**10 tricks I used to help me make straight As in Nursing school…and one B.**

No really! I did! And before everybody get’s all prickly, let me say this. I have been a nurse for 12 years (even though I don’t look old enough) and I have been an educator for nearly 10 and some of the BEST dang nurses I have ever had the pleasure of working with or teaching did NOT make straight A’s! In fact, some of them had to repeat courses for one reason or another. This post is for EVERYONE who is struggling with any part of nursing school.

1. First and foremost, **I told myself I could do it**. Failure was NOT an option. I remember when I got my letter of acceptance I was told by certain people in my life that I was not cut out to be a nurse. So, naturally that made me try even HARDER. You’ve got this has to be your new mantra! Look at everything in your life you have ALREADY overcome; nursing school is just another small hill.

2. I scheduled my **study time at least two weeks at a time**. I always had a small planner that I used to plan how I was going to spend my time everyday. When I achieved my study goal for the day, I would reward myself with a run or a diet cherry limeade. The point is that I would set small, achievable goals and then reward myself for meeting those.

3. I **maximized every single minute of every day**. Immediately after lecture was over, I would go home and listen to the recording (back in the day I brought a small handheld recorder to every lecture). Research shows that if you don’t DO SOMETHING with the material you’ve just learned that within 24 hours you have lost about 70% of the knowledge! It doesn’t really matter what you do with the information: you can re-read the notes, listen to a recording, take the notes and start putting the information into a different format; whatever, just DO SOMETHING.

4. **I studied alone**; then with a group. I always studied until I felt like I had mastered the content before I met with a group to study. I found that if I did not have a full understanding of the information beforehand, then group studying would confuse me.

5. **I taught the material** to my Dad, my fiancé, and any other NON-MEDICAL person who would listen. Being able to teach something well is the HIGHEST level of mastery. So look at the concepts of pre-load and afterload; these are inherently confusing concepts but are absolutely essential to understand if you are taking med- surg and studying cardiac. So I studied and studied until I figured out a simple way to explain these concepts then I explained them to my non-medical family. If they understood what I was teaching, then I knew I had it down!

6. **I used the content outlines**. I know I know. But this is where your instructor is going to pull questions from. Make sure you always use these to guide your studying! Usually content outlines will have a bunch of key terms, chapters to read, maybe some critical thinking questions. Make sure you have a good understanding of all the information listed here.

7. **I used outside resources**. Youtube and Medscape were my friends when I ran across a concept that I just could not grasp by just using my notes and book. You can sign up for a Medscape account for free!

8. **I took study breaks.** It sounds productive to sit down and study for 4 hours straight but its not. I would always get up and walk away every 30 minutes or so. Your attention span will require that you do this if you want to remember anything that you studied!

9. **I constructed practice exams for my classmates**. Remember how I mentioned that being able to teach the material is the highest level of mastery? Well I took it a step further and tried to get into the heads of my instructors by writing multiple choice tests for my classmates, complete with rationales about why the right answer was right and why the wrong answers were wrong. This was an extremely powerful way to drive the concepts home for me.

10. **I took my tests backwards**. Yep, for a 50-question exam I would begin with question 50 and work my way backwards. Usually the content at the end of the exam is most fresh on your mind because it was the last material taught. I would usually be able to answer these questions with ease which gave me confidence about the rest of the exam. When you feel yourself starting to get frustrated and confused, MOVE ON TO THE NEXT QUESTION!!!!

Now this list is by no means comprehensive and I know you all have some outstanding tips and tricks yourself. I would love for you to leave your suggestions in the comments and I will add them in to the post!