Nurses Make Bad Patients: Heal Yourself, Help Others

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According to U.S. Department of Health & Human Services:

➢ Less than 5% of adults participate in daily physical activity (30 minutes or more) and one-third get the recommended activity every week.
➢ Our children consume 40% of their daily intake on EMPTY CALORIES, HALF of which come from soda, fruit drinks, dairy desserts, grain desserts, pizza, and whole milk.
➢ Ninety percent of Americans eat more than 1,000mg OVER the recommended dietary guidelines.
➢ WE’RE OBESE! RIGHT NOW, 1 out of 3 in the U.S. (me, too!) is considered medically “obese”. By 2030, that number will grow to include HALF the adults in this country (https://www.hhs.gov)
Barriers to Nurse Health...
➢ STRESS
➢ POOR SLEEP HYGIENE
➢ POOR DIET
➢ LACK OF EXERCISE
➢ LONG HOURS/STAFFING SHORTAGES
➢ COMPASSION FATIGUE
➢ SUBSTANCE ABUSE

NURSES ARE AMAZING. LOOK AT ALL YOU DO! On any given day, nurses are responsible for assessments, medications, chart orders, documentation, wound care, safety, changes in patient status, patient compliance, meal trays, room temperature, cleanliness, cable television, maintenance entry, communication, comfort, spiritual needs, advocacy, education, discharge planning, follow-up care, etc.
Stress

The Surgeon General states there is a direct correlation between stress, weight gain, abdominal fat, and obesity.

Chronic stress lends itself to binge-eating foods high in sugar, fat, and salt.

Nurses who experience workplace stress are more likely to consume fast foods and less likely to eat fruits and vegetables (Ross, Bevans, Brooks, Gibbons, & Wallen, 2017).

Sleep Hygiene

Research supports a direct correlation between reduced sleep and obesity.

Nurses working 12-hour shifts or taking overnight call often suffer from lack of sleep or sleep disturbances, which increases mortality rates.

Shift nurses average 5.5 hours of sleep which becomes progressively worse with each consecutive shift (Ross et al., 2017).
Depending on which study you read...

➢ ANA suggests that up to 10% of RNs may be suffering from drug or alcohol dependency.

➢ One out of every 5 to 7 RNs is affected by substance abuse.

➢ Increasing number of new complaints to Delaware State Board of Nursing (35%) are related to substance abuse, dependence, abuse (Starr, 2015).

When friends tell you you are remarkably chill for someone with a stressful occupation...

THANK YOU, ALCOHOL.

because PATIENTS.
COMPASSION FATIGUE

➢ Common among first responders (police, firefighters, paramedics), but can be experienced by anyone who is repeatedly exposed to human tragedy and suffering over an extended period of time.

➢ Compassion (emotional reserves) become EXHAUSTED. We’re unable to connect with our patients/families or respond to their needs in the way that nurses are expected to respond.

➢ The result? APATHY, INSOMNIA, CYNICISM, JUDGMENTAL RESPONSES, DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, ISOLATION, JOB DISSATISFACTION, EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONING, LEAVING THE FIELD OF NURSING (Boyle, 2015).
- Make an appointment to see your PCP.  Know your numbers!

- Consider joining a gym or making a commitment to complete 8 fitness classes.  Two months.  See how you feel.  DRAG A BUDDY WITH YOU.  MISERY LOVES COMPANY!  And you could use the support.

- Consider meeting with a registered dietician (your PCP can refer you to one).  Get an instant pot or browse online for healthy recipes.

- Create a NO-fail environment.  If it’s not in your house, you can’t EAT IT/DRINK IT.
What are habits? They are “ACTIONS that are triggered automatically in response to contextual cues that have been associated with their performance” (Gardener, Lally, & Wardle, 2012). Examples: washing hands after using the restroom, turning off the light when you leave a room, buckling your seatbelt when you get into a car.

Repeat an action consistently in the same context (i.e., take a nightly walk after dinner). The more simple the PATIENT- (that’s YOU!) chosen behavior, the more likely the adherence (Gardener, Lally, & Wardle, 2012).

SMALL CHANGES OVER TIME HAVE LASTING RESULTS.
How long does it take to form a habit?

➢ 10 weeks (approx. 66 days) until your habit becomes so embedded into your routine, you become antsy when you deviate from it. Count it down. If you fall off the wagon, get back on. Get your act together, THEN HELP OTHERS!
Thank you. For giving so much of yourself to others. Even at your own detriment. Don’t forget to put your own mask on before you help others. Take care of yourself. Learn when to say “no”. Manage your finances so you don’t become the overtime zombie. Take the advice you give your patients. Habits. 10 weeks. I know you can do it. Habits will still be there when will-power checks out.