

Stronger Together: Faculty-Student Mentorship and Peer Support to Reduce New Nurse Burnout



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Pre -License BSN Program

Problem Statement

Nursing professionals are continuing to leave the profession at a rapid rate. The nursing workforce continues to decline, decreasing from more than 6 million nurses in 2019 to approximately 4.7 million working nurses in 2022 [6]. As nursing is the nation's largest healthcare profession [1], nursing burnout has emerged as a major threat to the health of the United States, impacting patient safety, quality of care, workforce stability, and healthcare system sustainability. Burnout remains especially prevalent among early-career nurses, with nurses having less than 10 years of experience reporting burnout rates as high as 65%, compared to approximately 30% among nurses with more than 40 years of experience. Additionally, 10% of nurses reporting burnout are age 25 or younger, and nearly 18% of new nurses leave the profession within their first year of practice [5]. These alarming trends highlight the urgent need to better prepare student nurses as they transition into practice.

Faculty mentoring of senior nursing students will be a critical intervention to prevent new nurse burnout by fostering resilience, providing emotional support, and easing the transition from student nurse to practitioner. Structured mentorship programs will reduce stress and increase confidence, helping students manage realistic workloads and navigate the "reality shock" of early nursing career challenges.

New Nurse Burnout: Prevention and Preparation is Management

Review of Literature

- Registered Nurses comprise the largest segment of the U.S. healthcare workforce, and one of the largest segments of the U.S. workforce in whole [6].
- New to profession nurses are reporting burnout at a rate of two times that of nurses who have been in the profession 40+ years [2].
- Nearly 18% of newly licensed nurses leave the profession within their first year [5].
- Greater proportion of nurses <45 years of age are reporting burnout compared to nurses >45 years of age [5].
- 69% of nurses under the age of 25 years are reporting burnout [5].
- Definition of Burnout: conceptualized syndrome resulting from chronic, unmanaged workplace stress [3].
- Symptoms of Burnout: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased mental distance from the job, feelings of negativity or cynicism about the job, and reduced professional efficacy [3].
- Definition of Resilience: The ability to successfully adapt to stressors, maintaining psychological well-being in the face of stressors [4].
- Definition of Transition Shock: The intense, often overwhelming, emotional and professional disorientation experienced by new graduates moving from academia to clinical practice [9].

What "Burnout" is NOT: Burnout is not a failure or lack of compassion or work ethic on the nurse's part.

Method

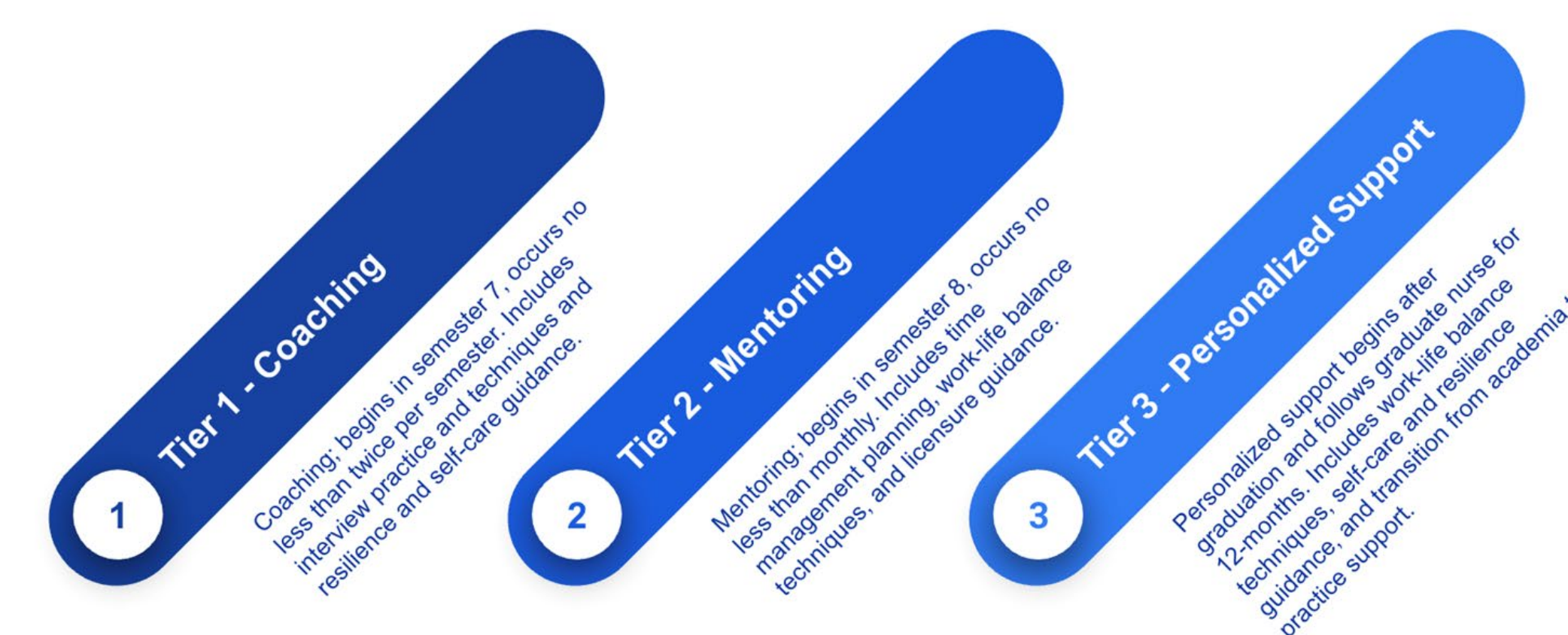
A literature review found nurses with burnout suffer emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, sleep issues, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment [7]. Burnout impairs clinical judgment, decreasing attention and problem-solving ability [8].

Program Design for Senior Nursing: Three-part intervention:

- **Tier 1: Coaching** (Semester 7, occurring twice per semester): Interview practice, resilience, and self-care.
- **Tier 2: Mentoring** (Semester 8, occurring monthly): Time management, work-life balance, and licensure guidance.
- **Tier 3: Personalized support** (Post-graduation, 12 months): Work-life balance, self-care, resilience, and transition to practice support.

Implementation:

- **Tiers 1 & 2:** Managed by a Boise State School of Nursing faculty team; progress reviewed/adjusted. Faculty may count hours as Service/Scholarship.
- **Tier 3:** Managed by Boise State School of Nursing faculty and the "Bronco Nurse Alumni Group."



Evaluation Plan

Evaluating new nurse success in transitioning to practice will involve tracking key performance indicators at the conclusion of semesters 7 and 8, and quarterly during the first 12-months after graduation. Key markers such as retention rates, competency checklist completion, self-reported confidence levels, and levels of anxiety will be measured.

Conclusion

Mitigating burnout in new-to-profession nurses must begin *before* student nurses' transition into practice. Education about burnout warning signs for senior nursing students and support that encourages healthy habits and self-care strategies will prepare senior nursing students for the "reality shock" or early nursing career challenges. Supporting student nurses by preparing them for licensure, interviews, and orientation will increase their ability to advocate for a good-fit position. Continued mentorship through the new nurse's first year in practice will foster a sense of positivity and ownership to build resilience in the workplace.

References

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Biography

Tracy M. Watt, MSN, RN, is an Assistant Clinical Professor and Adjunct Coordinator in the School of Nursing at Boise State University, where she teaches in the pre-licensure BSN program through clinical instruction, simulation, skills laboratory, and didactic education. She also serves as a leader in adjunct faculty recruitment, onboarding, mentorship, and development within the nursing program.

With more than 25 years of nursing experience, Tracy has built a career grounded in emergency nursing, healthcare leadership, patient safety, and nursing education. Her professional background includes leadership roles in emergency services, quality and patient safety, regulatory accreditation, and clinical operations across multiple healthcare systems in Idaho.

Tracy's clinical expertise spans emergent and critical care, nursing leadership, regulatory compliance, physician collaboration, process improvement, and academia. Throughout her career, she has remained deeply committed to strengthening nursing practice through mentorship, collaboration, and professional development. Her passion for supporting students and early-career nurses has become a defining focus of her academic and professional work.

In addition to her teaching and leadership responsibilities, Tracy has contributed to numerous professional and civic organizations, including the Idaho Board of Medicine Prelitigation Screening Panel, the Southwest Idaho Healthcare Coalition, and the City of Nampa Opioid Coalition. She has also served in leadership roles with Nurse Leaders of Idaho and other regional healthcare initiatives focused on advancing patient care and workforce resilience.

Tracy earned her Master of Science in Nursing with an emphasis in Leadership and Management from Western Governors University, where she was recognized for excellence in strategic leadership work. She also holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Boise State University and maintains registered nursing licensure in both Idaho and Oregon.

Contact Information



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