How to Be a Winner in School

Each quarter, Anatomy and Physiology Professor Norrenna Hubbard (West Chester campus) reminds her students that there is a difference in mindset between students who succeed in school and those who struggle through. By working hard and working together, she believes you can all be successful in your chosen program. You have the intelligence and ability or you would not be here. You’ll find below what she shares with her students about winners and whiners; it’s a good lesson for all of us.

There is something to be said for those students who succeed in their program versus those that do not. Poke (2010) has identified four scenarios that highlight the differences between winning students and whining students. They are described below.

(1) **How they cope with obstacles.** The first distinction between winners and whiners is how they each respond to the inevitable problems that happen in life and in school (Poke, 2010).

Winners look for solutions to problems by being creative and trying different options until they overcome them (Poke, 2010). School is hard. Life is hard, too. Life will get in the way of school and school will get in the way of life. Obstacles will come up for all of you. If you keep looking for solutions, you will win.

Some students are whiners, however, and complain about how hard their program is and about their problems and difficulties. They make excuses and wish that the problem would just go away. They think that that winners are just lucky, but no one passes or succeeds in school with luck. It is hard, and everyone who succeeds is overcoming many obstacles along the way. Just remember to face them positively and get help if it is too much.

(2) **How they impact others.** Poke (2010) writes that “We were created to be in a community with others and can only truly be considered successful when we are adding value to those around us, not meeting goals at the expense of others” (para 7).

“Real winners understand this and are constantly on the look-out for opportunities to build others up and take people with them on the journey” (Poke, 2010, para 8). Real winning students look for ways to help their fellow students. Some of you will be great at science. Some of you will be great at nursing. It is actually really rare to have a student that is successful at both. Help each other. Find your strength and look to help your fellow student in peer studying. If you look to help others, not only will you take your friends with you to the next quarter, but you will know the material even better than you would on your own.

Some students are whiners, however, and have a flawed perspective on life. They think that they can only win if others lose, so they are always on the lookout for ways to bring others down, discrediting people who look successful and acting to sabotage their efforts (Poke, 2010). This often happens out of insecurity and low self-esteem. We can see this; the people you meet at your clinicals can see this. Being negative and tearing down others can impact your ability to get a job when you graduate.

Remember that you are with your cohort for a full year. You are only with an individual instructor for a short time. Find a way to connect with your class. Make friends. Help each other. Be successful together. Make getting along with others a priority; you’ll find co-workers and bosses that you may not agree with, so use this as a learning opportunity when personalities clash. Take the high road.
Albert Gray once said, “Winners have simply formed the habit of doing things that losers don’t want to do” (as cited in Poke, 2010). Think about what your goals are. Do you want to get your MLT certification? You LPN? your ADN? your BSN? your NP? Whatever your goal, see yourself there. Imagine yourself at graduation and how rewarding it will feel accomplishing your dreams.

People with a winning mentality find a way to get things done, even if it seems like it’s too much work. They set schedules; they do their homework and study for tests in advance. They are the ones who do the study guide—that sometimes the rest of the class copies. If you want to be successful, do not shy away from the hard work of nursing school. Attitude and positivity are important, but only to support consistent action that takes you closer to your goals.

On the other hand, some students are whiners, complaining that life isn’t fair; they sit around waiting for something to fall into their lap. Winners are working toward their goals, whiners are not (Poke, 2010).

If you think that nursing or MLT school success falls into anyone’s lap, you are mistaken. It takes hard work and dedication from you always. DVR your favorite shows and watch them over breaks. Take index cards of material with you to your kids’ games. Work early, work consistently, and do the best you can.

Wilma Rudolph said, “Winning is great, sure, but if you are really going to do something in life, the secret is learning how to lose. Nobody goes undefeated all the time. If you can pick up after a crushing defeat, you are going to be a champion someday” (as cited in Poke, 2010).

This quote really describes the mentality that winners need to have when responding to losing. Not all of you will pass every test. Not all of you will make an A on the first exam. Learn to take personal responsibility and then to work hard on the controllable reasons for the loss. Go review your exams. Go talk with your instructor and let him or her help you. Seek out tutoring. Do this as early as possible. Ten weeks is short; it will be over before you know it. As soon as you start feeling yourself slide, talk with your instructor. Get encouragement, support, and help right away.

On the other hand, whiners make excuses or blame others for losses. They don’t learn from negative experiences so they are bound to repeat them (Poke, 2010). We don’t want that for any of you. We want to see you succeed and do well. We want to see you accomplish your dreams. Please do not repeat any mistakes. Let’s fix it and focus on success.

Poke (2010) believes “If you want to be a winner in life, make sure that you:

- Focus on solutions, not problems.
- Build others up, don’t tear them down.
- Take action, don’t sit around.
- Take responsibility for losses, don’t make excuses” (para 17).

Tips For Success From Previous Hondros College of Nursing Students For New Students

Do you need some practical advice on now to be successful in your program? If so, here are some tips for PN students from ADN students who have been in your shoes; most apply to new ADN and MLT students as well.

- Get in a study group right away. They make a world of difference.
- Respect other students and faculty so they will respect you. You’ll learn more if you’re respectful.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions. There are no stupid questions, so don’t be shy.
- Organization is key—have a calendar just for assignments, quizzes and tests.
- Time management is also extremely important. The better you are at this, the easier your life will be.
- Use other students as your support system; your family really can’t understand what you are going through, but your fellow students can.
- Listen and take notes during lecture, take notes when reading, and type your notes too. Every repetition and exposure to the information increases the likelihood that you’ll remember it.
- Start using your NCLEX book right away. Do the questions related to the topic covered in your class each day.
- Get an NCLEX app for your phone. (The Hogan one was recommended.)

Reference