

# I Was a Nursing Student, But I Was Also Trying to Be Everything Else

*(By Abit Madukkakkuzhy George)*

When I look back at my three years at the University of Worcester, I wonder how I fitted everything in. I was a nursing student with lectures, exams and clinical placements. I was also working part-time, volunteering, representing students and building a life in a country that was still relatively new to me. There were times I wondered whether I was taking on too much. Sometimes, I probably was.

## ***Starting from zero***

I arrived in the UK in March 2023 knowing few people. The city, the university and even the way people communicated were new.

I had come to study nursing, but I quickly realised university would teach me much more than that. I needed to become independent and comfortable putting myself forward.

I started volunteering. I became involved with the Students' Union and Worcester City Council, worked alongside my studies and took on representation roles, eventually becoming a Student Trustee at the SU.



None of it was part of a grand plan. I simply kept saying “yes” where I felt I could contribute.

### ***The reality of balancing everything***

I wish I could say I had an incredible time-management system. I didn't. Some weeks everything arrived at once: a deadline, a placement, a shift, a meeting, messages from other students. And somewhere in the middle, I still had to eat, sleep and remember I was a human being. I learned that being busy and being productive are not the same thing. As a student, it's tempting to say yes to everything, because you want the experience and you don't want to disappoint anyone. But you can become so busy doing things that you stop doing the important things properly. I had to ask myself: what actually needs me today? Not every opportunity needed accepting, and not every problem needed me to solve it. Sometimes, saying “I can't do this right now” was the responsible thing to do.

### ***When life became heavier***

In my second year, I realised that balancing university was not just about managing a timetable. I went through a very difficult personal period. I had already experienced heartbreak, and then a friend passed away. Processing that while living away from home and training to become a healthcare professional was very hard.

At the same time, I was struggling academically. I failed a few modules. For someone who had come to the UK to become a nurse, those results were painful. Was I good enough? Could I finish the course? Had I taken on too much? For a while, those questions were louder than everything else. But that period also became a turning point.

## ***Finding my way back***

During this time, my faith became much more important to me. It wasn't simply about going to church or praying when things were difficult. I tried to change the way I lived: to be kinder, more patient, and to help others without expecting anything back. I tried to become a better person, not just a better student.

Gradually, something changed in me. I became less focused on proving myself and more focused on doing what I believed was right. The deadlines and pressure remained, but I approached them differently. My faith reminded me that one failed module or one bad day did not define who I was.

I started again. From then on, I completed my remaining modules and placements without failing. I don't see that simply as an academic achievement. It represents a time when I had to rebuild myself. Failure does not have to be the end of your story. Sometimes it is the point from which you begin to rebuild, just as Bruce Wayne says in *Batman Begins*, "Rebuild it. Just the way it was, brick for brick."

## ***Working taught me things university couldn't***

My part-time work wasn't only about earning money. It taught me responsibility: people rely on you to turn up, and in healthcare that matters even more. It also changed how I approached placement. I understood what it was to be tired and still have responsibilities, and I understood the importance of teamwork.

Above all, I understood that everyone has things happening in their lives that you know nothing about. A quiet colleague might have had a difficult morning. A student who misses something might already be struggling. You don't always know what someone else is carrying. I want to remember that throughout my nursing career.

### ***The leadership I didn't expect***

I never started university thinking, "I'm going to become a student leader." I simply wanted to become a nurse. But gradually I found myself representing students and becoming involved in decisions that affected the student community.

Leadership does not always begin with a title. Sometimes it begins when somebody says, "Can you help?" and you decide to help. I also learned that you don't need all the answers. When I didn't know what to do, I asked. When someone had a better idea, I listened. When I made mistakes, I learned. That was more valuable than any leadership theory.

### ***When my patients saw more than a student nurse***

One of the most unexpected experiences came during my part-time job. A few patients' families recognised me from social media. They had seen that I'd been nominated for the Student Nursing Times Awards 2026 and had read about my volunteering and community work.

It was strange at first, but I realised people were seeing more than a nursing student. That recognition gave some patients and colleagues confidence in me, and that confidence came with responsibility. If

someone already believes you care about people, your actions have to live up to that belief.

I never did that work for my CV. I did it because I wanted to help. But it shaped how I communicated, listened and supported people. Being a good healthcare professional is not just about technical knowledge. It is also about the character you bring with you.

### ***The difficult days mattered too***

I don't want to make my journey sound perfect. There were exhausting days, days I wondered whether I was doing enough, and days I simply wanted to go home. We often talk only about the finished product: the graduation, the award, the photograph. We don't see the early mornings, late nights, shifts, mistakes, grief and uncertainty, or the times you keep going when you don't feel like it.

I was fortunate to be recognised within the University community and nominated for the TeamWorc Awards 2026. Those moments meant more because I knew what was behind them: not one extraordinary day, but hundreds of ordinary ones, and some very difficult ones too.

### ***Then I became the nurse***

On 9 September 2026, I graduated from the University of Worcester, completing my nursing degree. By then I had already started working as a registered nurse. I was no longer the student who could say, "Let me ask the nurse." I was now the nurse.

I am currently a Band 5 nurse on an Acute Stroke Unit. The transition has been humbling. There is a big difference between knowing something academically and being responsible for applying it to a real person. I suspect I will always be learning. But the student who arrived in Worcester knowing few people is now a registered nurse in the NHS.

### ***What I would tell another student***

If you're a healthcare student trying to do everything at once, remember this: you do not have to do everything. You have to do the right things well. Protect your education and your health. Do your job properly. Be kind. Say yes to opportunities that genuinely matter to you, but learn to say no. Don't compare your chapter one to someone else's chapter ten, and don't assume that someone who looks in control actually is.

Most importantly, don't be afraid to ask for help. I used to think being capable meant managing everything myself. Now I think it sometimes means recognising when you need another person, and having the humility to start again after failing. Friends, classmates, lecturers, colleagues and people I met through volunteering all played a part in my journey. Nobody gets through healthcare education alone.

### ***I wouldn't change the journey***

If I could go back, I wouldn't tell myself to do less. I would tell myself to be more intentional. Enjoy the moments. Don't be afraid of mistakes or ashamed of failing. Don't underestimate what grief can do to you. And remember that asking for help is not weakness. I would also tell myself to keep God at the centre of everything. Not because faith makes life easy,

but because it gave me somewhere to turn when I didn't have the answers.

My student years taught me nursing, but also how to manage responsibility, listen, prioritise, accept that I cannot do everything, recover from failure and carry grief. They taught me that a career in healthcare is not only about the professional you become, but also the person you become along the way.

I started my journey wanting to become a nurse. I finished it as a nurse who understands that healthcare is built around people: patients, families, colleagues and students. And now I know one thing for certain: the learning hasn't finished. In many ways, it has only just begun.  
Godspeed.