Graduating During a Pandemic: Navigating the Unknown

MEGAN P. LIPPE, PHD, RN
SARA K. KAYLOR, ED.D, RN, CNE
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Conflict of Interest: Authors attest that no relevant financial relationship exists between themselves and any commercial supporting entity which would represent a conflict of interest or commercialize the presentation content.
Objectives

- Describe different types of grief from the perspective of nursing students approaching graduation or nurses who have recently entered professional practice
- Identify strategies for responding to loss amidst the COVID-19 pandemic
- Develop mechanisms to prioritize competing challenges and uncertainties
- Explore methods to foster resilience and promote self-advocacy upon entering professional practice
Change is Flooding in...

- Preceptorships and clinical hours
- Final coursework
- Graduations and pinning ceremonies
- Testing sites
- Celebrations and parties
- Outings and trips with friends
- Housing
- Financial stability
The Pull from the Front Lines...
That Discomfort You’re Feeling is Grief
The Broken Bridge and the Dream, Salvador Dalí, 1945

(Berinato, 2020; Corless et al., 2014; Corless & Meisenhelder, 2019; Doka, 2002; Hamilton, 2016; Shear, Frank, Houch, & Reynolds, 2005)
(Corless et al., 2014; Rogalla, 2020; Stroebe & Schut, 2010)
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Through Grief and Coping we find Growth

(Corless et al., 2014; Rogalla, 2020; Stroebe & Schut, 2010)
Stages of Grief

Denial
“This is only temporary. The university may still change their plans and have graduation.”

Anger
“I’ve worked hard for all of these semesters, and this is how it ends?”

Bargaining
“Maybe if I start working now then things will get back to normal faster.”

Depression
“I’m sad and stressed. I miss my old life.”

Acceptance
“What are my options? Let’s get busy.”

Meaning
“What can I take away from this?”

• (Kessler, 2019)
Fostering Resilience

“The ability to bounce back, adapt to stress and adversity, and thrive after being involved in particularly stressful situations...”

• Inherent, protective factors
• Coping strategies/mechanisms

(Turner & Kaylor, 2015)
Navigating the Turmoil

- Find balance
- Be mindful of the present
- Let go of what cannot be controlled
- Stock up on compassion
- Keep trying

Berinato, 2020
Finding your Path

- Arm yourself with the facts
- Be innovative
- Stay connected
- Find joy
- Stay motivated
- Keep studying for licensure and exams
Transitioning from the Student Role

• Thick Skin, Strong Mind, Open Heart
• Build your resource toolkit
• Advocate for yourself
• Care for yourself before all others
Questions or Discussion?

Contact:
Megan P. Lippe, Ph.D, RN
The University of Alabama
melippe@ua.edu

Sara K. Kaylor, Ed.D., RN, CNE
The University of Alabama
skkaylor@ua.edu
References