and failure in your coursework.

FEAR OF FAILURE

The final barrier to returning to school that will be discussed in this chapter is the fear of failure itself. You have invested a lot of time and effort to be where you are today. Taking exams and being observed in the clinical area can be frightening. You may have developed shortcuts to clinical skills or bad habits that will need to be corrected. The fear of not being successful as a student nurse can be overwhelming; it may stem from previous school experiences or from lack of self-confidence. You may also find yourself hesitant or uneasy in new clinical settings. Adult learners are typically hard on themselves because they not only want to be successful, but they often also want to be perfect. It takes frequent reminders that the learning and transition processes need not be perfect, only positive. In addition, many factors are involved as a student progresses through a nursing program, including learning at a professional practice level that requires nursing diagnosis, critical thinking, and judgment not required at the LPN/LVN level. There may be times where you feel that you have forgotten everything you learned in LPN/LVN training or that you are "starting over." These are common experiences of returning students. It is important that you share these issues or concerns with your nursing advisor, who can give you reassurance and suggest strategies to address your particular situation. It is important to remember that faculty want to see you succeed as much as you want to succeed. They will do all they can to support you, but to be able to assist you, they must be aware you are struggling.

It is beneficial to identify your fears and concerns as you return to school. Later in this chapter, some strategies for success and minimizing fears are presented. Remember that the barriers and fears you may be experiencing are real; you may find that they are shared by others and that together you can find answers and solutions. For instance, as you get to know your classmates, you will find that your age, experience, and unique qualities are valuable to other class members. It may be advantageous to have had certain experiences, such as participating in certain cultural/ethnic traditions or raising children. Your concerns about studying may be the same as those of your fellow students, and you may find that you will be able to assist each other. You may also find

THINKING CRITICALLY

After reading the previous section, you may have found yourself nodding your head in recognition or wondering why your particular fears and concerns were not voiced. At this point, identify the barriers and fears that you face as you return to school. Include all of them, regardless of whether they have been mentioned. If you have identified some coping strategies or possible solutions, include those as well. As a next step, talk with a fellow student or another nurse at work who returned to school to determine whether you share common concerns. You may also find it useful, as did the student in the vignette, to share these concerns with your nursing advisor. This is a beginning step in preparing for success when returning to school.

that your study skills did not disappear. In fact, you may be more organized and better able to complete the assigned work than you anticipated. Other students may provide insight into particular courses or instructors. Many students experience financial concerns; you may find that you can share commuting costs, childcare, or other resources. It may also be reassuring to know that you are not alone. As you develop your individual educational plan and discuss these issues with your advisor, success strategies will emerge.

RESUMING THE STUDENT ROLE: "RETURNING TO SCHOOL SYNDROME"

Donea L. Shane (1983) identified the process of reentry as the "**returning to school syndrome**" (**RTSS**). Although Shane's research was conducted more than 30 years ago, it is still applicable to today's returning student. In studying educationally mobile nursing students as they returned to school, she was able to identify stages that comprise an entire syndrome. **Educationally mobile** nurses are those who are returning to school or at least contemplating such a return. Shane's work was derived from stories and data collected during a 6-year period from those studying to become RNs. Those students were able to "share their insecurities, sorrows, failures, and anxieties as well as their triumphs, humor, and joy" (p. vii). The results of her work remain valuable today.

Shane (1983) defined RTSS as up-and-down emotional swings that are experienced by nursing students who are returning to school. These swings occur because returning students are familiar with their nursing roles within the work setting yet are taking on a different role by becoming nursing students again. The RTSS model depicts a series of sequential stages. She notes, "However, an individual nurse may not proceed through these phases in a linear fashion. The usual progression is an irregular one, with relapses, detours, and expressways through certain stages" (p. 73). Shane identified three major stages within the RTSS syndrome (Table 1.1).

TABLE 1.1 Returning to School Syndrome

Stage	Description
Honeymoon	Individual is happy and delighted about being back in school; does not see any problems with the process.
Conflict	Characterized by high anxiety: individual feels conflict about educational process and role changes.
a. Disintegration	a. Individual represses feelings of anger and hostility; may become depressed and sullen.
b. Reintegration	b. Person becomes outwardly hostile and angry, particularly with nursing faculty; individual is frustrated with the educational program.
Resolution	There are various forms in the process of resolving conflicts.
a. Chronic conflict	a. The student nurse maintains angry feelings and fails to see anything worthwhile or valuable in the educational process.
b. False acceptance	b. Individual pretends to accept the changes in role but actually does not understand or see any difference.
c. Oscillation	c. The educationally mobile nurse vacillates between stages; generally involves regression if a stressful event occurs; once the stressor is resolved, the person moves to a more positive resolution.
d. Biculturalism	d. A positive resolution in which the individual accepts the differences and role values and is challenged to grow within the professional role.

STAGE 1: HONEYMOON

Typically, the shortest and most benign stage is called the **honeymoon stage**. It is a somewhat blissful time in which the reality of a situation has not quite been absorbed. Individuals are generally happy about being in school and see the experience as congenial. The end of the honeymoon usually occurs when the educationally mobile nurse is enrolled in her or his first clinical nursing course. At this point, the student may become intimidated and begin to fear that her or his experience is no longer of value. In particular, the dreaded clinical evaluation looms ahead, causing the individual increasing anxiety.

STAGE 2: CONFLICT

Shane (1983) suggested that the longest and most intense phase is conflict. It is a difficult time that can be emotionally exhausting and overwhelming. In general, the educationally mobile nurse experiences conflicts with beliefs, family roles, work roles, prior knowledge versus new knowledge, and nursing faculty. Such nurses may believe that there is no difference in the educational programs, that they already know what they need to know to be RNs, or that they are already better than the graduates of this program, and thus, nothing will change by continuing the educational process. Work role conflicts arise from realism versus idealism. Working nurses know and understand the real-work world, and so they dispute the idealistic presentations or experience guilt at not being able to practice idealistically. Other conflicts also arise, such as stressful relationships with clinical faculty, dealing with various teaching styles, and adjusting to new ways of learning in the nursing program.

The conflict stage is subdivided into two parts (Shane, 1983):

- **Disintegration** is characterized by a state of anxiety in which the individual turns their anxious feelings inward. This can result in several negative feelings that are potentially harmful: depression; sadness; withdrawal from friends, family, and others; and attitudes of obstinacy and gloom. It is remarkable that significant people who have contact with this person are able to overlook these behaviors or do not notice them.
- **Reintegration** is marked by outwardly intense feelings of frustration and hostility that are directed toward those around the individual, especially the faculty. This anger is the result of the individual's frustrations with the nursing program or with the whole educational process. Although these outbursts are difficult to handle, they are healthier than the repression of feelings that is seen in disintegration.

STAGE 3: RESOLUTION

The third and final stage, **resolution**, is a variable phase because each individual experiences it for different lengths of time, and its outcomes can differ. Shane (1983) presented a few of the forms that resolution can take:

- **Chronic conflict.** This resolution is the least effective because these nurses become stuck in a quagmire of anger. They may continue with their nursing education, but they fail to recognize the value of that education or the inherent worth of the role change. They spend valuable energy and time being angry and belligerent, with little energy put into creating a positive outcome.
- **False acceptance.** This resolution is also not considered positive. Educationally mobile nurses play games of deceit and pretense. They may claim to accept the

differences in the former work role and the present educational role and the value of the new role but do not actually recognize any difference. They also cannot perceive the positive aspects of education and transition. In some regard, they become their own victims by not realizing any difference or usefulness in the process.

- **Oscillation.** Individuals who fall into this category vacillate between the various resolutions. To some degree, their oscillation occurs because they have experienced each resolution in various forms. Fortunately, oscillation is reversible. An oscillation (most frequently a regression to a more negative state) usually occurs because of some unusual stressor, such as failure on an exam, an illness at home, or an unfortunate interchange with a faculty member.
- **Biculturalism.** This resolution is the most positive. These educationally mobile nurses have positive feelings about their previous educational experiences. They also value their current education and their growth within the nursing profession. It is important to them to be challenged and to develop their professional roles.

The RTSS presents an interesting way to view the reentry process. You may recognize the various emotional states. However, Shane (1983) also found that some educationally mobile nurses deny that any of the RTSS concepts apply to them. These nurses resent being analyzed and categorized. Behavior and role changes are not uniformly valued in the educational process. It is even more difficult to identify your own emotions and feelings. The value of understanding this syndrome is that it provides you with some insights into the conflicts and concerns that can arise when you are dealing with role change and changes in your own beliefs and it can affirm that these are normal responses.

> ## THINKING CRITICALLY
>
> After reading about the RTSS, consider how these phases apply to you in your own LPN/LVN-to-RN role transition. For example, recall your practical/vocational nursing education experience. Was it positive or negative? In thinking about the role change from LPN/LVN to RN, what do you value about this process? Have you experienced any of the emotions described in the explanation of RTSS? As you consider these questions, write down what you are experiencing and why. You may find it helpful to keep a journal as you progress through this role transition or make a note on your calendar to review this material again after taking your first clinical course.

DIVERSE LEARNING STYLES

The process of learning often seems formidable, particularly if the learner has not been engaged in formal learning activities for several years or if previous experiences were not especially positive. Adults have long been occupied with the tasks of returning to educational settings in pursuit of further educational degrees. Many adults fear that they will not be capable of learning new information or that they will not be able to focus on their educational program due to other commitments or interests that demand their attention. However, for most adults, it is a pleasant surprise to find that not only are they still able to learn but that they are also more focused and dedicated than in previous

educational endeavors. They also may experience again their love for learning and a renewed interest in the nursing profession and the value of their nursing practice.

Much research has been conducted over the past few decades to determine the ways in which people learn; these are called "**learning styles**." One categorization of learning styles is to examine one's preference for learning through visual, auditory, or kinesthetic delivery mechanisms. For example, some individuals learn better when information is provided visually. Use of graphs, charts, visual aids, DVDs, internet, or video streaming modes of delivery is more effective for these individuals. Some of us learn faster, or retain more, when information is accessed in an auditory manner. Acquiring information through a lecture, DVD, or other method where listening is involved are auditory learning processes. A third learning style is the preference for "doing" things to learn new information and concepts. Assembling three-dimensional objects, building conceptual models, role-playing, and "learning by doing" all align with this learning style.

As the research on teaching and learning has progressed, it has become evident that there are many **diverse learning styles**; they are much more complex, varied, and interdependent than just these three. Additionally, we are influenced by our social and cultural context, age, and other factors so that our learning styles do not always remain the same. You may find as you return to school that you no longer learn in the same way(s) you did in LPN/LVN training. You are older and have had more life and nursing experiences from which you can draw when acquiring new information, applying research to practice, or engaging in evidence-based practice.

Ellis (2022a) describes that learning styles are based on both how we perceive new information and how we process new information, leading to four styles of learning. An overview of these concepts is presented in the "Four Styles of Learning" section later in this chapter. Ellis (2022b) provides a simple Learning Styles Inventory whereby learners can begin to gain insight into their preferences for learning. He examines one's learning profile based on four key learning preferences: feeling (concrete experience), watching (**reflective observation**), thinking (**abstract conceptualization**), and doing (**active experimentation**). He also acknowledges the interrelatedness of these preferences into four "modes"—that is, the kinds of behaviors that feel most comfortable and familiar to an individual who is learning something—as follows: Mode 1 (a blend of feeling and watching), Mode 2 (a blend of watching and thinking), Mode 3 (a blend of thinking and doing), and Mode 4 (a blend of doing and feeling). The more you can reflect on your patterns of learning over time, and understand how you learn best, the more successful you will be in your educational pursuits at any level. You may wish to take Ellis's Learning Style Inventory to learn more about your own learning style(s), preference(s), and mode. You can then develop and/or apply study techniques that will maximize your success as you return to school.

ADULT LEARNING STYLES

In addition to understanding your inherent learning style since youth, it is important to also note that you will likely experience learning differently as an older/adult returning student. Learning styles of adults differ from those of children. Adults have a different and clearer sense of themselves, what their purpose is in a particular educational endeavor, and what is worthwhile and what is not. Adults are able to draw on their experiences to gain a deeper and more meaningful understanding and, therefore, have a greater capacity to apply theoretical concepts to practical situations. Adults pursue educational opportunities because there is a desire or need to attain new learning for job

acquisition, career advancement, or personal gratification or self-actualization (Sarver et al., 2020). Covey (2004, 2013) describes that to develop effective habits, such as those needed for studying and learning, one must possess the knowledge, skills, and desire for that learning. He notes that finding meaning and your own voice (i.e., why you are going back to school, your true aspirations) will yield greater success. Additionally, learning achievement will be stronger if motivation is intrinsic, coming from within yourself rather than from external forces.

Learning from experience changes what we do and how we view things. You may find differences between what you have learned from experience as an LPN/LVN and what you read in preparation for class assignments. This is to be expected because, just as patients bring with them a unique array of personal attributes, you as an adult learner bring with you various life experiences. Your learning in the RN program will involve an active process in which you will engage in activities that further your knowledge, practice, and abstract skills.

PERCEIVING AND PROCESSING TASKS

Styles of learning are the methods that the learner prefers to use for perceiving and processing new information (Ellis, 2022a, 2022b). It is advantageous to be aware of one's learning styles to recognize that there are differences, to use strengths, and to adapt when the learning styles of others are predominant. Ellis identifies styles of learning as involving two tasks: perceiving and processing. He summarizes two methods of perceiving and two methods of processing information (see Box 1.2). As Ellis emphasizes, these categories are not absolute, and successful learners benefit from participating in all four styles of learning. (Refer to Box 1.3 for a review of terms used in this section.)

FOUR STYLES OF LEARNING

When considering the different styles of perceiving and processing, four distinct styles of learning emerge (Ellis, 2022a, 2022b). The following material has been adapted from Ellis's (2022a) *Becoming a Master Student: Making the Career Connection*. Each learning style is intended to serve as a guide for you to begin thinking about your own learning preferences. There is no hierarchal design in the four learning styles; each has validity and usefulness. It is helpful to review each style and identify the characteristics that best describe your own learning preferences. This is intended to assist you in increasing your self-awareness. You will discover that you probably draw from all four categories and that it often depends on the particular situation, the context, or your experiences.

Style 1 Learners

Perception of new information is best accomplished with concrete experiences. These learners prefer to find examples of how particular information applies to their world. They use reflective observation to process new learning. Characteristics may include the following:

- Viewing concrete situations from different points of view
- Approaching events as observers
- Reflecting on situations rather than taking action
- Enjoying experiences that necessitate creation of ideas
- Using imagination
- Working for harmony and developing support
- Placing importance on concerns, caring, and trust in others

BOX 1.2

Methods of Perceiving and Processing

Methods of Perceiving

Some people perceive by:

- Using concrete experimentation
- Dealing with situations with an intuitive ability to problem solve
- Sensing and feeling
- Taking the initiative in unstructured settings

Other people perceive by:

- Using abstract conceptualization
- Thinking about things completely and analytically
- Using a scientific approach to problem solving
- Functioning well within structured settings
- Along with styles of perception, Ellis also delineated two styles of processing

Methods of Processing

Some people process new information by:

- Using active experimentation
- Applying new information in practical situations
- Seeing results despite potential risks

Other people process by:

- Using reflective observation
- Considering various points of view
- Presenting different ideas about a specific situation

Adapted from Ellis, D. (2022a). *Becoming a master student: Making the career connection* (17th ed.). Cengage Learning; Ellis, D. (2022b). *The essential guide to becoming a master student: Making the career connection* (6th ed.). Cengage Learning.

BOX 1.3

Review of Terminology Related to Perceiving and Processing Tasks

Active experimentation: a method to process information that involves a hands-on approach to be able to apply new information; implies that an individual wants to work with an idea or concept to determine if it makes sense

Abstract conceptualization: a mode of perceiving new knowledge that entails an ability to analyze, think through, and organize theoretical material in a logical way

Concrete experimentation: a means to perceive new information in a more passive way; involves approaching situations in a more observational manner, preferring to look at a situation from several viewpoints and ponder various ideas

Experiential learning: a process of learning that evolves and is evolving as an individual matures and has a wider range of experiences: involves adaptation and growth, and increased self-awareness

Learning style: a preferred method to perceive and process new information

Reflective observation: a method of processing information that involves careful observation and pondering about those observations and judgments that occur after the individual has contemplated several alternatives

Goals: being involved in important issues and bringing harmony

Favorite questions: Why? Why do I need to know this? Why should I attend this class? How do these concepts relate to my life?

Skills: valuing—brainstorming, listening, speaking, interacting, feeling, data gathering, and imaging

Preferred skill: problem identification

Style 2 Learners

These learners perceive best through abstract conceptualization. Explanations through lecture style are favored, particularly if a theoretical base is included. They process new information generally by reflective observation. Characteristics may include the following:

- Understanding a broad range of information
- Compiling information in a concise and logical form
- Being interested more in abstract ideas and less in people
- Favoring theory that is logical as opposed to practical
- Preferring traditional learning settings that include lectures and reading assignments and do not include open-ended tasks
- Being industrious and goal oriented with attention to detail

Goal: understanding things on an intellectual level

Favorite questions: What? What is important to learn from this particular class?

Skills: thinking—observing and analyzing, classifying, theorizing, organizing, conceptualizing, and testing theories

Preferred skill: solution identification

Style 3 Learners

Perceiving knowledge is best done through abstract conceptualization. Traditional modes of lecture and listening to theory are most preferred. New learning is best processed through active experimentation. Characteristics may include the following:

- Being skilled at applying ideas and theories for practical use
- Answering questions and demonstrating problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Enjoying technical tasks, as opposed to contemplating social issues
- Discovering how things work, including experimentation and tinkering
- Preferring plans and schedules

Goal: putting new information into use in their work and daily living tasks

Favorite questions: How does this thing operate? How can I use this information to make a positive difference in my life?

Skills: deciding—manipulating, tinkering, improving, applying, experimenting, and goal setting

Preferred skill: selecting a workable solution from all possibilities

Style 4 Learners

These learners perceive information by using concrete experience. They also use active experimentation to process new information. They prefer to explore ideas to determine if they can make sense of them or apply them in a practical way. Characteristics may include the following:

- Learning best from hands-on methods
- Carrying out plans

- Being involved in new and different experiences
- Relying on gut feelings, as opposed to logical analysis
- Taking risks
- Feeling comfortable in new situations
- Encouraging others to be independent thinkers
- Drawing conclusions without necessarily having logical reasons

Goals: bringing action to ideas and encouraging creativity

Favorite questions: What if? If I am learning important and accurate information, how does it apply to my own life? What else does it mean?

Skills: activity—modifying, adapting, risking, collaborating, committing, influencing, and leading

Preferred skill: implementing a selected solution

Being aware of your learning preferences will help you have a greater understanding of your learning needs and strengths. By appreciating your own individuality and recognizing that there are many learning styles, you should be open to situations that are not conducive to your style of learning. You will be exposed to different modes of education and instruction. You also will care for a range of clients who will have educational needs and styles of learning that are different from yours. Having the knowledge that there are various learning styles provides you not only with flexibility but also with an ability to meet your own needs and the needs of others. The following example illustrates this truth.

EXAMPLE 1.1 A student nurse is assigned to care for a client who has recently been diagnosed with hypertension. The client has begun a regimen of antihypertensives and a low-sodium diet. The student nurse observes the dietitian reviewing diet pamphlets and a list of low-sodium foods with the client. The dietitian instructs the client to read the materials and jot down any questions. After the dietitian leaves, the client tells the student nurse that they are confused. The student nurse, who believes the instructional methods were appropriate, asks the client what would help them learn the information. The client tells, "I don't learn well when I just have to read about it." The student nurse recognizes that a more visual method of instruction might be beneficial to this client and arranges for them to view a video and to learn to recognize low-sodium foods by reading their labels.

THINKING **CRITICALLY**

After reading the preceding material and determining which characteristics apply to you, list your preferred learning styles. Identify which of the four styles is the most predominant for you. Give several examples of why that style is your most preferred. You may use examples that demonstrate when you have enjoyed or deplored a particular learning situation. Share this information with a partner, and discuss observations about yourself and each other that back your selection of a learning style. It also may be helpful for you to share this with your faculty advisor.

STUDENT ROLE: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

The key to being a successful student rests with you. Although methods and techniques to assist you in your endeavors are available, only you can make them work. This will require that you assume responsibility for your academic efforts and use assertive behavior to meet your goals. **Assertiveness** is a positive skill because it provides you with the courage and stamina to meet your needs. Assertiveness does not mean confrontation or aggression; rather, it implies that you are able to communicate in a positive and constructive manner. Assertive behavior assists you in exploring possibilities, asking for more information and clarification, considering various viewpoints, and making informed decisions. It will be important that you are assertive in building a relationship with faculty and in seeking their feedback on what you are doing well and where you need to improve. This will assist you in setting clear goals for yourself for success. Several strategies to support your success are discussed in the sections that follow.

COLLEGE SUCCESS COURSES AND RESOURCES

Colleges today provide you with many opportunities to sharpen your academic skills. For instance, you may find it helpful to take a course that provides you with study skills, test-taking skills, or an improved ability to write professional term papers. If you have been away from an academic setting for a while, or were overwhelmed by previous academic experiences, it may be extremely beneficial to enroll in a course designed for college success. In addition, computer literacy and library research courses may be helpful. Many colleges require or strongly suggest that you take these courses. Again, you may be pleasantly surprised that some of the obstacles that you believed had prevented you from being successful were not as much of a problem as you anticipated, given the right tools and college success strategies. You may also discover that relearning and/or refining your academic and study skills is not especially difficult and perhaps even more rewarding than it was in prior experiences due to your current motivation and desire for success.

On your return to school, take advantage of any courses that are available to assist you in being more successful in your nursing program. Research shows that students who take college success courses as they enter or reenter college do better in their course work. Such courses often include content on time management, note-taking, study skills, writing skills, using technology effectively, and accessing college support services. If you are not able to take a course in these areas, online programs and a wide array of college success texts on these subjects can be found in your college library and through online search engines. Smaller, inexpensive resources are available that have been authored by independent publishers. *The Study Skills Handbook: How to Ace Tests, Get Straight A's, and Succeed in School* (Hollins, 2021); *How to Succeed in Nursing School: Before, During, and After* (Thomas, 2011); and *Ten Strategies and Survival Tips for Managing Nursing School* (Mingo, 2023) give practical tips on such topics as time management, organizing your study notes, test-taking strategies, and approaching clinical rotations.

WORKING WITH A FACULTY ADVISOR

Once enrolled in a program of nursing, you will be assigned to a faculty advisor, most likely a member of the nursing faculty. You should introduce yourself to your advisor as early as possible so that both of you get to know each other. Exchanging telephone numbers and e-mail addresses will help you keep in closer contact and can be invaluable in the event of illness or a personal emergency. Your faculty advisor is available to you

throughout the length of the program. Many students have primary contact with their advisors when it is time to register for the next term's classes. This contact may consist of getting a signature on the registration or add–drop form. However, there are many other reasons to have contact with a faculty advisor. Students often consult with their advisors when they are experiencing academic or personal difficulties. Faculty advisors are knowledgeable about finding appropriate resources for students to improve their academic performance or cope with personal concerns. For example, if a student finds that they are having trouble taking multiple-choice exams, the advisor may refer the student to college resources that can teach the student ways to be successful with that type of exam or to someone who can review past exams with the student and develop methods for taking future exams. Some faculty advisors are also skilled in these methods and assist the student directly.

Some students also seek assistance from faculty advisors if they believe that they are not skilled at taking notes in class or grasping the most important material from text and/or online assignments. Again, discussing these issues with an advisor may help the student focus on topics that are outlined in the study guides or that are main themes in a text or web source. The advisor may also refer the student to other college resources for improving study and note-taking skills.

Other reasons for students to see advisors are related to personal problems at home or in the college environment. Advisors are generally skilled at listening to problems and, although they are not trained counselors, will be able to discuss coping strategies and refer the student to an appropriate resource. If the problem involves another faculty member, the advisor may choose not to hear that issue completely but may suggest that the student speak directly with the faculty person, counselor, or program administrator.

An advisor can be most helpful if you meet them as soon as possible, instead of waiting until you have an insurmountable or overwhelming situation. It is highly advantageous to schedule an individual appointment at the start of the term to develop a rapport with your advisor. Advisors can be many things, but they are not mind readers, miracle workers, or saviors. If you begin to experience academic problems, you are expected to proactively seek help early in the process so that the difficulty can be remedied before failure. Advisors can help only as much as you are willing to seek help. Advisors are not always immediately available because of other academic commitments. In most instances, it is advisable to make an appointment to meet with your advisor, rather than trying to deal with an issue before or after class. This provides for a more relaxed, focused interaction with your advisor and their undivided attention. If you have an urgent issue, other faculty members may need to be involved if the advisor is not available. If you find that you have difficulty relating to your advisor, you may be able to change advisors by speaking with the program administrator.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

As you begin your nursing program, many different resources are available to you that will enhance your success. The following is a brief summary of some of the most important resources as you return to school.

Student Handbooks

A college student handbook is designed specifically for students at that designated college or university. Additionally, most nursing programs have a Nursing Student Handbook. It is important to read and familiarize yourself with these handbooks, as

they contain important information about the academic calendar, important dates, student policies, attendance policies, grading procedures, and resources available on campus. Becoming familiar with the handbooks will help you avoid conflict and issues during the program that can occur if you do not know college or program policies and procedures. When a question arises, always refer to your handbook rather than asking a fellow student, who may give you inaccurate, incomplete, or outdated information.

Program Philosophy and Curriculum

Faculty for each nursing program have developed a **program philosophy** that presents the concepts, themes, and **curriculum threads** for the nursing program. Generally, nursing education philosophies are composed of beliefs about nursing, the education of nurses, and the various recognized levels of nursing education. They may include philosophical approaches to the education of adults and the responsibilities of adult students. In many instances, the program philosophy carries out the principles stated in the college or university philosophy. It is also helpful to explore this in terms of your own evolving philosophy about nursing. The curriculum is designed based on the program's philosophy, the standards governing nursing licensure, the NCLEX-RN test plan, and accreditation standards of both the institution and the nursing program. Each program will adopt certain concepts as "curriculum threads" that will be woven into each course in the program.

Student Learning Outcomes

The nursing program will also have identified **student learning outcomes (SLOs)** for students as they progress through the course work. SLOs are identified for each course, program, and degree in the institution. SLOs are required by accrediting bodies for the institution and the program and will be found in the college catalog, student handbook, and course syllabi. Learning outcomes portray the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of all program participants as they complete coursework, graduate, and proceed to higher educational degrees or enter the workforce. Individual courses and their learning activities are designed to facilitate the student achieving these learning outcomes as they progress through the curriculum of the program.

Course Syllabus

A course syllabus is an outline and summary of material that will be covered in a particular course, including the expected SLOs, and often includes structure of the course, learning activities, guidelines for assignments, grading criteria, and important due dates. Reading assignments, web-based resources, and other useful information is often included. It is important to read the course syllabus carefully and ask clarifying questions if needed. The syllabus becomes a roadmap for the course and outlines how your progress and performance in the course will be assessed and evaluated.

Faculty and Course Web Pages

Today's student must be adept in the use of electronic environments. Many schools require students to have access to either a computer, a tablet, or an internet access device. If this is an area of discomfort for you, it is highly recommended that you take a course or workshop at the college to strengthen not only your use of such environments but also your confidence in troubleshooting any technological difficulties you may experience. Many faculty maintain a home page online with e-mail addresses, other contact information, announcements, reminders, and other important information for students. Whether online or traditional face-to-face, most nursing programs present

courses using a learning management system (LMS) such as Canvas, Blackboard, or Desire2Learn that contains the course syllabus, course calendar, school policies, assignment information, discussion boards, and other helpful tools vital to student success in the course. Many faculty require assignments to be submitted electronically and expect students to access and review the LMS daily for important information about the course and any changes in course assignments, meetings, class cancellations, etc. If you are unfamiliar with these learning technologies, talk to your faculty advisor for assistance in locating an orientation session, class, or other forum for becoming familiar with using these online resources. It is also important to turn in all assignments in advance of the due date/time to avert being late due to any technical difficulties that sometimes arise.

Personal Professional Library

Collecting nursing texts, resources, and web-based materials can be confusing, overwhelming, and expensive. Students returning to school are often tempted to purchase all the books they can, with the hope that each book might be helpful. There are many excellent resource books, but you do not need all of them. The course syllabus generally lists required and recommended texts. The faculty members usually select recommended texts to assist you in acquiring more knowledge about a particular topic. In general, students are generally required to attain a comprehensive medical dictionary, a drug resource manual, a laboratory manual, and possibly a text that assists with the nursing process and the development of care plans. Although many textbooks also have online student resources, computer-based resources are also available from websites specifically for student nurses. Other resources that students may want to purchase are current anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology texts, and those about a particular subject in which they have a strong interest. The nursing textbooks and other resources you acquire will be valuable after completing the program when you prepare for the NCLEX-RN. Other resources that may be helpful are pharmacology and nutrition texts, state board review books, CDs, DVDs, and computerized programs. Before purchasing anything, you may find it helpful to discuss your choices with faculty and recent graduates of the nursing program. Your college's library will have additional resources, and many more are available via interlibrary loan and online.

Periodical Subscriptions and Web Resources

Many nursing journals are available both by subscription and online. It is often difficult to choose which journals are appropriate for you. Again, talking with faculty and other students may assist you. Many nursing journals are available at campus libraries, in hospital libraries, and online, which is a less expensive and easier way to become familiar with nursing journals as resources of information. As a student nurse, you will have many opportunities to read journal articles as part of course requirements. This will help you decide whether you want to subscribe to a particular journal. If you use an online resource, make sure it is reputable. Not all information on the web is accurate; therefore, if you are unsure of the accuracy of a website, consult your instructor or the college learning resource center.

RESOURCES FOR UPDATING YOUR RESEARCH SKILLS

Web resources have greatly expanded over the past decade. In completing your general education and nursing course requirements and writing professional papers, you will find general resources—such as a dictionary, thesaurus, and standards for writing professional papers—readily available online. Search engines and directories are abundant,

including those available in other languages if English is not your first language. You will need to become skilled at using these resources, and many students enhance their abilities in this area via a college success or library use course, or by working with the college library staff. Although it may take some time for you to become comfortable in this environment, you will find your time saving is extensive once you are adept at online research. Examples of web resources are available with this text.

If you have not been in an academic setting recently, you will discover that performing research for assignments and term papers has also become a more technical process because most libraries now have computerized records and online databases. There also are several sources from which to obtain particular articles, journals, and books, depending on what you are researching. You must become familiar with using the college's library and its computer system to research a topic properly. As part of your initial orientation to academic life, make sure that a library orientation is provided or independently orient yourself to the college's library. Although you may feel "technologically challenged" initially, you will find that technology actually expedites and expands your research capability and often allows you to do your research at home and at times most convenient to you. When you begin to use the library, do not be afraid to ask the library staff for assistance, as that is their purpose of being there, and like others at the institution, they want students to be successful. You will soon be able to access many resources, which will enable you to research a topic thoroughly. These skills will be critical to your lifelong learning as an RN, as well as to your pursuit of advanced degrees and/or clinical certification.

VALUING PRIOR LEARNING

As stated previously, adults often return to school with the fear that they will not do well, that they will appear foolish, or that the rest of the students will be more advanced. For the LPN/LVN, it is also difficult to be removed from an environment that values clinical skills and to be placed in an environment that values skills necessary for academic success. However, the value of your experiences as an LPN/LVN and your life experiences in general are immeasurable. You will probably find that your view of the world and of nursing has been greatly influenced by your many experiences.

Educators of adult students have long recognized the value of prior learning. You will find that your experiences enable you to perceive course work in a different way and to place a higher value on your efforts. The life experience you bring to your classes is valuable and will equip you to ask meaningful questions and to make solid connections between theory and practice (Ellis, 2022a).

Valuing who you are and your life, work, and educational experiences provides you with a foundation for continued growth and development in your career as a nurse and as a person. You remain capable of acquiring new knowledge and of adapting to the educational process. Everything that you have learned before returning to school will serve you well. Instead of despairing about what you may not know or understand, rejoice in the knowledge that you can achieve your goals with hard work and a reliance on the skills and knowledge that put you where you are today.

Langridge et al. (2023) stress the importance of students in professional careers developing personal portfolios. A portfolio is an organized compilation of materials and records that showcases and provides evidence of an individual's skills, achievements, experiences, and qualifications. Because documents in your portfolio are self-selected, they reflect your individuality, autonomy, and unique attributes. A professional portfolio is a snapshot of accomplishments and should be tailored to a specific use—for

example, for a student to showcase academic accomplishments or for a professional nurse to acquire a job following licensure (Langridge et al., 2023; Marino, 2023; Siddiqui et al., 2023). A portfolio can be used with your nursing advisor to introduce yourself and to identify strengths and areas where you may need further mentoring or development. Items that may be useful to assemble for your portfolio when meeting with your nursing advisor include sample nursing care plans, clinical skills checklists, papers you have written, case study projects, and other documents or projects you have completed as an LPN/LVN and/or returning student that demonstrate your critical thinking ability and work as a healthcare professional.

The PEP you design in Chapter 6 of this text is an excellent document to include in your portfolio when working with your nursing advisor. Maintaining and adding to your portfolio throughout the nursing program will continue to bring value to your portfolio as you customize it for job applications upon graduation. After graduation, as a professional nurse, maintaining a portfolio will showcase your unique skills, knowledge, and abilities as a member of the profession and as a member of **interprofessional collaborative teams**.

TIME MANAGEMENT

One of the biggest challenges that returning students face is the lack of time to perform all roles adequately. There never seems to be enough time to manage everything and to do it well, but developing a plan will assist you in managing your time more effectively. Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between class attendance and student success. Good time management will ensure you have strong attendance and thereby support your success in nursing school. (For more information on time management, see Chapter 14.)

Balancing Personal, Career, and Student Roles

It is particularly helpful to plan a weekly schedule to see the entire picture. Some blocks of time are inflexible, such as work and class schedules. You must also remember to make time for other activities, such as sleeping, eating, exercising, family time, and studying. Once you have the weekly plan in place, it is helpful to formulate a daily "to-do" list to keep yourself organized and to be realistic about your time commitments. Successful students neither procrastinate nor work from morning to night without a break for personal "down time." Breaking tasks down into smaller achievable units and managing time wisely are both critical to success.

It is not necessary that you do everything as you did before you started school. Involve your significant others in your scheduling plan. Delegate some tasks or hire others to help. Give up some tasks until there is time to do them, and learn to be flexible so that you can take care of unexpected needs that arise. Let your family and friends know your schedule so that they have a better understanding of your needs. Enlist family and significant others in chores traditionally done by you. The decision for you to return to school must be an "all-family" decision, as it is disruptive not only to you but also to your family. Acknowledge the extra burden on everyone and work out a schedule where everyone feels consulted and part of the plan. Share the academic calendar, your scheduled exams, etc., so that they are aware of when extra support will be needed. This may also need to be the year you decline roles you may have held in the past as the organizer of events or activities in your personal life (professional organizations, clubs, boards, charitable organizations, etc.).

Do not give up all your exercise and recreation activities; you may need to modify what you do or when you do it, but continue to find time for yourself. Exercise is not

only healthy but also reduces your stress level. Some students find it helpful to walk or jog between classes, plan a physical activity with a friend, or take a physical education class. You also will find it beneficial to designate some periods of quiet time for reflection and/or meditation. Students often feel guilty about taking time for a walk or quiet time, but it can actually rejuvenate you and make your work and study time more productive. Reading for pleasure, watching television or a movie, listening to music, meditating, or even just taking a walk may help you regroup and recharge.

Returning students need to be prepared to spend 2 to 3 hours of studying and preparing for every hour spent in class or clinical. If you are carrying a full-time student load, you will need to plan 20 to 30 hours per week for reading, studying, and completing assignments. This does not need to be done in huge blocks of time; most people generally study best in 1- to 2-hour blocks of time spent at the library or another quiet place without distractions. The benefits will be realized at exam time or when a project is due because you will not have to have marathon study times to prepare or complete the work. Retention of information is also improved when you avoid "cramming" at the last minute. For some students, carrying a full academic load is not feasible, and so they choose to attend school on a part-time basis. This will reduce both the workload and stress of multiple role responsibilities.

It is also helpful to communicate early with your employer regarding your needs and potential scheduling difficulties. Although most employers will support your decision to return to school, they also have to manage an entire staff, multiple work schedules, and many other details. Most students find that it is advantageous to reduce the number of work hours to the lowest number that is absolutely necessary to maintain financial commitments. With a full course load, it is recommended that you work only 1 to 2 days/shifts per week. Students who complete their general education and science course work before entering the nursing program, however, may find that they can work half time while attending college. Box 1.4 summarizes 10 hints for time management (Efron, 2023; Pitre & Pugh, 2023).

Reassessing Commitments

When you are rationing your time, besides creating a "to-do" list (see Box 1.4), consider also creating a "not-to-do" list. This list should include tasks that are not a priority and those that can be done by others while you are in school. For instance, if you serve on a committee at your child's school, consider resigning and giving someone else the opportunity to serve. If you volunteer for a local nursing home, you may decide to take a leave of absence. When you finish school, there will always be opportunities to be a member of a board or committee or a chance to do volunteer work. One student who returned to school referred to his time in school as "the years to say no."

THINKING **CRITICALLY**

Track your time commitments for 1 week. Think in terms of 15-minute blocks of time so that you can account for short activities. Account for all 24 hours of a day, and include adequate personal time and study time to avoid cramming assignments and exams. Carry the plan with you, and at the end of the week, examine what you did, and modify your plan for the following week so that you are organizing and using your time more efficiently.

BOX 1.4

Ten Hints for Time Management

1. Be realistic about how much time projects may take. Don't overcommit, underestimate the amount of work that has to be done, or overbook yourself to the point where you become overstressed.

2. Include "safe time" in your schedule. Allow yourself some "wiggle room" in case of computer malfunctions, automobile issues, or other unforeseen circumstances that can push you behind schedule, result in missed deadlines, or leave you unprepared for an exam.

3. Use a calendar to plan your activities. Make a weekly schedule that includes time allocated for all of your responsibilities (student, spouse, caregiver, employee, volunteer, and, most importantly, yourself).

4. When reading, studying, writing papers, or working on projects, find a calm, clutter-free area and let people know that's where you're going to be working.

5. Remember that life is about more than just academics. Make time for your classes and other necessities, but don't forget to prioritize time for your family, friends, and health.

6. Establish weekly priorities, then work throughout the week so that you don't have too many tasks on any one day. Put off chores that aren't absolutely necessary for your achievement.

7. Break large projects into smaller tasks to maintain a positive outlook, make progress, and gain a sense of accomplishment.

8. Learn to say "no," propose an alternative, or delegate tasks.

9. Group similar tasks together to reduce the mental effort required to switch between different types of activities.

10. Regularly review your time management strategies by identifying what works well and what needs adjustment. Be willing to adapt your approach to better suit your needs.

Adapted from Efron, N. (2023). Ten tips for efficient academic time management. *Clinical & Experimental Optometry, 106*(7), 691–693. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164622.2022.2139592; Pitre, C. J., & Pugh, C. M. (2023). Reclaiming the calendar: Time management for the clinician educator. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education, 15*(1), 117–118. https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-22-00939.1.

Using the Win/Win Agreement

Stephen Covey (1989, 2004) formulated a method to reach agreements in which there is mutual benefit or satisfaction from the agreement for all involved. **Win/win agreements** create an environment in which each party thinks in terms of cooperation, as opposed to competition. Win/win is conceived on the idea that "there is plenty for everybody, that one person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others" (p. 207). Such agreements are useful in working out arrangements with significant others while you are in nursing school.

Covey identified five dimensions that are interdependent and relational:

1. **Character:** This is the foundation of win/win and consists of three traits:
   - Integrity: the value you place on yourself; a commitment to yourself and others
   - Maturity: the maintenance between the ability to express your opinions and attitudes and the respect for the opinions and attitudes of others
   - Abundance mentality: the notion that there is enough or plenty for everyone; requires the individual to have strong integrity and maturity

2. **Relationships:** Win/win involves a level of trust in the process and in the person(s) that are involved with the formulation of an agreement. It also involves an ability to listen and to communicate with respect for the person(s) and the various points of view.

3. **Agreements:** Win/win requires that each party have a clear understanding of the limits and scope of the process. The agreements include an understanding of the desired results, any guidelines that are needed, an awareness of all available resources, accountability by all those involved in the agreement, and an evaluation of the process with possible consequences.

4. **Systems:** For win/win agreements to work, there must be support for the process. Each individual involved must feel equal responsibility for achieving goals and results and, therefore, solutions.

5. **Processes:** Win/win solutions are best achieved if each person looks at the problem from the other's perspective; this gives the other person a chance to be heard. It is then essential to name the concerns and issues that are involved. Each person next presents possible results that would be acceptable solutions to the problem. As a last step, various options could be determined for achieving the specific results.

Win/win agreements do not need to be elaborate or lengthy. The process can actually be simple, particularly if each person is committed to the process. An example of a win/win agreement within a family is illustrated in the following example.

EXAMPLE 1.2 When Sandy, an LPN, returned to school, she recognized that her time would be more restricted because she would be in class for 6 hours a week and clinical practice for 15 hours a week. Her study and preparation time would require 20 to 30 hours a week. She also needed to work two 8-hour shifts per week to pay certain bills and maintain benefits and seniority. Her husband works full time (Monday to Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM). Their son and daughter are 10 and 16 years old, respectively. Historically, Sandy has taken care of many of the household chores, particularly housecleaning, preparing meals, and the majority of errands. The other family members helped but not on a regular basis and often only with much persuasion. With classes and studying, Sandy realized that she could no longer be responsible for all of these tasks. Sandy's family developed the following win/win agreement:

Sandy will do the housecleaning in the living room, dining room, and kitchen. The son and daughter will be responsible for the bedrooms, and the husband will be responsible for the bathrooms. They agree that these jobs will be done without reminders and in a timely manner. The daughter will have Sandy's car 2 days a week and, for that privilege, will be responsible for doing most of the weekly errands and transporting her mother to and from school. The son and husband will do the weekly grocery shopping. Everyone will share in meal preparation and cleanup, with assigned days for those tasks. The children will receive compensation for their work, and the parents will put aside an equal amount so that they can have an occasional evening out. On Sunday evenings, they will have a brief family meeting to plan for the coming week and evaluate how things are going based on the agreement.

The wins for Sandy are more time to devote to classes and studying and fewer responsibilities at home. The wins for the family members are that Sandy will have some time to spend with them, and everyone benefits from sharing responsibilities without having to be reminded or badgered. There are financial and social benefits for all. The consequences of failure are also made clear: If a person does not uphold their responsibilities, they will not receive the agreed-on compensation. They have built in some flexibility by planning ahead each week to account for special activities and needs. At the end of this chapter, you have an opportunity to develop a win/win agreement to assist you in developing methods to manage your time more effectively.

DEVELOPING STUDY SKILLS

Forming and refining study skills can be a challenge for returning students. The difficulty is often related to previous experiences in which adequate study skills were not formed or because there are many other distractions for adult learners than for students directly out of high school. Another difficulty may be that past study skills involved rote memory, whereas you now will be asked to analyze, synthesize, and think critically about the material presented and to write papers and design care comprehensive care plans for your clients. In *The Essential Guide to Becoming a Master Student,* Ellis (2022b) provides an excellent summary of strategies for success as you enter the academic arena. Ellis (2022b) covers a variety of topics on study skills, using today's technology effectively, time management, and maximizing learning through your most successful learning styles. The texts *How to Survive & Thrive in College* (Bennet, 2022) *and Insider's Guide to College Success: The Underground Playbook for Making Great Grades, Having More Fun, and Studying Less* (Stemmle, 2021) provide valuable contemporary strategies for success in college. Reading texts such as these, and completing student exercises, will be money well spent to support your success in returning to school in today's collegiate environment.

Time and Place for Study

A first step in developing good study habits is to create study time. The specific time will depend on your other demands, but it will be most helpful if you can select a time of day in which you learn best or when you can be assured of minimal or no interruptions. Plan to study in short blocks of time (1 to 2 hours) with 5- to 10-minute breaks. Many students also plan study time between classes or other activities.

A place to study is also essential. Instead of trying to read while reclining on the sofa with the television on, try to find a quiet area in your home or go to the library. Your family and friends need to be aware that your study time and place are off-limits so that you can study without interruption. Turn off your cell phone and plan to return calls on breaks or after the study time.

Another useful study skill is to plan your time so that you know what you want to accomplish each day. Short-term goals are often less intimidating than long-term goals. Once your overall weekly plan is established, break up large or lengthy assignments into "small bites" that can be accomplished in 1- to 2-hour time blocks. You will be surprised at how much progress you will make using this strategy.

Procrastination

Another common challenge for adults returning to school is procrastination. As an LPN/LVN, your time outside of work hours has been filled with family time and/ or other interests. You may find you procrastinate when faced with heavy reading assignments, writing papers and nursing care plans, and other assignments. Delaying

BOX 1.5

Suggestions for Overcoming Procrastination

- Define clear, achievable goals for your tasks. Knowing what you need to accomplish provides direction and motivation.
- Divide larger tasks into smaller, more manageable steps. This makes the workload seem less overwhelming and helps you focus on one aspect at a time.
- Develop a realistic and structured schedule. Allocate specific time slots for tasks, including breaks, and stick to the schedule as closely as possible.
- Identify and prioritize tasks based on their importance and deadlines. Focus on high-priority items first to ensure you address critical responsibilities.
- Use time management techniques such as working in short, focused intervals with breaks.
- Minimize potential distractions by creating a dedicated workspace, turning off notifications, and staying away from social media during work periods.
- Envision the positive outcomes and benefits of completing a task.
- Establish deadlines for yourself that are achievable. Self-imposed deadlines create a sense of urgency.
- Share your goals and deadlines with someone who can hold you accountable, such as a friend, family member, or study buddy.
- Reward yourself for completing tasks. Once you've accomplished a specific goal, treat yourself to a break, a small snack, or an enjoyable activity.
- Remind yourself that everything doesn't have to be "perfect." Focus on completing tasks rather than striving for perfection.
- Begin your work with a small, manageable task to create momentum and to make it easier to transition to more challenging assignments.
- Identify the potential negative consequences of procrastination, such as the impact on your grades or your well-being.

Adapted from Hinton, S. T., & Cherry, B. (2023). Managing time: The path to high self-performance. In B. Cherry & S. R. Jacob (Eds.). *Contemporary nursing: Issues, trends, & management* (9th ed., pp. 460–475). Elsevier; How to Stop Procrastinating. (n.d.). MindTools. https://www.mindtools.com/a5plzk8/how-to-stop-procrastinating; Mingo, S. (2023). Ten strategies and survival tips for managing nursing school. *Nursing Made Incredibly Easy!, 21*(6), 7–11. https://doi.org/10.1097/nme.0000000000000005

tasks often results in rushed and below-average work that negatively affects overall academic success. Identifying the cause of your procrastination and working to overcome it will improve your time management skills, reduce stress, and enhance your academic performance. Strategies to help you overcome procrastination are listed in Box 1.5.

Reading, Note-Taking, and Writing Skills

Many study habits you will need to develop are those that will assist you in improving or strengthening your reading, note-taking, and writing skills. For example, in reading textbooks, there are a few methods that will help make your reading time more productive. Many educators recommend that you take a few minutes to scan a reading assignment before reading it. This enables you to get a feel for the subject and to identify the main themes of the material. You can also decide how much time is needed to complete the assignment. Some material requires in-depth concentration, whereas other texts and reading assignments can be skimmed. In addition, a focus on reading with the course objectives and learning outcomes in mind will help pinpoint information that requires application and mastery.

Other strategies involve taking notes while you read. This can be in the form of an outline, or it can be more elaborate if the material is complex. Some students find it helpful to highlight or underline so that when they review the material, they can focus on these sections. It may also be useful to make notes in the margins or to write questions. For visual learners, flash cards, mind-mapping, and drawing models of conceptual relationships among content themes may be helpful. Instructors usually start their lectures by asking for student questions; this would be a perfect time to ask for clarification of your reading materials. Of course, this requires having read and jotted down questions in advance of class. Make use of the chapter objectives, terminology list, summaries, and review questions. These help clarify and reiterate certain concepts. Some students find it helpful to read aloud to maintain their focus. Finally, review your readings frequently so that the material will not look new just before an exam.

Note-taking in class is another necessary skill to master. One of the most useful note-taking skills is to complete the reading assignments before attending class. Thus, the material will not sound foreign, and you might be able to reduce or simplify the notes you take. It also helps you focus on the class content, ask questions, and synthesize information attained from multiple resources rather than worrying that you are missing something. Another important aspect of note-taking is to sit where you will not be distracted and where you can focus on what you need to do. Maintaining your concentration is also related to having sufficient supplies, having everything in good working order, and running on a "full battery." If an instructor is agreeable, you may want to record their classes as an adjunct to note-taking; you can use the recording to clarify certain points or as a way to review if you have a long commute. Some faculty videostream their lectures and/or post them to their websites so that students may review them again later for this same purpose. If you have strong keyboarding skills, taking a portable laptop to class may expedite your note-taking ability.

Other tips for note-taking are related to format and responding to clues. Note-taking can be done in many forms; you have probably seen various methods. Generally, whether you outline or write in narrative form, it is best to be as brief as possible. It does not matter whether you use complete sentences or words as long as you write in a way that you can decipher later. Using abbreviations is helpful, but be consistent with the abbreviations that you use. A helpful abbreviation strategy for remembering nursing concepts is acronyms. Underline or star important points; instructors often emphasize or state what is particularly important and may repeat a key issue. It is useful to copy information from slides, computer presentations, or whiteboards, although the information does not need to be verbatim. Develop your own system of shortcuts, abbreviations, and coding. Many computer software programs now provide note-taking, highlighting, and other editing features that will assist you in organizing your notes. Lastly, it is also important to review your notes within 1 to 2 days, rather than waiting until time for an exam.

Writing skills will also be required as you return to school. Hacker and Sommers (2021) and Foster (2022) provide information for success in writing and reviews common errors made in punctuation, verb tense, pronouns, modifiers, and diction. Matthews (2023) provides a step-by-step approach to writing essays and academic papers, from developing a foundation for the essay—what it is about and how to develop your thesis—to developing an outline, writing paragraphs, and finalizing your essay.

Preparation for Tests

Developing study skills also includes preparing for tests and exams. This can be stressful for many students, and so it is beneficial to use methods that will aid the process. Reading assignments and notes should be reviewed on a regular basis to keep familiar with the course content. This does not substitute for a comprehensive review before a test, but it does enhance the process. It can help to review your previous exams to learn from your mistakes and to get a feel for how the instructor asks questions. If you have difficulty with the type of exams your instructor uses, consult with the tutoring center on campus, where useful tools are available to assist you in perfecting your test-taking skills.

Most nursing schools have adopted testing styles similar to the Next Generation NCLEX (NGN), which the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2023) developed to better measure clinical judgment and decision-making abilities. The NGN features real-world patient scenarios that are constructed to measure your critical thinking and clinical judgment. To prepare you for this exam, your instructor may assign case studies or include case-study questions on exams and quizzes.

Developing study skills is an important component of student success. Again, the process depends on you. Being a proactive student means that you accept responsibility for achieving your goals. If you are having difficulty studying or taking exams, or if you experience test anxiety, you must seek help from appropriate sources. Asking for help is not a weakness; rather, it is strength. Your advisor, counselor, and many text- and computer-based programs can all be resources to support your success. For those who specifically are having difficulty with math or who have math anxiety, the campus tutoring center can provide assistance to decrease stress and review math concepts that are particularly applicable to healthcare (measurements, drug calculations, etc.).

Cultivating Study Groups and Mentors

Study groups and mentors can be extremely valuable resources. Although you may feel that you don't have time for a study group, the discussion of various reading assignments, making connections between and among concepts, and applying past experiential knowledge to new concepts can improve retention and also build confidence. Additionally, peer students may explain complex topics in different ways and share their use of different study strategies (from different learning styles) that may benefit you and vice versa. Another rewarding strategy is to form a study group, sharing in common struggles and successes. The group needs to have a spirit of cooperation, as opposed to competition, to be beneficial. The group's meeting cannot be a social gathering because the purpose must be to study. The best approach is to join a group with students who have similar goals and study habits and who seem to have the same focus in classes. If the group is larger than five or six people, it will probably be too unwieldy. A "study buddy" can be helpful in motivating you during times of procrastination and can also suggest coping and accommodation strategies for challenges you face.

The format of study group meetings should include reviewing material, comparing class notes, testing each other with review questions, or asking questions based on the readings or notes. A study group can be used for developing projects or reviewing members' written work. Nursing students find it useful to develop nursing care plans to help each other understand the process and to strengthen the comprehensiveness of such plans.

It may also be helpful for you to develop a mentor as you enter the program. A mentor is generally defined as a wise and trusted counselor. It is a person for whom you have

respect and admiration and from whom you feel you will receive guidance and support. As you begin the nursing program, you may find that a faculty member, a nurse where you work, or even a more advanced student is someone with whom you are able to consult or use as a role model. This relationship may provide you with the courage to explore other options or discuss new ideas. More information on developing mentors is presented in Chapter 6.

Characteristics of Highly Successful Students

Being successful as an adult learner is not just about grades—it's also about personal growth. Finding a balance that works for you is key to a fulfilling college experience. Returning to college often demands adaptability and strong organizational skills. Many adult learners face the challenge of reacquainting themselves with academic expectations, technological advancements, and evolving learning methods. Skills such as information literacy, critical thinking, and effective communication become important tools for navigating coursework successfully. Returning students must cultivate resilience and a growth mindset, embracing the learning curve and persevering through challenges.

Characteristics of successful students are described in Box 1.6. Developing these characteristics can positively impact not only academic performance but also personal and professional growth. Although these traits contribute to academic success, remember that each student is unique, and success can be defined in various ways.

Fagan and Coffey (2023) and Mingo (2023) describe the current academic environment as one that moves at a faster pace, with more diverse teaching strategies requiring today's student to think critically, to engage in group activities, and to use technology effectively. Students who are curious, open-minded, and self-disciplined often develop learning and study strategies that foster their success (Box 1.7).

In examining nursing students in specific, Thomas (2011) surveyed nursing faculty from colleges and universities across the nation to ascertain what characteristics they believe lead to success for student nurses. Thomas stressed how important it is for nursing students to let their faculty members know as early as possible if they are struggling with something. A summary of faculty responses to questions about student success is included in her text *How to succeed in nursing school: Before, during, and after*. These responses provide insights into the experiential knowledge of nursing faculty working every day to help students be successful.

CONCLUSION

Returning to school as an adult is not easy. The strategies presented in this chapter provide you with a means to facilitate the educational process and to make the journey more successful and enjoyable; they also put you in the driver's seat. Preparing for your return to school will be time well spent; it will build self-confidence and strengthens the likelihood of your academic success.

Do not be intimidated by the process; your prior learning and work experiences have provided you with a sturdy foundation. As an adult learner and a returning student, you have a wealth of knowledge and experience that will support your efforts. Now, you must continue to maximize your skills and abilities. Remember Sandy Martin? She involved her job and family to help meet her needs. She sought guidance from her nursing advisor and took a proactive approach to her learning experience. Together, they have built a strong foundation on which she can build her continued success.

BOX 1.6

Characteristics of Highly Successful Students

Self-motivation and self-discipline	Successful students often have a genuine passion for learning and, beyond external rewards, are internally motivated to succeed. They demonstrate self-discipline, resist the temptation to procrastinate, and stay focused on their academic goals.
Goal setting	Successful students set clear, achievable goals for themselves, providing direction and motivation. They maintain a healthy balance between academic commitments and personal well-being, recognizing the importance of physical and mental health.
Time management	Successful students effectively manage their time, prioritize tasks, and adhere to deadlines. They excel in managing their time efficiently, balancing academic and personal responsibilities.
Adaptability and resilience	Successful students can adapt to challenges, adjust to different learning environments, and overcome obstacles. They bounce back from setbacks, learn from failures, and maintain a positive attitude despite challenges.
Continuous active learning	Successful students actively engage in the learning process, participate in class discussions, ask questions, and seek additional resources. They have a curiosity for continuous learning beyond the classroom and seek opportunities for personal and professional growth.
Effective study habits	Successful students demonstrate a commitment to their studies and consistently put in the effort required to succeed. They employ effective study techniques, create study schedules, use diverse learning resources, and practice active recall.
Organization	Successful students are well-organized, keeping track of assignments, deadlines, and other responsibilities.
Seeking help when needed	Successful students are not afraid to seek help when faced with challenges, whether that assistance is from professors, tutors, or counseling services. They build positive relationships with professors, classmates, and professionals, and they recognize the value of networking for future opportunities.

Adapted from Hollins, P. (2021). *The study skills handbook: How to ace tests, get straight A's, and succeed in school.* petehollins.com; Jantzen, D. (2022). Getting grounded: Educational foundations for nurses lifelong learning. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 39,* 34–40. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2021.12.009; Mulolli, D., & Gothberg, J. (2023). How doctoral students with low GRE scores succeed: A grounded theory study. *The Qualitative Report, 28*(1), 14–32. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2023.5672; Sarver, W., Seabold, K., & Kline, M. (2020). Building a foundation of evidence to support nurses returning to school: The role of empowerment. *Nursing Education Perspective, 41*(5), 285–290. https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NEP.0000000000000704

BOX 1.7

Strategies of Successful Students

Strategy	Example
Set realistic long-term and short-term goals	• Be specific • Start small • Set reasonable time limits
Manage time	• Study in time blocks • Don't cram for exams • Create schedules
Prevent procrastination	• Stay organized • Set realistic goals • Meet challenges first
Practice self-care	• Exercise regularly • Get enough sleep • Eat a healthy diet
Use nursing program resources	• Schedule office hours with faculty • Seek assignment clarification • Utilize textbook resources
Utilize campus support systems	• Consult with student advisors • Request librarian assistance • Attend social events
Think positively	• "I can do this" • "I will be successful" • Trust you intuition
Stay motivated	• Visualize success • Reward yourself • Track your progress
Manage anxiety	• Be prepared • Read assignment instructions carefully • Practice breathing exercises
Participate in study groups	• Prepare lecture notes to share • Utilize campus study rooms • Maintain a distraction-free environment
Develop critical thinking	• Draw concept maps • Take practice exams • Review rationales for interventions

Adapted from Fagan, J. M., & Coffey, J. S. (2023). Despite challenges part II: Bridging the gap to success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice,* 152102512311702. https://doi.org/10.1177/15210251231170297; Jantzen, D. (2022). Getting grounded: Educational foundations for nurses lifelong learning. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 39*, 34–40. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2021.12.009; Mingo, S. (2023). Ten strategies and survival tips for managing nursing school. *Nursing Made Incredibly Easy! 21*(6), 7–11. https://doi.org/10.1097/nme.0000000000000005

STUDENT *Exercises*

Exercise 1.1

Consider the relationship you have with family and significant others from whom you will need support in your return to school. Develop a win/win agreement that encompasses the following:

1. Who needs to be involved with determining the win/win agreement?
2. What are the desired results of the agreement?

3. What perspectives would you anticipate that each individual has of how they contribute to reaching the results desired?
4. What perspective do you have?
5. What guidelines can you identify to guide the agreement?
6. What resources might be necessary to carry out the agreement?
7. What is the win for each individual?
8. What are the consequences if the agreement is not followed?

Capture what you have identified in writing and review it together. Make adjustments as needed. An effective agreement will be extremely helpful in managing your time and commitments as you return to school.

Exercise 1.2

Reflect on the attributes needed for success as you enter the professional nursing program. It is now time for you to design and assemble your first professional portfolio to be used as you meet with your nursing advisor. Consider the following:

1. What are the documents you will include that provide tangible evidence of your accomplishments and the knowledge, dispositions, and skills that you possess?
2. What documents or projects have you completed as an LPN/LVN and/or returning student that can be included to demonstrate your critical thinking ability and work as a healthcare professional?
3. How will you assemble your portfolio in such a way to introduce yourself as the unique student nurse that you are, highlighting your strengths and areas where you may need further mentoring or development as a growing professional?

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