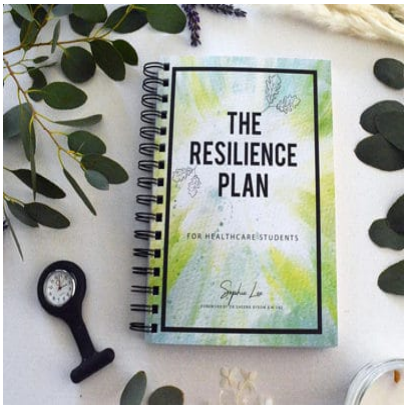

Description

Positive Planning With The Happy Student Company

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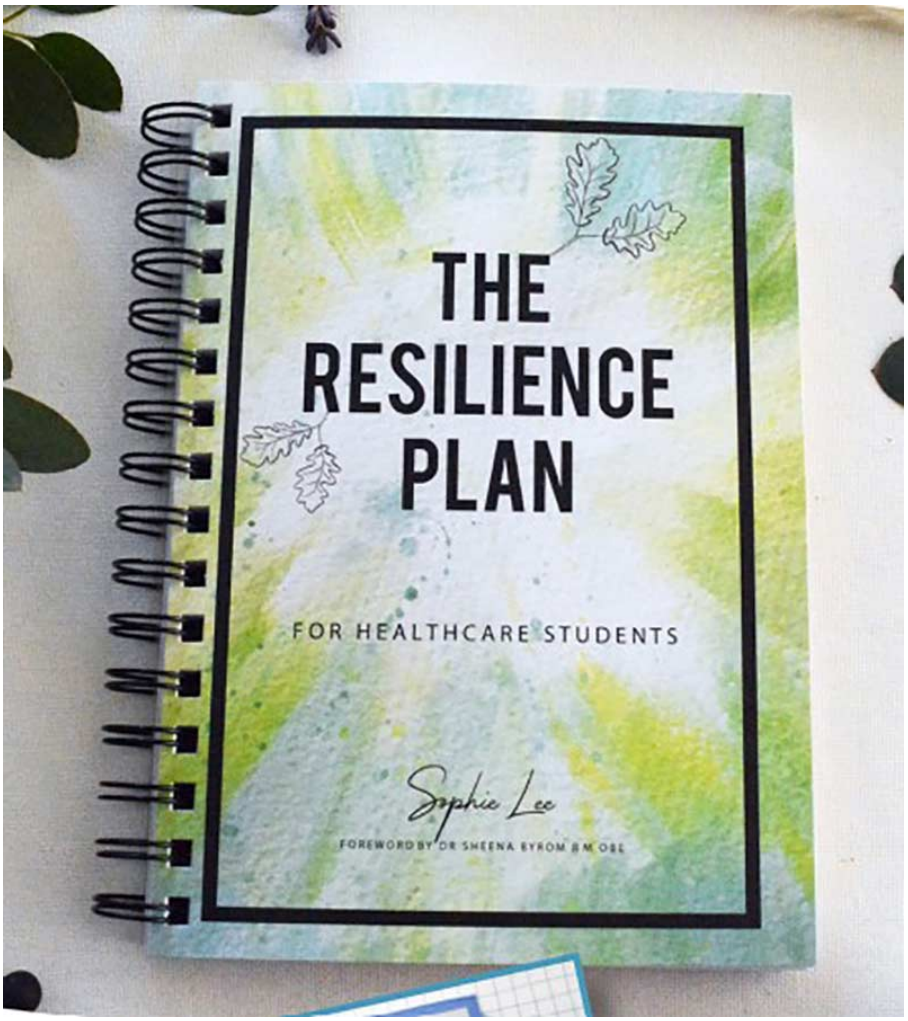
The cycle of caring

How do you look after yourself when you are holding space for others? The Cycle of Caring[1] gives us a four-step process in protecting our own mental health when caring for others, particularly when trauma or time-extended care have been involved.

Being emotionally involved but appropriately separate is a positive position to be in for your own mental wellbeing whilst on placement. I do believe you have to mindfully plan for this and add routines to support yourself in this area.



The four-step process of The Cycle of Caring:

1. **Empathetic attachment.** This is where you recognise a person's needs and provide acceptance and empathy into the situation.
2. **Active involvement.** This stage combines your empirical knowledge, clinical skills and emotional intelligence to provide the care you are being trained to give.
3. **Felt separation.** This step marks the end of your involvement with this service user and is the anticipated stepping away and detachment from them. It might be helpful for you to mark this detachment ritualistically, perhaps visualising the shutting of a door after saying goodbye. Writing a reflection of your interaction with this patient, particularly if it has been a long-standing one, can also give you closure and help you to detach appropriately.
4. **Re-creation.** This step involves you separating from your practice entirely at the end of your shift by actively switching off. This might include planning an activity like a walk with a friend, or a hobby you enjoy doing. A moment of mindfulness and deep breathing could be enough for this step for you.

Whatever it is, plan for it in your planner and make sure you are aware of the need for it to protect yourself from burn-out. Have you found it difficult to detach from a family that you've cared for? How did it effect you? There's always time to follow steps three and four after the event if you're still troubled by detachment. If you're having a particularly difficult time letting go or understanding your emotions in this area, always try and speak to a mentor, a tutor or perhaps a student counsellor in your university. **TSM**

For more student wellbeing resources and planning tools, visit www.thehappystudentcompany.com.
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Reference

1. Skovholt TM. The Cycle of Caring: A Model of Expertise in the Helping Professions. J Ment Health Counselling. 2005:27(1):82-93. doi. org/10.17744/mehc.27.1.mj5rcvy6c713tafw.

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