

## *Nursing Stressors and Coping Methods*

### **Background:**

If grouping different professions into categories, nursing/healthcare would come top of the list for encountering stress. The mental health of nurses is very important when it comes to their overall performance with patients. Therefore, the ability to cope with stressful situations becomes a big factor. The article, *Nurses Coping With Stressful Situations- A Cross-sectional Study* explains that “nursing is one of more demanding professions involving exposure to a number of stressors associated with the responsibility for the health and life of another human being (P1).” This article gives background information as well as frontline nurses responses to how their stress affects their ability to handle the care of patients and different coping styles used. Many first time nurses don’t know how to cope with stress and it tends to get the best of them. The purpose of this research is to bring awareness to the stress that nurses encounter as well as how to give them better support and access to stress coping methods. What stressors do nurses face and how can they cope with this encountered stress at work and away from work?

### **Methods:**

Within conducting my research, I used the open online space of Reddit comments as well as the subreddit r/nursing, r/StudentNurse and r/Nurse to analyze comments between many different nurses in regards to the topic of stress and coping methods. Within the combined communities, there are 745k members, given that there are many comments to explore. As I read through comments and decided which ones fit best into my research, I steered away from comments that included “I’ve heard...” or “I assume...” due to these comments being from someone that doesn’t actually have experience in the medical field nor do they have reliable information being given. With this being said, I analyzed comments that included personal

experience and/or included the words “I have” or “I am” to be sure that the information being given has come from personal encounters rather than someone else's. I found these comments by mainly focusing on the words “nurse”, “stress”, “coping methods”, “advice” and “student”.

I grouped the comments I found by what they related to. For example, the comments that related to stressors were in one category. Comments related to coping methods were in another, and so forth. I did this so that it was easier for the reader to find the comment's meaning regarding the related topic rather than having to search through them all to find the one they're looking for to read more about. Although it took a few searches to find what I was looking for, I finally found my answer. When undergoing my first search for comments, I found many discussions about stress and coping methods but completely disregarded the nursing factor, they were just talking about stress in general. Within another search I was finding nurse stressors but they were in a discussion of people joking about what nurses deal with and therefore wasn't an actual discussion with reliable information. It took a few different searches to find legitimate discussions about nursing stressors and coping methods of personal experiences and advice. When encountering the discussion about people joking about the stress of nurses, it really encouraged me more to dig deeper into this study to help spread awareness of how mentally difficult the medical field actually is and to encourage others to have sympathy towards your nurses as they carry a lot on their shoulders day in and day out.

## **Results:**

The chart below gives the most relevant comments from each category of my research using all three subreddits.

<b>Reddit Comment Number and Category</b>	<b>Subreddit r/nursing and r/StudentNurse</b>
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	Comments
r/nursing Comment #1 Category: Coping Methods	From <i>invisibledot1</i> , "I drink a lot of alcohol. All joking aside most of my fellow ER nurses drink a lot"
r/nursing Comment #2 Category: Coping Methods	From <i>Livingontherock</i> , "I work at a purely psych facility and their key to mental health for staff is pretty much non existent."
r/nursing Comment #3 Category: Nursing Stressors	From <i>PeppersPoops</i> , "Increased patient load during flu season. Lack of organization Lack of communication Poor team mates No mental health days"
r/nursing Comment #4 Category: Nursing Stressors	From <i>Kez1a</i> , "Violence or threat of violence (physical and/or verbal) towards self/coworkers from patients."
r/StudentNurse Comment #1 Category: Student Nursing	From <i>suebeecron</i> , "Life at the hospital, thankfully, bears no resemblance to the nursing school experience. Get through it as best you can and put it behind you. I work in the OR and really love my job. Glad I survived nursing school."
r/StudentNurse Comment #2 Category: Student Nursing	From <i>Budgieloverr</i> , "A Rollercoaster of emotions."
r/Nurse Comment #1 Category: Personal Relationships	From <i>tourniquetthetaint</i> , "Those in a relationship with a nurse can't fully understand all that we deal with and go through because they aren't nurses. Add that to the fact that we also can't talk about it with them, and even though they try to understand, they eventually bear our burdens as a byproduct of it."
r/Nurse Comment #2 Category: Personal Relationships	From <i>yvonneuhhicide</i> , "While working night shift, my boyfriend of 6 years (ex) cheated on me with a girl he met on POF.. that I found out about. I am sure there were more."
r/Nurse Comment #3 Category: Personal Relationships	From <i>A_lovesunshine</i> , "My job has me coming home late all the time & is always changing my schedule. He would start googling "do nurses cheat? " & eventually

	<p>started accusing me of cheating. The good thing was that I worked with my mom so she was able to fend for me. The stress of being a nurse &amp; having to pay high loans in such a shitty job market eventually took a toll on our relationship. He saw I hated my job &amp; didn't want me to work anymore but because of my debt I had to work. Im always too exhausted to do anything &amp; we ended up splitting.”</p>
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After researching and finding these comments, my research question is no longer a question and now more like a realization. Among all career paths, medical is one of the highest rated careers that develop anxiety, PTSD, depression and alcoholism. Between balancing their work stress and trying their best to cope with it in many different ways, or not knowing how to cope with it at all, they bring this stress home to their partners which in the end causes more stress factors to develop. It was interesting to see what people said about nursing school being harder than actually working as a nurse. Nursing students have different kinds of stress factors in the school aspect of it rather than in the actual hospital and, in the end, can cause many nursing students to not follow through with their degree.

My analysis of the comments I found:

<b>Reddit Comment Number and Category</b>	<b>Subreddit r/nursing and r/StudentNurse Comments</b>
<p>r/nursing Comment #1 Category: Coping Methods</p>	<p>In this comment, it is explained that many nurses steer towards drinking when stressed. This is used as a coping method. This backs up my statement about nursing being one of the highest careers that cause alcoholism and depression. Alcohol is known for amping up depression symptoms and making them worse. In this case, many nurses who suffer from depression also suffer from alcoholism.</p>

<p>r/nursing Comment #2 Category: Coping Methods</p>	<p>This comment explains that many nurses, especially psych nurses, have no coping methods to their stressful work days. This commentor explains that their work facility offers no mental health and stress resources. The article, <i>Occupational stress, coping strategies, and psychological- related outcomes of nurses working in psychiatric hospitals</i> explains that “Stress and depression are prevalent among psychiatric nurses.” (P1). This exact reason is why I want to bring awareness of these issues related to nurses and stress to people's attention in hopes to bring more resources for nurses to learn to cope with stressful work related situations.</p>
<p>r/nursing Comment #3 Category: Nursing Stressors</p>	<p>This comment explains the factors that play a role in work related stress to nurses. This commentor explains that there are “no mental health days” where they work. This seems to be a growing problem all throughout the healthcare field. Having no mental health days increases the anxiety and depression rates among nurses. The article, <i>Associations of work stress and humor with health status in hospital nurses—A cross-sectional study</i> explains that “It is necessary for hospital managers to determine and deal with the causes of work stress to avoid the development of health problems in the nursing personnel.” Proper stress coping methods need to be in place for nurses to avoid the onset of anxiety and/or depression which can cause a negative correlation in work efficiency.</p>
<p>r/nursing Comment #4 Category: Nursing Stressors</p>	<p>This comment explains the stressors that psychiatric nurses endure. The article, <i>Occupational stress, coping strategies, and psychological- related outcomes of nurses working in psychiatric hospitals</i> explains that “Psychiatric nurses experience a wide range of stressful events, evolving from the care of violent, aggressive patients, recurrent relapse, and poor prognosis of mental disorders.” Psychiatric nurses handle a lot of stress, not</p>

	<p>only their own, but also the stress of their patients and coworkers as well as they are constantly making sure everyone is safe.</p>
<p>r/StudentNurse Comment #1 Category: Student Nursing</p>	<p>This comment explains just how stressful nursing school really is. Although nursing students aren't working in the hospital yet, they still have their own levels of stress such as exams, clinicals, professors and so much more. The article, <i>Stress, resilience and psychological well-being in Chinese undergraduate nursing students</i> explains that "Globally, more attention could be given to the potential role of resilience training and other forms of effective coping strategies to deal with the inevitable sources of stress in student nurse training." This commentor explains that life in the actual hospital is nowhere near as stressful as the life of a student nurse.</p>
<p>r/StudentNurse Comment #2 Category: Student Nursing</p>	<p>This comment describes being a nurse as a "rollercoaster of emotions". Having a lot of emotion, especially related to work, can cause many stress factors to elevate. This supports my research by explaining that nursing is not all sunshine and rainbows, oftentimes there are thunderstorms as well.</p>
<p>r/Nurse Comment #1 Category: Personal Relationships</p>	<p>This comment explains the difficulties of the stress that nurses bear brings into their personal life at home with their spouse. Many people who are married or in a relationship with someone who is a nurse say that putting a boundary between work stress and home life isn't always the easiest thing to do. According to the article, <i>Occupational stress, dyadic adjustment and quality of work-life in married nurses: Moderating effects of dyadic coping</i> explains that "Nurses are at higher risk for occupational stress, work-family conflict, and the challenge of balancing job and family roles."</p>
<p>r/Nurse Comment #2 Category: Personal Relationships</p>	<p>This commentor explains her personal story about their boyfriend cheating on them while</p>

	<p>working the night shift. Although getting used to your significant other working odd shifts, especially nights, can be difficult to get used too. However, many times these weird shifts can bring hardship to the nurses relationship, as seen in this comment.</p>
<p>r/Nurse Comment #3 Category: Personal Relationships</p>	<p>This commentor explains that their significant other would blame them for “cheating” when working weird hours and often changing shifts and then ended up splitting. Constant shift/hour changes can seem odd to a significant other especially if they’re not familiar with just how often nurses’ hours change. This can lead to relationship difficulties if trust issues arise.</p>

**Discussion:**

Schooling, relationship difficulties, mental behaviors of patients, long shifts and no mental health help seem to be the main key takeaways of stressors that nurses face. Nurses work a difficult job in an overstimulating environment. Not only having to care for the wellbeing of their patients but for themselves as well in the process. Many studies mentioned stressors that nurses face as well as how it is so hard for them to cope with this stress. When relating the stressors of long hours to at home difficulties, it is not hard to understand why these two play hand in hand. Many spouses of nurses have a hard time with their significant other being at work 85% of their time. No time with the kids, if they have them, as well as no personal time with loved ones. This tends to cause issues within personal relationships as well as internal relationships. Long hours are a stress factor for nurses as well as their partners. Many nurses don’t like being at work for 12 hour long shifts, I mean, who would? However, coming home to their partner complaining of them being gone all the time adds more stress to their shoulders that they're already carrying. Although there are not many mental health coping methods put into place for nurses at the moment, I hope to bring awareness to the situation and to help initiate these platforms to become available to nurses and healthcare workers.

## Reflection:

Within writing this piece of work, I encountered a few obstacles but feel as if I overcame them within the process. One being that I have never used Reddit, much less have I used it to write a paper about a given topic. Not only did I have to teach myself how to contribute comments into my own line of work, I had to learn how to use the online platform itself in the process. There are also a few takeaways from this writing for me. One being that oftentimes I struggle when trying to incorporate someone else's line of work into my own, however, I found it much easier this time than most. I have discovered that when directly quoting someone else's words and then describing how they fit into my own work is easier for me than attempting to paraphrase a quote. Another take away would be within the actual topic information itself. I always had some insight on the struggle of balancing stress as a nurse being that I have friends and family who are nurses. However, I never truly understood the toll it took on that person's mental health and personal life. Now that I have a deeper understanding of this situation, I feel as if more laws should be put into place to help nurses battle their work stress, yet many people don't know how severe this stress can be. The main takeaway I want my readers to get from my work is that oftentimes, we are the reason nurses have high stress levels. Although we may not realize it, the way we treat our nurses is part of the reason why they live such a stressful life, along with long shift hours of course. I want people to come to an understanding that we, as patients, coworkers, bosses, friends, and even family, come with our own hardships upon our nurses. We can be part of this fix. Within writing this piece of work, my hope is to bring light on the situation and to help the well-being of these nurses in the future.

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