

Developing Educational and Professional Goals

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NURS 401: Professional Development

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July 6, 2025

Introduction

My path to nursing has been a long one. As I examine and reflect upon my educational journey and establish goals for the future in this paper, I'd like to give myself credit for choosing a career and sticking to it. This has been the hardest part so far. The best thing I like about nursing is the ability to work in a multitude of settings and trying on different hats, from direct patient care at bedside, to case management, aesthetics, or nursing research. I have only been a licensed registered nurse for a year and haven't started work yet because I am raising two young children. Initially, I planned to obtain only an associate's degree and start working, but I became pregnant with my second child and didn't want to train at a new job and then go on a maternity leave, so I decided to stay home and concentrate on family life and getting a bachelor's degree.

Examination of the Journey

As I mentioned earlier in the introduction, choosing a career was the hardest part for me. Back home in Belarus, I studied to be an English teacher, but after immigrating to the United States in 2010 at age 19, my focus shifted from education to establishing myself in a new country. A few years later I enrolled into a college in New York City. I love animals and have nursed a few rescue dogs back to health in the past, so a degree as a veterinary technician was appealing to me. Unfortunately, I had to stop due to unforeseen circumstances and continue working in NYC to pay the bills and have a little bit of fun. Around the same time, my sister Hanna was working towards her bachelor's degree. She fell in love with human anatomy and physiology and had a realization that she wanted to be a nurse. As I observed Hanna in her career, I noticed how much confident she had become, how much she loved what she did, and she strongly suggested I look into the profession as well. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I worked at Lowe's and my coworker Donna, a retired nurse, said that I would make a great nurse.

At that time, I had relocated to rural Virginia with my husband and there was not much else to do other than to study or have a family. I talked to a career counselor at my community college, completed a few tests, and she recommended that I give nursing a try. I ended up graduating at the top of my class and enjoying the program to the fullest (but not without tears, both mine and my baby's). Just like my sister, I fell in love with the human body and the way it works, and how many parts play a role in homeostasis. My cousin Viktoria, who lives in Kyiv, Ukraine, owns a beauty salon and she kept telling me through the years to look into aesthetics, since it is an exciting, fast-growing, innovative, and lucrative field. Having a job be connected to beauty, self-care, and bringing the best out in people seemed appealing to me. Luckily, one of my professors at the community college, Katie Justice, was a nurse practitioner who worked as a nurse-injector at a skincare studio, so she kindly invited me to shadow her. Interestingly enough, in my two years of clinicals, the sight of blood, human waste, or fourth degree pressure ulcers did not make me as queasy as the sight of my professor loosening up fascia on client's cheeks with a two-inch needle, before injecting it with a filler. Other than that, it was an exciting experience.

According to the state of Virginia, you can do facial injections as a licensed RN, but I knew I would at least want to have a bachelor's degree, both for my own self-worth and trust of my future clients. The time spent shadowing my professor Katie taught me that there is always room for professional improvement. Even though the job requires just an associate's degree and some additional training specializing in face anatomy and injection techniques, I knew I'd like to be trained to the fullest extent possible, thus getting a BSN seemed like a logical step.

Establishing Goals and Self-Assessment

While studying at ODU, I'd like to take some public health classes, as well as classes that relate to nursing education. Although these classes are not the cornerstone of aesthetics, this

would be beneficial in case I switch the fields. Primary prevention is another passion of mine, so I would like to be equipped with as much knowledge as possible when it comes to the health of larger populations. Upon completion of the RN to BSN program, I would like to receive hands-on training for injectors and find an entry level position at an aesthetics clinic. Additionally, I would like to keep my eyes open and perhaps fill an opening at the local health department. I like that this job has regular office hours, federal holidays, and good benefits. A work-life balance is very important to me. As a person who grew up abroad and seen a different way of life, I know there is more to life than work. I want to be present for my family, to do work that fulfills me and to try to enjoy it as well. While reading the chapter of the textbook on resilience, I kept thinking: would I work like those heroic nurses in the eye of the storm or would I break and step away from the bedside, just to keep sane? It is a hard question. I know I am a resilient person but at the same time, if the job degrades my mental and physical health, I do not think it is worth it. One of the ways I take care of myself is being physically active; however, I must be careful so that I do not exacerbate my back injury, so I choose activities like Pilates, stretching or walking. Another way to take care of myself is by socializing with other parents with young children or cooking a tasty meal. I know my limitations like my injured back and limited ability to lift patients, being picky about the field I want to work in or having hard time understanding a very thick Appalachian accent - that makes it hard to take care of the older local population. However, I know my strengths and want to emphasize them. They are my foreign background and exposure to multiculturalism while living in big cities, good communication and sense of humor, going through the program in my mid-30's with a variety of life and work experiences. I like to affect people in a positive way and make them feel better. I am a good planner and try to do

schoolwork every day, even if it is just a little bit. Graduating with a 4.0 GPA from my community college was a pleasant surprise: I didn't think this would be possible simply because English is not my native language. I guess, language skill is just a part of a puzzle that makes a successful student.

I can think of my weaknesses as a limiting factor, or I can use them as guidance. I plan to emphasize my strong sides in my educational and professional path and work on my weak sides. Precepting at the local hospital was a valuable experience because I was exposed to various dialects and ways of talking, and that trained my ear. I hope to continue to be a diligent student while balancing school and family life.

Conclusion

My professional nursing journey is still at the very beginning, but I am excited about the ways it might unfold. I didn't grow up knowing that I would like to work in medicine and take care of the ill. For me, it was more of a calculated approach between personal history and qualities and the demands of the job. I appreciate the fact that, in case I don't fit into one field, I may find something else and that I can always rely on the job security. While job security was not something I was concerned with in my 20's, it is a deciding factor now that I have a family and children.

The Honor Pledge

“I pledge to support the Honor System of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community it is my responsibility to turn in all suspected violations of the Honor Code. I will report to a hearing if summoned.”

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