How to beat the post-holiday blues

After a summer break, it can be tough returning to early starts and long hours. Here’s how to stay motivated

By Mandy Day-Calder

After your first few shifts and catching up with colleagues, you will usually quickly get back into the swing of working life. But sometimes, especially if you have been nursing for a while and weathered many healthcare storms, you may feel a deeper sense of malaise for your work.

So what do you do if your lack of motivation is more than a case of the post-holidays blues?

First, don’t be too hard on yourself; nursing is tough and can take its toll mentally, physically and emotionally. Like athletes preparing for the Olympics, it is challenging to keep yourself motivated year after year.

Like all relationships, accepting what you are feeling can sometimes lift some of the emotional burden, so be honest and acknowledge that your bond with nursing is temporarily strained.

This does not mean you are a bad nurse, or that you must leave the profession, it simply means your are human.

You may feel lost and unable to see a way through, but you can reshape how you move forward.

As an experienced nurse, you will have seen numerous clinical changes as well as changes to your role.

Each change will have brought challenges, but you got through by developing the emotional resilience to adapt and progress.

Reflect

How you are currently feeling is yet another change in your nursing journey. To prevent yourself from becoming stuck, try to reflect on how you have managed change in the past.

For example, did you use the support of colleagues? Or did you reflect inwardly, resenting the need for change until you finally came to a point of acceptance?

We all adapt differently, so try to identify what you have learned.

If you have been nursing for a decade, it is unlikely you...
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entered the profession purely for monetary gain. Among all the modern technology, caring is as fundamental to nursing now as it was when you trained.

Putting your ‘why’ at the centre is key

Leadership expert Simon Sinek

It may help to spend some time reflecting on what drew you to nursing all those years ago, and where this fits into how you have grown as a professional.

Leadership expert Simon Sinek, author of the popular TED talks, calls this ‘finding your why’. He believes that putting your ‘why’ at the centre of what you do is key to lasting inspiration and motivation. Try asking yourself the following questions:

» What ideals and values made you choose nursing as a career?
» How would you like to be described by patients and their relatives?
» How do you make a difference to those you care for?

Mandy Day-Calder is a freelance writer and life/health coach

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Women leaders: ensuring you fulfil your potential

Men still dominate senior positions in the public sector – but a King’s Fund course for women aims to help break down barriers

By Lynne Pearce

The Athena programme is a King’s Fund initiative designed to support women to fulfil their potential as public sector leaders – whether in the NHS or beyond, such as social services, police and prison services, education, or the voluntary and community sectors.

Gill Horne, director of patient care at Rowcroft Hospice in Torquay, Devon, completed the course last December, as part of a group of 15 women from the health sector.

‘I was attracted to it as it was specifically for executive women,’ she says. ‘It ticked all my boxes.’

Established more than 30 years ago, Athena is delivered in four modules, as well as three one-day learning sets and two one-to-one coaching sessions.

The programme starts with a four-day residential stage, designed to give everyone space away from their workplace and encourage the group to form a learning community.

‘It took me out of my comfort zone,’ says Dr Horne. ‘Everyone in