

# First Generation College Students' Resilience for Repeating a Nursing Course

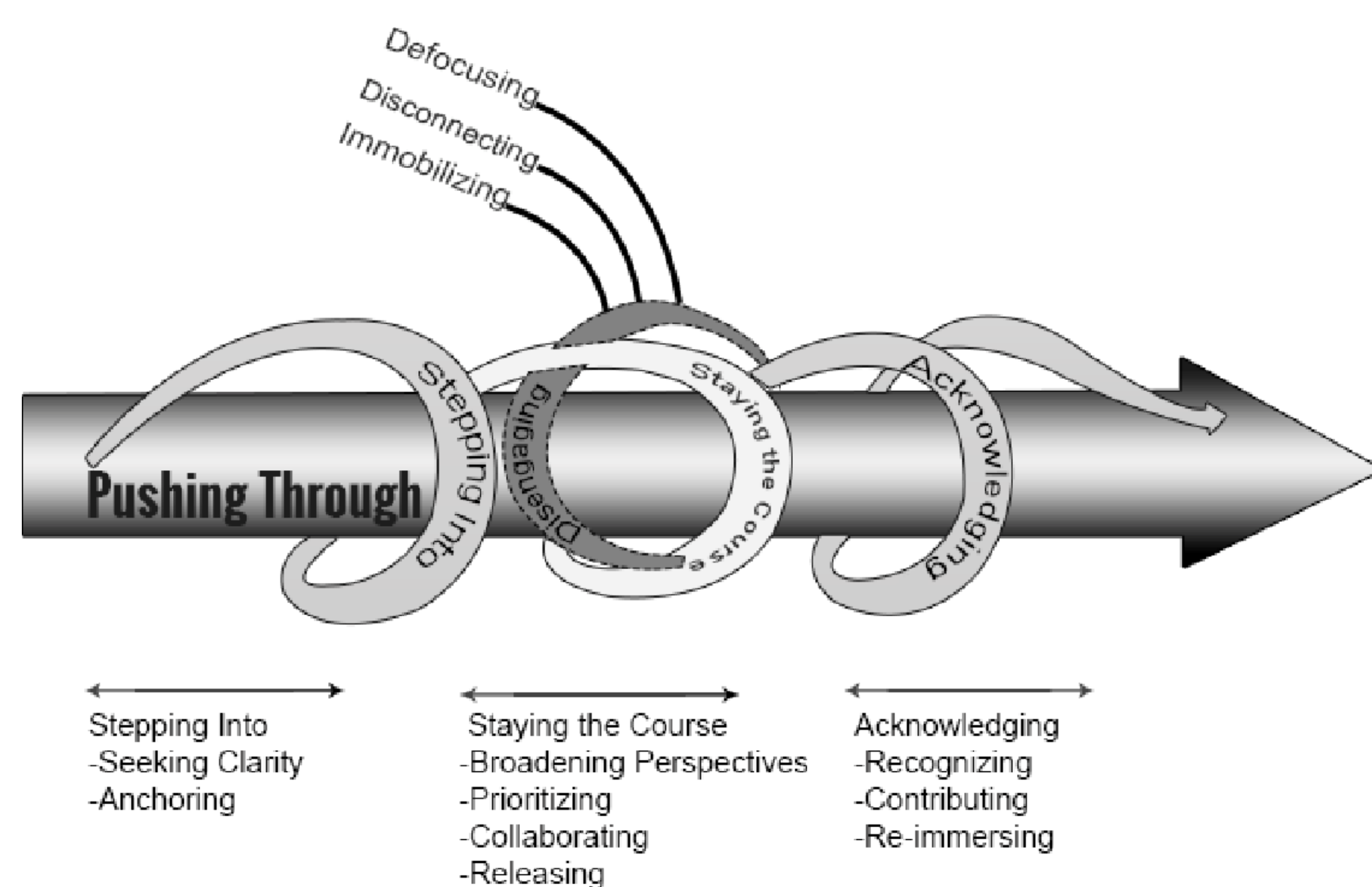
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## Introduction

The first generation college student in nursing who fails a nursing course and finds the willingness to be resilient and push through their academic struggles is one area of nursing education that has not been well-explored. This student population faces distinct challenges associated with often coming from low-income families, balancing financial and academic obligations along with finding personal time.

These students are often unaware of the rigorous nature of the nursing program and may result in failing a course or two. This leaves two choices: drop out of school or repeat the course(s). **Those who stay and repeat the course(s) and are more successful, demonstrate resilience, or a drive to rise above adversity.**

The 'push through' framework was based upon the students' statements related to balancing the demands of the nursing curriculum and the students' non-school demands such as family, social activities, employment, and wellness activities<sup>1</sup>.



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## Methods

- Interpretive phenomenological approach
- 5 Midwestern baccalaureate nursing programs
- **Inclusion criteria:** neither parent nor guardian completed a bachelor's degree, enrolled in an accredited Bachelor of Science in Nursing program & at least one nursing course failure
- Individual interviews via Zoom®
- 8 participants

## Results

### Disengagement

- **Shared Concern:** Anna stated, "I think I did kind of express concern, but I did not ask for help...I wanted to be able to do it on my own because I've done everything on my own for a really long time."
- **Future Unknown:** For Taylor, her future was "Undefined... because I don't really know whether I could actually do and continue on with. I was really hard on myself, and like I thought of myself like kind of like a disappointment so I didn't think I would be able to continue on in nursing, or anything else I was fit for. I was really angry. I was sad."
- **Distractions:** Angela stated "I worked nights so that was also difficult. You know being a first generation and a little bit older, returning to college I had quite a few responsibilities. So, I have to pay my bills."
- **Distractions:** Jane shared her struggle with depression "My mental health...I developed stress, anxiety last semester. I was diagnosed with depression. So, it was just a very difficult time. I really felt no motivation to do anything at any point."

### Stepping Into

- **Reason for Repeating:** They want to be a nurse. Jane noted "A lot of my classmates have failed nursing classes...just watching them and seeing their success and seeing how much more motivated they were to get through the nursing program...my family really pushed me...my dad is really one of my like biggest influences... [he said] there's no reason to quit now you're already halfway through."
- **New Study Practices:** Caroline stated, "I think I just made sure to use more time for it... I made sure to do stuff like before class instead of like printing out the slides and going over them after class... read the chapters more in depth."
- **Maintain Self-Control:** When Lynn feels overwhelmed by nursing, she notes "I exercise actually that has kind of been my main outlet. I have a lot of friends who have been through nursing and so just if I feel overwhelmed, I reach out and talk ... and talking with classmates."

### Staying the Course

- **Academic Resources:** Holly learned how to prepare for future courses "Um I did more reading, went through the textbook before class, which is what I wasn't doing before. I think that it did just catch me off guard event he first day remember the first time around. I was just so surprised that we had to read beforehand, and that we needed to be prepared with that first chapter."
- **Resource People:** Anna became more open to others "This time around I've stayed in like a group chat with them and I've tried to communicate a lot more with people and my professors especially... The communication with the professors is a little bit new for me so it's kind of intimidating. I think it's a good thing though. I think it's really good that they want to talk to us and figure out what's going on."
- **Self-Care:** Exercise, Counseling, Meditation, Time for self, Playing with pets  
Jane stated "I started you know exercising and going for runs and doing workouts at the gym and stuff and that really helped. I think a lot of it just came from outside stress that needs to be resolved."

### Acknowledging

- **Personal Transformation:** Angela stated "A lot humbler now. I almost feel like it built my confidence back up...I feel like it really helped me be a stronger person. It helped me realize how to be more organize and I am more appreciative of the work that I accomplished now because I know I actually worked for it."
- **Advice to Peers:** These participants did not want to be seen as an inspiration but rather as motivators for those in a similar situation. Jane noted "If they are experiencing issues within the course, they should definitely reach out. They are experiencing issues within themselves or at home, they should definitely find resources and reach out to whoever they can. "

## Discussion

- Lack of a role model to guide academic experience
- Lack of self-confidence & pride
- Missed opportunities to use university resources = poor study habits
- Financial obligations = working versus studying
- Stress = mental & physical health issues
- COVID-19 interfered with learning
- Faculty-student positive relationship = persistence
- Resilience results in positivity & reduced stress
- Self-care activities = renewal & reengagement

## Conclusion

The first generation college student in nursing's academic journey has been met with a multitude of distractions and adversity in which they found the resilience to overcome for academic success.

Through the nurturing of student nurses to develop resilience during their undergraduate education, this would provide healthcare organizations with nurses who can work through adversity and obstacles for the greater good of their patients.

## References

1. Reyes, A. T., Andrusyszyn, MA., Iwasiw, C., Forchuk, C. & Babenko-Mould, Y. (2015b). Nursing students' understanding and enactment of resilience: A grounded theory study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 71(11), 2622-2633. doi: 10.1111/jan.12730