

FIU Anesthesiology Nursing Program Class of 2014 Health and Wellness Newsletter Spring 2013

Stress Management: Surviving the Second Semester

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Remember what it was like to be a new grad? Remember the joy of getting your first job? Remember the fear of being in a new place with new people and not knowing what to do or what to expect?



Remember the first time your patient desaturated to the single digits, or had to be emergently rushed to the operating room? Those were some intimidating times for a new grad; but you learned to bag those sats back up. You learned how to titrate vasoactive drips and push fluids. You learned just how much pressure to push down on someone's chest during CPR, and you learned how to manage your time and think on your feet. Your confidence grew over the years and you advanced to taking sicker patients, being on the code team, precepting, and taking charge. Your job became easier because you knew how to interact effectively with the rest of the interdisciplinary team, you knew how to find resources quickly, and

you became the go-to person for the new grads. The stress of being a new grad was gone. You were confidently accomplishing what you had set out to accomplish- to save lives. Life was good...and then you decided to go to anesthesia school.

You researched many schools, studied your adrenergic meds and receptors, passed your CCRN, and probably didn't



sleep much the night before your interview. Some of you drove from across the state,

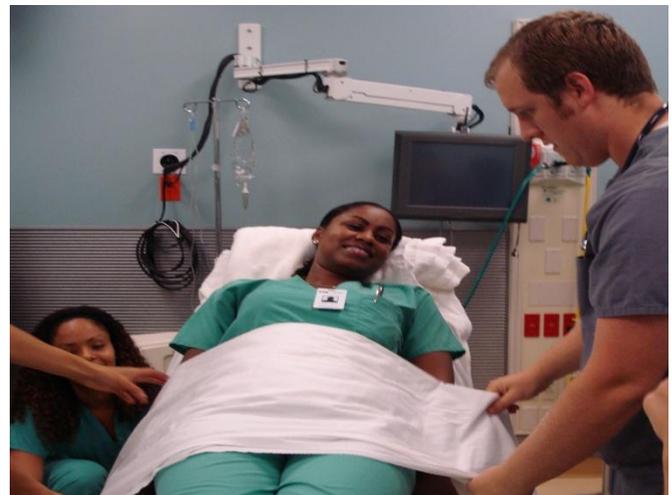
and others flew from across the country. The nervousness was palpable but somehow, your knowledge and confidence shone through. There was something about you that gave the panel the confidence that you had what it takes to be successful in anesthesia school. Afterwards, you looked on the blogs and texted people who had also interviewed to see if acceptance letters had gone out

yet. You checked your email and mailbox on a daily, even QID basis. The wait was almost torturous, but then you finally got that letter- "To the future (insert your name here), MSN, CRNA... CONGRATULATIONS!" You told your family and friends, and celebrated your last days of bedside nursing. Some of you packed up your entire lives and families, and all of you have made great sacrifices for the opportunity to embark on a journey that would lead to the dream of becoming a CRNA.

And now that new-grad feeling is back. You barely know a thing about anesthesia, and although you have been a nurse for this many years, that nervousness of being in a new, unknown situation is back; and it is stressful! When asked what the biggest source of school-related stress is, one student replied, *"No matter how much you try to study, prepare, or stay ahead, it is never enough. There is always something that could have been better if you had only done x, y, and z."* We are learning a great deal of information in a short amount of time. Sometimes it feels like there is an expectation that we should know everything, and we often put pressure on ourselves that our professors and preceptors don't even put on us. It's okay if you miss an intubation, so long as you learn how to improve for next time. Don't beat yourself up if you forgot to put an extension on your fluid warmer...just don't forget to hook up your suction! We all make mistakes, but the important thing is to learn from them and to not be as hard on ourselves as anesthesia students tend to be. Hopefully, we have all found

which study habits work for us and which don't. Take care to prioritize the important things so that you can maximize the effectiveness of your study time.

Speaking of study time, you know you are in anesthesia school when the employees at Starbuck's may know you by first name and have your drink ready by the time you get to the counter. You may think getting more than 4-5 hours of sleep is too good to be true. The stress of an 11-hour class day, hours of commuting to clinical, writing care-plans, studying for multiple tests for one day, and balancing all of the stresses of anesthesia school with your life outside of school has set in. Let's face it-



anesthesia school isn't for the weak-hearted, but at the same time, we are all human; we get stressed! We all get stressed from different things, and what may have a great effect on one person may not affect another to the same extent. Whether stress is from clinical, studying, test grades, lack of time, having to balance school with a family, not having family close, health problems, lack of sleep, traffic, sheer bad luck, or whatever the case may be- we all get stressed. As expressed by one student, *"I know some*

people get stressed from studying, but I often feel stressed if I'm doing anything except studying because I'm so worried about failing. This is true even when I am doing things that need to be done, like laundry!"

We get stressed not only from school, but from the lack of homeostasis our body needs to function. The National Sleep Foundation recommends 7-9 hours of sleep per night for the average adult (2011). This is not always possible between studying, commuting, and 12-hour clinical days. One student states it realistically, *"Eventually you get used to 5 hours of sleep per night and just decide what is well worth spending time on."* One good way to incorporate more sleep is to improve time management. Saying "no" to social time with friends and family may be hard, but it may mean getting more time to get work done, which leads to less all-nighters. This doesn't mean to forsake social time, because time with family and friends is very effective in reducing stress; however, the key is learning how to create a reasonable balance.

Achieving physical and mental wellness while being successful in anesthesia school can be quite challenging, but it is possible. Exercise is a very important thing that has been proven to reduce stress. Coupled with the natural anti-depressant properties of the Florida sun, a good run releases endorphins that can take the edge off of some of that stress. The CDC recommends at least 20 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per day for the average adult (2011). Exercise

can also help improve performance. According to Buhler, "A physically fit individual is more likely to be more productive at work and more satisfied with their job." (1993). The FIU Recreation Center has a great facility that offers the use of gym equipment, as well as free exercise classes such as Spinning, Step, Ultimate Core, Hip Hop, Yoga, Pilates, even Meditation. Advanced classes are just \$2 per session, but most classes with a fee during the weekdays are free on the weekends.



A healthy diet provides more energy than one filled with those fast foods that are so easy to grab. So how can you eat healthy on an anesthesia student's budget? Buying fruits and vegetables in season will help your budget. Blueberries, cantaloupe, celery, cauliflower, peas, carrots, grapefruit, watermelon, and oranges are all in season through June or July. Then there are foods that are always cheap, like bananas, which are also filling. Buying food in bulk when they are on sale and freezing them will also help to reduce cost. Publix usually has some good buy-one-get-one-free deals. So what about preparation time? Using those weekends without a test coming up to make food for

the week is a good way to save time on those days when you need to grab something and run out the door.



Think cooking a meal takes too long to prepare? Take some chicken, put it in a foil-lined baking pan, and cover it with your favorite seasoning (like lemon-pepper). Wrap the chicken in the foil (for that moist, fall-off-the-bone-texture). Put it in the oven on 350° for forty-five minutes (for dark meat) or half an hour (for white meat) and study or do family time while it is cooking. Ten minutes before the chicken is done, put a potato in the microwave for 6-8 minutes, or throw some easily prepared veggies (like green beans and baby carrots) in a boiling pot. Preparation time is about 10 minutes, and cook time is less than an hour. Cook time is just 20 minutes if you use Tilapia fillets. If you make enough to last for the week, portion it and freeze it to take to clinical for lunch.

Another source of stress is financial stress. It's hard to go from making a decent living to making no living at all. Even though the lack of having a steady income is just temporary, it can be quite challenging. Discipline is a key factor when it comes to

giving up some of those luxuries we have been accustomed to. Some good ways to save money is to get rid of luxuries such as cable, eating out, and buying name-brand foods. If you really need that cable, some companies will offer you a new promotion when the old one is getting ready to run out. Yes, name-brands generally taste better, but your taste-buds will adjust. Really tempted to buy a new outfit or a new pair of shoes? Considering the time commitment of anesthesia school, that new outfit will likely be sitting in your closet for a while. Ask yourself if it is a necessary purchase and if it's not, discipline yourself to say "no". Keeping the windows open and the air-conditioning off or set high during winter months can cut a sizable amount off your electricity bill. Some cellular phone plans may include features that you don't use, so look into down-grading your plan. Many credit card companies are willing to reduce your interest rate for a promotional period if you simply ask. Groupon and good old-fashioned coupon-clipping (if you have the time and patience) are also good money savers. Keep in mind that although saving money is important, it is also important to treat yourself every once in a while. So pick one thing to indulge in, whether it is eating out once a month or treating yourself to a massage.

FIU offers many services at student-friendly prices. You can get a \$10 manicure from the Santi Salon or a \$30 massage from the Waves Spa at the Graham Center. The FIU Health Center offers free chair massages, and personal

massages for much less than a massage chain. They also offer acupuncture on Fridays by appointment. While you are tending your physical health, don't forget your mental health- the Counseling Center offers individual, couples, and group counseling for no or limited cost.

Even if you manage to save money, get rest, and exercise, it always seems like there just aren't enough hours in the day. *"I hate spending two hours of my life everyday stuck in traffic driving home from clinical,"* states one student. Although this may be the case, finding ways to utilize that seemingly wasteful time can help. *"I listen to lectures in the car to maximize my study time,"* states another student. You can also save time by getting your car washed at Pronto in the Panther, Gold, or Red Garages while you are in class. Also, the FIU Pharmacy just initiated an on-campus delivery system that will deliver your prescription right to you.

Most of us agree that this semester is more stressful than last semester, but we are already more than half-way through! When things become overly stressful, one student says she likes to make time to be alone. Make sure to get some time for yourself! Soak your feet, watch a movie, or relax at the pool. Often when we are in the midst of a challenge, it is easy to lose focus. Try to remember the excitement of getting your acceptance letter. *"I framed my acceptance letter and put it on my bookshelf as a motivator,"* states one student. Remember all of the preparation you have done to be where you are right

now, as well as the goal that you have set out to achieve. As one student stated, *"Nothing worth having is easy to attain."* Remember all of those friends and family that are rooting for you to succeed; yes the same ones who have already claimed those coveted graduation tickets for 2014. And let us also cheer for each other, as we are the only ones who know what it's like to be in our shoes. As challenging as it may be, the good thing is that challenges are easier to face when we are not alone. One student stated, *"I am grateful for my classmates; they help relieve my stress by listening to me whine or by helping me study."* Oh, and what about that new grad feeling? *"Once you start taking call and doing nights you will gain a lot of confidence,"* states one senior. Throughout the next two years we will cry together, laugh together, have fun together, grow together, and graduate together. Take time to join in class events, as it will strengthen our relationships, as well as reduce stress. When you have a bad day at clinical or don't do as well as you wanted to on a test, just keep in mind that our challenges are not unique, as many have gone before us... and succeeded!



References

1. Buhler, P. (1993). Managing in the 90's: Stress management. *Supervision*, 54(5), 17-19.
2. Center for Disease Control. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.html>
3. National Sleep Foundation. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/how-sleep-works/how-much-sleep-do-we-really-need>

Links to FIU Resources

FIU Retail Home Page: <http://shop.fiu.edu/retail-and-services/index.html>

- Here you can find links to Pronto Wash, Santi Hair and Nail Salon, Waves Spa, Wells Fargo, and many more resources

FIU Counseling Center: <http://counselingservices.fiu.edu/default.aspx>

FIU Pharmacy: <http://healthservices.fiu.edu/clinical-services/Pages/Pharmacy.aspx>

FIU Health Center: <http://healthservices.fiu.edu/Pages/Home.aspx>

FIU Recreation Center: <http://www.recreation.fiu.edu/RecCtr.htm>

Panther Fit Classes: <http://www.recreation.fiu.edu/PantherFIT.htm>