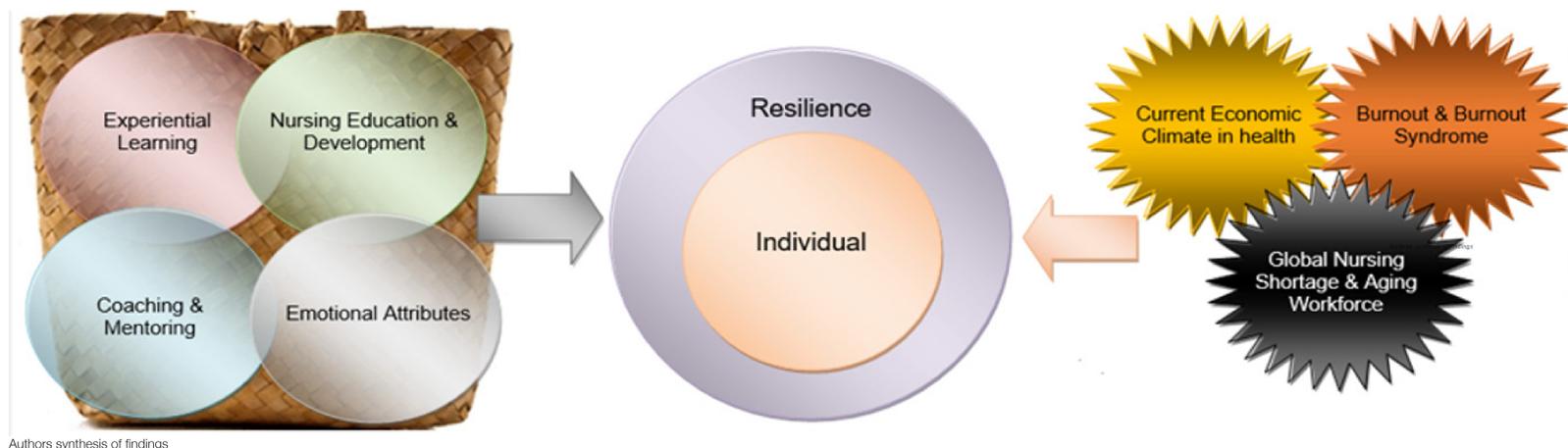


Strategies to develop resilience in nurses and nursing students – Enhancing our kete to empower the nursing profession

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Research design

Nurses face a growing number of pressures. These pressures originate from many sources, such as the patient for whom the nurse is caring and the organisations within which nurses are employed. These pressures can lead to increased stress levels, increased sick leave and poor staff retention. It is, therefore, essential nurses develop and use personal resilience strategies to continue caring for the populations with which they work¹. Several strategies were identified during a search of the literature. Jackson et al.'s definition of resilience, as the "...ability of an individual to adjust to adversity, maintain equilibrium, retain some sense of control over his or her environment, and continue to move on in a positive manner"⁷ was selected to focus the search. Four themes emerged: Nursing Education and Development; Coaching and Mentoring; Experiential Learning; and Emotional Attributes.



Authors synthesis of findings

Tools in our resilience kete

Coaching and mentoring

The important role that coaching and mentoring plays in the development of personal resilience cannot be underestimated^{8, 10}

Coaches can facilitate the development of:

- *Resilient mind-sets* - working with coachees to promote and develop individual resilience by supporting them through three key areas: facilitation of learning, personal growth and reflection on personal goals⁸
- *Reflection and exploration of new learning* - increasing self-reflection and insight also increases levels of optimism and hope, while decreasing turnover and absenteeism⁹
- *Positive self-talk* - supporting coachees to develop and sustain personal resilience through positive self-talk increases coachee levels of coping and self-efficacy¹⁰
- *Leadership resilience* - by guiding and supporting coachee personal growth, resilience can be utilised as a preventative strategy to support those working in challenging contexts^{11, 12}

Experiential learning

A number of authors have identified that experiential learning is an important strategy in the development of resilience^{13, 14}. Strategies that can be utilised to facilitate the development of resilience include:

- *Testing clinical skills and competencies through practice simulation* - student nurse's self-confidence was improved, and their levels of uncertainty and worry were decreased, when their clinical skills were reinforced and supported during simulation¹³
- *Utilising simulation and debriefing* - supporting the students to develop personal resilience through professional empowerment techniques, teamwork building, and conflict management strategies¹⁴
- *Building a greater understanding of workplace adversity* - using techniques such as self-reflection, critical thinking and collaborative learning, participants were able to increase their knowledge of resilience strategies, assisting them to develop and sustain resilience in themselves and their colleagues¹⁶

Nursing education and development

The significance of the role that nurse educators play in the development of resilience cannot be underestimated. Nurse educators are crucial in preparing nurses and nursing students for sustained professional resilience² by facilitating the development of:

- *Reflective learning and reflexive practice* - these skills enable nurses and nursing students to sustain their equilibrium during periods of adversity²
- *Meaningful connections* - supporting nurses and nursing students to develop and sustain their own professional resilience, enabling them to challenge adversity as nurses in the future⁴
- *Self-care* - through self-care nurses can develop and sustain their own personal resilience enabling them to face the complex challenges of professional practice⁵
- *Personal growth and self-development* - reflective learning encourages nursing students to consider aspects of their practice, then using reflective models they can evaluate and develop strategies, enabling them to think critically and reflexively about their future practice⁷

Emotional attributes

Numerous authors elude to the role that emotional attributes play in developing and sustaining resilience^{2, 5}

Strategies to facilitate the development of resilience include:

Coaches can facilitate the development of:

- *Associating positive emotion with periods of adversity* - the power of laughter was noted to lessening levels of burnout and reduce negative emotions⁵
- *Developing grit* - The importance of sustained deliberate practice and conscientiousness, combined with perseverance and a sense of competency was associated with fewer absences and decreased turnover^{19, 20, 21, 22, 23}
- *Encouraging optimism* - maintaining a positive outlook by seeing the possibilities that situations and events possess was noted as significant. It is important to highlight the value that both positive and negative experiences have on the development of resilience⁵
- *Building resilient characteristics* - resilient individuals displayed determination and persistence, while maintaining a balanced perspective of life²⁴

Research findings

Developing strategies to enhance resilience is an essential element of nursing practice and education, leading to improved job satisfaction, greater retention of nursing staff, and enhanced patient care²⁵. The literature has revealed that resilience is a complex subject and that it is not possible to identify one simple approach that will be effective for everyone, and so the use of a combination of strategies tailored to the individual maybe a more effective approach for building resilience in nurses, empowering and enabling them to successfully navigate the challenges of workplace adversity.

Recommendations for practice development

During these unprecedented times; building and maintaining resilience can be extremely challenging. However, these are the times when being resilient is critically important. Taking small steps such as being kind, appreciating the small things, having a positive mindset and asking for help are a great place to start.

- By showing kindness, we can create an environment that demonstrates 'we are all in this together'.
- Appreciating the small things, particularly those that seem insignificant, can help increase resilience when facing daily challenges.
- Embracing a positive mindset can lower stress levels and decrease feelings of hurt, frustration or anger
- Asking for help benefits not only the person asking, but also the person being asked. The person asking for help feels safe to seek assistance and reassurance; while the person being asked, feels acknowledged, appreciated and that their opinions are valued.