

People make a difference

In our continuing series on the experiences of a nursing student, **Jade Petchey** describes the significant people in a student nurse's support network



I am now on my fourth course placement and I can confidently say that people make a difference. By this I mean the people you have at home, those you study with and those who teach you both inside university and on placement.

When I was applying for nursing courses and doing my interviews, one of the big questions that always confused me was 'do you have a support network?' I couldn't understand why this was so important. Now, coming to the end of my second year, and seeing the light of the third year, I truly understand.

Family and friends outside of your course are vital. There are multiple times I've called my mum or partner because I have needed them to keep me going when I have been saying, 'I can't do this' and 'I'm going to fail'. Then I've heard that familiar voice on the end of the phone saying they are proud of you and they know this is just the wobbles and to keep going because you can do it.

Family and friends are also important because they stop you from getting stuck with your head in a book or staring at a screen because they pull you away for self care.

Seeing people and going out is self care and you need to do it. It is okay to take time away and socialise. It allows your body and mind to reset and refresh and it is great for your mental health. Ensure you keep seeing your people and have someone you can talk to.

Study buddies

The people you study with are going to become your best friends and your biggest advocates because they understand to the fullest what you are going through. Having a good group of 'study buddies', as I call them, can be one of the best things for you. Each of you will thrive in different areas and can help one another when you're struggling. You can prepare for exams together or just have a good old moan about that one assignment you just can't wrap your head around.

On the other side of this bench are your tutors at the university. They aren't there to catch you out – they want you to succeed but they want you to do it on your own merit. That doesn't mean you can't talk to them when you are struggling with assignments or on placement. You can always ask for guidance. (Side note: if they offer you tutorials with your assignments – take them! Best thing ever!)

On placement

And lastly, the other important people are the nurses you work with on placement. I have been fortunate that 80% of the nurses I have worked with want to teach and want to educate you to be the best nurse you can be. They do this by offering you learning opportunities and showing you the right path to take, encouraging you to do things you

didn't think you would ever be able to do, and being a confidante while on placement if you are having a hard time.

But then there is that one nurse who can make the best placement you have ever been on come crumbling down. They instil fear and negativity into you. They don't bother to look at you or even know your name. You become their 'errand student' doing the things they don't want to. Sometimes it's not one nurse but, unfortunately, a group of nurses, and this can change your whole view of nursing. In some cases, it has made people leave the course and right now the NHS cannot afford to lose students.

So how do we overcome this? Talk to your people! I mean your study buddies, your tutors, call your mum for a rant and go on a date night with your partner. Then, when you come back in on your next shift that you don't want to do, hold your head high, and remember you don't have to stay there forever: this is a short 6, 8 or 10-week placement. You are here to learn, and you have – you know what sort of nurse you are going to be when you start teaching students in a few years. You can reflect on this placement and take everything you have learnt – good and bad – with you. The good you can teach to others and the bad you can change. Think about what type of nursing environment you want to encourage when you have the power to do so. Do not let one person, or one group, take away what you have wanted and worked so hard for!

Remember you are the future, and you can make a difference. Hold on a little longer, the light at the end of the tunnel is near. **BJN**

Erratum

Russell S, Archer K, Osborne W. Exercise and physical activity after stoma surgery: EXPASS recommendations. *British Journal of Nursing*, 2024;33(6):S20-S25. <https://doi.org/10.12968/bjon.2024.33.6.S20>

The number of people living with a stoma was incorrectly stated on page S20. It should have read:

'In the UK, there are between 165 000 and 205 000 people living with a stoma and 21 000 individuals are thought to require stoma formation surgery each year ...'

This has been updated online and the *British Journal of Nursing* would like to apologise for this error.