

## **The Resilient Nurse: Episode 3 Transcript**

### **Nancy Reller**

Welcome to the Resilient Nurse podcast, where we discuss the tools and practices nurses are using to renew and amplify their resilience. This podcast is a special series within the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing's On the Pulse podcast.

Each episode we will cover the complexities, sometimes the misconceptions, and certainly the new pathways for keeping our nursing workforce resilient throughout Maryland and beyond. Our podcast comes out of the R3 Initiative, which stands for Renewal, Retention and Resilience in Maryland nurses.

I'm your host, Nancy Reller, and my guests today are Jen Dalton and Selena St. Jules. So glad to have you both.

Let me introduce you one by one.

Jen Dalton is an R3 champion, which means she has been a part of our program for a couple of years now. She is also the simulation manager at the University of Maryland School of Nursing at the Universities at Shady Grove Campus. Her interests include ethical concerns surrounding health profession students and educational methods for addressing them.

Selena St. Jules is a fourth semester nursing student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. And Selena is a first generation college student and the co-president of the University of Maryland Association of Nursing Students. She participated in the R3 Simulation "A Day module" that Jen taught, and we'll jump right in to that. I am so happy to have you both.

Welcome. Welcome to both of you.

### **Selena St. Jules**

Thank you so much.

### **Jen Dalton**

Thank you.

### **Nancy Reller**

So, Jen, before we get into the actual module itself, tell us about what was the impetus for you to include resilience for your students. In other words, sort of why do you think it's important to teach this?

### **Jen Dalton**

So both in practice and in academics, I noticed the exhaustion potential for burnout many times before students even graduate. And I felt and still feel very strongly that it's our responsibility as educators to provide the tools to build our resilient nurses.

### **Nancy Reller**

You yourselves, as faculty have gone through the R3 initiative, have learned a little bit about your own resilience. So, tell us a little bit about who your students are.

**Jen Dalton**

So in this case, the students were fourth semester students in their final semester before graduation. I chose this group of students simply because we're in the process of integrating a new curriculum at University of Maryland. And what we were lacking, in my personal opinion, was that ability to help build more resilient nurses. And so this group of students had not yet experienced some of our newer initiatives in our new curriculum. And I wanted to make sure that nobody was leaving the school without a few tools to be able to mitigate difficult situations and understand what it is that they need to do to be successful and also to be able to manage their emotions.

**Nancy Reller**

So did you see students leaving in years prior that gave you pause or concern about their ability to manage the complexities of being a nurse?

**Jen Dalton**

So I don't think that I saw it in the academic setting initially. I think what I saw was in my experiences with new nurses who had just graduated, both before the COVID 19 pandemic and heavily during it.

The quick exit when they began to understand and the challenging situations they were put in and were not given or provided access to the tools that they needed.

**Nancy Reller**

Mm hmm. There was a need that you saw that sometimes it's sort of elusive, isn't it? You maybe can't quite exactly put your finger on it. Is that part of it that you just had this concern?

**Jen Dalton**

Yes, I think a bigger concern in that I was running a new grad nurse residency program. And during that time, I would say probably 75% of the nurses in this new grad residency program were spending at least 2 hours a week in my office just venting about their concerns and difficulties. And, you know, it made me realize that I could give you the tools right now. But ultimately, we need to step back and figure out where we can implement the tools so that more people have the opportunity.

**Nancy Reller**

And also, what I'm hearing you say is earlier implement them earlier so that they get them from the get go.

**Jen Dalton**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Nancy Reller**

Good. So, would you tell us a little bit about the tools that you picked? Just describe the day that you designed for these students.

## **Jen Dalton**

Sure. I knew that one of the things I really wanted to hone in on was the speaking up with integrity. Mostly because a lot of what I've seen, what I've read points to the nurse's position in health care and even further, the student nurse. And so when I say position, I mean that nurses come into contact with most health professions, both students and professionals, throughout their day to day practice and their ability to communicate directly and appropriately with these colleagues is incredibly important.

So I didn't feel like I could do just the module of speaking up with integrity without making sure that we went through a couple of different modules that the R3 has. One of those being the moral compass, and the moral compass ultimately helps the students to look at what values are and begin to think about what their values may be.

And so we did a little practice with the moral compass. And I would say that a good amount of the students had already done a practice similar to this, and they were able to articulate what their values were.

So after values, we talked about some of the basic concepts such as emotional intelligence. We talked about what integrity is because oftentimes integrity is just a word and doesn't have a meaning behind it. We talked about all of those pieces that are important in order to be able to have that conversation, that direct conversation with somebody.

So then we went on to the Speaking up with Integrity module, and what that included was walking through a productive conversation and what that means. And I had all the students write from start to finish an example of what that was. And then we went into an actual simulation where the students were able to role play with a partner that they were either the listener or the presenter. And then we switched and we had a second scenario where they had the opportunity to be either the listener or presenter once again. So they each had the opportunity to feel what it was like to be in the shoes of either the person who was initiating the conversation or the person who was receiving the conversation.

And then from there we ended with about a 30 minute debrief, which oftentimes is the most important piece, simply because that's when you start to think about what it is that just happened and why you felt the way that you felt during the entire module.

## **Nancy Reller**

So one of the many things I love about this is that you took different pieces from the 30 tools that have been created and made them your own in a way, in a very specific way.

I also love that you helped students understand what their personal values are and that word like you said, integrity, are sort of thrown around and we don't really realize how much they can show up for us and keep us grounded every day. So sounds like such a fascinating way to do this. What did you hope that they would experience?

## **Jen Dalton**

You know, I hope they would walk away with the recognition of their own values first and foremost. And that they'd also walk away with at least one tool for having meaningful conversations with others, not just colleagues, with others, when they felt that they were experiencing something that wasn't ethical or

acceptable, based on what they've learned to this point in school and what they've experienced in their personal lives.

I also wanted to kind of reiterate the need for regular reflection on what is going on in your life, what's going on in your day, because so many times we just are on autopilot, walking straight through the day without thinking about it. And I feel like the reflection is such an important piece of all of this.

**Nancy Reller**

Selena, we're going to get to you in a big way. But Jen, I'd love to know what kind of feedback did you get from the students?

**Jen Dalton**

You know, there are always going to be people who this is not their thing, so to speak. A lot of people really appreciated the tools and they came to me to tell me that they never thought of speaking up in the way that we discussed it during this module.

Others already felt pretty comfortable approaching their colleagues, and so I found that to be one of the more interesting pieces, and I'm hopeful that they can continue on that same path because that's a piece of resilience that you can't just let it fester within you without being able to reflect and move on. So I think those were two good pieces.

And then it was a lengthier module. And in the future I'd like to cut it down, meaning that it doesn't all need to be slammed into one day. And I'd really like to be able to give them pieces of it throughout their curriculum.

**Nancy Reller**

So we'll come back to that in a few minutes. Selena, so interested in your perspective on this. What did you sort of expect? What was your mindset going into this day?

**Selena St. Jules**

Well, I actually had no expectations for the module itself. I came into the classroom and I was honestly surprised that we were having this conversation during the simulation. So I went into it open minded, and I was looking forward to the presentation.

**Nancy Reller**

So what was the experience like for you?

**Selena St. Jules**

For me specifically, I feel like I was personally uncomfortable, but it was the good type of uncomfortable. Like, you know, that you're about to take advantage of the situation that will help you grow as a nurse or as individual.

So, during the situation when we had to be the presenter and, and also be the listener, while I was the listener, I figured that I would have the opportunity to make someone else feel heard. And when I was

the presenter, I feel like that was more of the overwhelming piece of it, like figuring out how to translate my emotions to someone else without coming off the wrong way, if that makes sense.

**Nancy Reller**

MM hmm. What did you learn about yourself?

**Selena St. Jules**

Well I feel like I learned things that I already knew. I just put words to my actions. With the example of integrity, we throw around the word. For me, I was able to personalize my values and internally, to do that self-reflection of, well, I'm not only compassionate, I value compassion and I also value integrity and health and leadership. And I see myself implementing those things in my daily life. So for me, it was something that I'll carry on.

On campus, I'm very involved in leadership and my values they're so important to consider when I'm advocating for students or patients or having those conversations with other people. So I really appreciated the module.

**Nancy Reller**

Yeah, I mean, I'm curious about what does it do for you to know your values?

**Selena St. Jules**

It gives me that self-awareness. I'm able to understand who I am as an individual more, so I'm self conscious of how people see me and how I see myself I was on a journey of self-discovery for so long and I almost couldn't identify my values before even considering this module, even though I knew that I was those things and I cared about specific things, I couldn't put words to them and actively implement them in my life.

Now when I'm living my life day to day, I'm doing that daily self reflection. Like when I see myself in any setting, I know that I value these things like leadership. And whenever I want to advocate for a patient, it almost grounds me whenever I feel unsettled, it helps me overcome any challenge that is holding me back from doing something. I put my mind on.

**Nancy Reller**

Wow. Lot of reasons to pay attention to this and not to put words in your mouth, but it sounding like it gives you more confidence. Is that true?

**Selena St. Jules**

Yes. It has definitely given me a lot more confidence.

**Nancy Reller**

I don't know anybody who wouldn't want a little more confidence like real grounded confidence. So that's amazing.

What about this seems important for you to learn as you head into your clinical practice? You talked about that a little bit. Can you say more about, as a student, Jen's idea of integrating this more often than for a semester and maybe one day? What are your thoughts about that?

**Selena St. Jules**

I feel like it's needed. I feel like it's very important because this isn't something we should be learning our fourth semester, should be something that we're constantly reminded of throughout our nursing education because nursing school isn't easy. We should be reminded of our values to be resilient because those are the things that help ground us on a daily basis and just to get through nursing school, I feel like we need to ground ourselves because I've seen so many of my peers struggle and just feel overwhelmed on a daily basis. And if we have these conversations, I feel like it would do a lot to not only retain nursing students, but retain nurses as we leave the university.

**Nancy Reller**

Let's talk about this a little bit in conversation with all three of us. Jen, tell us a little bit about your vision for how to integrate these tools and practices of resilience throughout nursing school.

**Jen Dalton**

So I think it's incredibly important to start where I started in this particular module, which is with your values. And so I think that that needs to begin at the beginning of nursing school, and that's something we're in the process of creating in our new curriculum. But I also believe that the speaking up with integrity module needs to come a lot sooner. As I've discussed with students in first and second semester out of four semesters, they are already experiencing these situations that make them feel uncomfortable and they're not sure what to do with that information. And I never want someone to leave school or a profession because they feel uncomfortable in a situation and they should be able to speak up and to speak to someone about that. And so I feel like giving them the appropriate resources early on is important.

Also think that I'd like to add more about incivility and this later in the four-semester curriculum, do you feel like it would be appropriate to add the incivility simulation and that could jump off of and scaffold from the other modules going on throughout the other semesters?

And I really love what Selena said about the constant reminder, and I think it would be ideal if we could add some of these practices throughout the curriculum, reminding our students that they do have values and they should have articulated what those values are. They put them into words. And now, every so often reminding them that this is how you use those values in your daily life.

**Selena St. Jules**

I was just going to add, I think it's so easy to forget our "why" of being in nursing in general. So I feel like also incorporating a reason for being a nurse is so important. So having that conversation with the reminder of our values could be like a great combination.

**Nancy Reller**

Knowing your why that also is very grounding. Another thing that the R3 modules pay attention to is mindfulness. And I don't know if either of you have either taught mindfulness or started a class with any kind of breathing. If you haven't, what do you think about that?

**Selena St. Jules**

I love deep breathing exercises. I love meditation. I was actually doing one before my exam the other day, so I feel like it's very beneficial, helps like lower the heart rate, center the body and mind. So I would recommend that anyone does a meditation when they're feeling overwhelmed or stressed.

**Nancy Reller**

Do you feel like, I'm so curious about your generation? Do you feel like your generation is more acceptant of that? Because there was a time when people would sort of roll their eyes or whatever?

**Selena St. Jules**

I do feel like a lot of people are more open to meditation. I feel like it's also hand-in-hand with mental health. I feel like more people are embracing mental health and advocating for mental health needs and services. So with that stigma slowly diminishing, I feel like we're going to see a lot more resources promoting overall wellness.

**Nancy Reller**

Jen, what do you what do you see?

**Jen Dalton**

I agree. I think, Nancy, you're aware of this, but I do box breathing with students before simulation as part of our pre briefings and when I first started doing that, there was a whole lot of anxiety in me because of that feeling a certain way that certain generations don't necessarily embrace mindfulness.

And I wasn't sure how it would work out. And as time goes on, I think I'm in the third semester of doing this as time goes on, I'm seeing more and more students actually participating and full participation eyes closed. Good deep breathing, like the ability for them to put their pencils down, all of their technology. And it's heart warming to me because I put forth the effort of that, knowing how much anxiety and discomfort occurs before you go into a simulated setting or an exam, for Selina's example. And I think those are really important pieces. So it's something I will definitely continue.

**Nancy Reller**

Well, I think you also speak to a really important part of this. Jen, and that is you're out of your comfort zone. When you started doing this, can you say any more about that?

**Jen Dalton**

This was incredibly uncomfortable for me to initiate mindfulness activities and I think a lot of that is part of stigma. And so initiating and pushing for something that, you know, so many people will not embrace is very similar to the way students kind of might feel about speaking up in a situation. It's that

discomfort, that initial uncertainty of what's going to happen. I'm grateful that I've had the response that I've had, and I don't let the people who don't embrace it stop me from moving forward with helping those who do embrace it.

**Nancy Reller**

That's so great. It takes a lot of courage. And I'm curious from both of you, just sort of quickly, what are you looking forward to or what are you hopeful about regarding nurses ability to, stay resilient? You are in probably the most resilient profession there is. What are you hopeful about?

**Jen Dalton**

I'm hopeful that the resilience isn't just at face value and that nurses in general begin to feel the positive mental health that comes with the tools that help you to be resilient and not just act or look resilient.

**Nancy Reller**

Selena, what about you? What are you hopeful about?

**Selena St. Jules**

I'm hopeful that we will have nurses, including myself and my cohort, entering the profession, having, like, a deeper reason for being in nursing. Because I know for me, nursing runs deep within me. It's not just a profession I picked overnight. It's something that is very important to me. So I hope many people are in nursing for the right reasons and do value quality, patient care and making a difference in other people's lives

**Nancy Reller**

Beautiful. Thank you both so, so much, not only for being on the podcast but all that you're doing as a faculty member, as a student, as a rising nurse, about to go out there and help people feel better and all that you both do. I speak for our entire society to thank you both very, very much and thank you for being with me today.

The R3 website holds 30 resilience tools and practices for faculty, students and new nurses throughout Maryland. Also found on the website are really beautifully designed and super easy to use free social media graphics that are available for personal or professional distribution throughout Maryland. And the R3. The website address is [nursing.jhu.edu/R3](http://nursing.jhu.edu/R3)

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