

First Year(s) Transition to Practice

By Anthony J. Silva, MSN, RN, AMB-BC, ROT

Anthony, a distinguished nurse, has dreams of becoming an esteemed writer. He is a former Bostonian living in Southwest Florida. A lifelong love for nursing, and a knack for teaching, will bring his vivid transparency to his writing—a perfect recipe connecting the front line to the front page.

Over two years have passed since I drove home from Port Charlotte, Florida after taking my National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).

I will never forget the ride home. I was certain that I failed. I was already planning my exit from nursing.

I am a firm believer that the NCLEX is designed to make you feel that way. I have yet to hear someone say that they

felt positive that they passed.

I digress.

When I began my first-year transition into practice, I had no idea what exigent decisions lay ahead for me. Although a good problem to have, my next hurdle was deciding where I wanted to work. I luckily had several offers on the table. I thought that I was heading into a critical care fellowship—wrong.

Enter my next difficult decision.

The ICU did offer me a position into their fellowship program. I even put in for the transfer. Orthopaedic surgery has always been my first love. Little did I know that it would make a move to bring me back to it. I was offered a position to learn to be an operating room nurse. Nearly three years later, I am still in the same position.

And. I. Absolutely. Love. It.

I joke most days that I am not a real nurse because I spend my time in surgical cases without the torment of a five-patient assignment. Yet, I have many of the same struggles that all of us nurses have. I struggle with burn out. I struggle with decisions that can have catastrophic consequences.

I even suffer from an empty Stanley cup sometimes!

All jokes aside, I think that the point is to connect over us not being alone through those first year(s) transition to practice. I know what it feels like to be terrified to be “the nurse.” I know what it feels like to clock into work and feel like you have absolutely no idea what you are doing. I know what it feels like to be yelled at by a physician.

I literally struggled with what direction to spin when putting on a surgical gown. I felt helpless. I felt defeated. I felt like I made the wrong decision.

I still showed up. I took my lashings. I cannot express how much I feel

that nursing school teaches you to pass boards—it does not teach you to be a nurse.

Today, I teach nursing clinical rotations. I practice as a nursing mentor. I have signed up to give professional practice and development lectures. I have signed up to become a facilitator in a nursing residency program. I believe that nursing is a calling. I believe that the cohesiveness and comradery are the foundational pillars of nursing that keep us coming back to that next dysfunctional shift. I believe that we can push each other beyond the limits of the sky. We can lift each other up no matter how hard the first few years of practice are.

Reach out to me when things feel impossible. Do not give up through those first few years. As I begin my third year in nursing, all I can say is just push through. It will be worth it!

The profession needs you. Your colleagues need you. Our patients need you. I need you.

Together we can continue to keep nursing as the most trusted profession. ■



Anthony J. Silva, MSN, RN, AMB-BC, ROT is currently an orthopaedic scrub nurse and ambulatory registered nurse at Naples Comprehensive Health in Naples, FL; He is faculty at Rasmussen University in Fort Myers, FL as an adjunct clinical nursing instructor; He is a custom infusion nurse at The Wellness Lab in Naples, Florida. He is currently pursuing his DNP: Family Nurse Practitioner at the University of Miami. He welcomes anyone to reach out to him directly on LinkedIn or via his e-mail anthony.john.silva@gmail.com

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