

## Ep #73: Studying While Pregnant



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Sarah Michelle**

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Welcome to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*, a show for new NPs and students that want to pass their board exam the first time and make that transition from RN to NP as seamless as possible. I'm your host Sarah Michelle. Now, let's dive into today's episode.

Hello my friends. After having my daughter, Meadow, in August of this year I've been thinking a lot recently about those of you out there who are new parents. Oftentimes when we are in nurse practitioner school or recently graduated it just so happens to coincide with the season of life where people are looking to expand their families.

And so this episode will be all about studying and taking your exam while pregnant or shortly after giving birth. We are all fully aware that this process alone can be quite a beast, and so adding in even a healthy pregnancy or new baby, or even older children can make it feel like you're on level 200 of board prep.

So I am here to be your friend and remind you this is possible and that you can absolutely do this. While it might be a tad more difficult, I'll give you that, achieving this goal and dream of yours is worthwhile. In this episode I want to share with you some solid tips and tricks that will help you make the transition to becoming a parent and a real deal nurse practitioner simultaneously as easy as possible.

I think we absolutely have to start this podcast with the most important part of navigating this successfully, setting realistic expectations. It sounds so simple, but it can be a lot harder to execute than you might have anticipated. You have this idea in your head of what your abilities, your stamina, and your time were like prior to having a baby and so you can't expect to run 100% again. You have to be able to give yourself some grace, and the best place to start doing that is from the very beginning.

I'll be very transparent with you, this has been the hardest part for me in my return to work. Just having realistic expectations of what I can accomplish now versus what I used to accomplish prior to having Meadow. It's just

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different. Priorities, schedules, everything is all different and so we want to account for that in our plan.

We have to openly admit to ourselves that pregnancy and parenthood are such beautiful but also such stressful seasons of life. Having realistic expectations will not only set you up for success on your board exam, but it will also hopefully take away some of the stress and anxiety around being pregnant or a new parent and studying on top of it.

So what do realistic expectations ultimately look like? For me and many of the students that I talk to realistic expectations may look like taking an extended time to study, like six to eight weeks instead of the typical four to six weeks. Letting go of the usual timeline in favor of one that will allow more flexibility with how you structure your studying can not only alleviate some stress and anxiety, but also really set you up for success.

And within those eight weeks you are not expected to study most of the day every day. If you can get a solid hour or two in on the days that you study, that can be enough if you are fully committed to what you're reviewing that day. That is actually exactly what we ask students to do in our live study group program, just study with us for an hour or two at a time and we can get you through this.

This is also a time in your life where it is so important not to compare yourself to others. If you see your colleagues or your other students in your programs studying for ten hours a day seven days a week, rest assured that they are overdoing it and they're likely trying to compensate for underlying anxiety that definitely needs to be addressed.

You have to do what works best for you and what works best for your new life and your baby. And I can guarantee you that studying nonstop will not be sustainable or helpful. So setting the expectation that not everyone's style of studying or their timeline will work for you and finding your own groove and time to study will be so beneficial in your board preparation while pregnant or as a new parent.

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When pregnancy and parenthood demands so much on you already, putting unrealistic expectations on top of that can be beyond detrimental to your success.

The same can be said for testing dates. So often I hear students say, “Well, I need to pass by this month because I will have been out of my program for so long, I’m going to forget things.” You can see they start to spiral because they’re afraid they’re going to lose knowledge.

I promise, the knowledge that you have locked in there from not only your nurse practitioner program but your nursing program and all of your work experience, all of that will stay there, okay? There is no need to rush things as long as you test within the window given to you by AANP or ANCC when you get that authorization to test.

And I really mean that. Taking your time can be key in making sure that you have the ability to give this exam the dedication it requires. Giving yourself a little leeway and a little more time to study can alleviate a lot of anxiety if you’re not able to dedicate a large amount of time daily.

Like we just discussed, you can break up studying into shorter stints over a longer period of time. Which is a great approach when you need that extra rest in pregnancy, and you do, or when you need that extra rest when you’re caring for children who need your attention. Allow yourself realistic expectations that you’re going to need a little longer timeframe, and know that you’re still going to be successful no matter what.

Beyond expectations my biggest piece of advice to you all is to plan, plan, plan. Laying out a study plan can seem really daunting if you’re dealing with all of the hormones and ups and downs of pregnancy or having a new little family member. But having a plan in place is going to be your key to success.

A good study plan allows you to have the flexibility to take care of yourself, your family, get to all those seemingly endless prenatal or pediatrician appointments, and still stay on track to pass your exam. We have many

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pregnant and new parent learners in our live study group program where we provide that day by day study calendar.

Time and time again these students tell us that the study calendar was the key to their success. If you are trying to study on your own outside of the live session, just like we talked about, I would suggest blocking off an hour a day to watch content videos, even if you have to split it up into smaller segments throughout the day.

I would also suggest allowing time to review the content you've already listened to. Even just quickly quizzing yourself or filling out a few pages of the study guide while you cook dinner or between commercial breaks of your favorite show after the kids go to bed can be a great way to keep content fresh while not needing to plan out true study time, just use your in between time.

All of my courses are currently available to listen on the go with the Kajabi app, which can be a great way to pass time in the car on the way to those prenatal or pediatrician appointments. Or if you're dropping off the kids at school, running a quick errand, even while feeding the baby. Any passive time spent listening of courses will only solidify your knowledge base further.

I always recommend daily practice questions too, and these can be squeezed in while you're in the waiting room. Or even while you're just getting a few minutes to yourself while the little one naps. The more the better, and there is no right or wrong way to squeeze them in.

Do be sure, however, to block off some time during your studying process to take a few full length exams. In doing so you're going to prime your brain for how long your AANP or ANCC exam will be and so you will be mentally prepared for your exam day.

My next tip applies to all students, but especially those who are pregnant or recently had a baby. And that tip is to utilize your resources and find a good support system. One of the greatest parts of SMNP Reviews is our community. I mean our Facebook group alone has over like 20,000

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members. That means that the odds that there's someone in your exact position, or who has been in your exact position are extremely high.

Ask for help. Don't be afraid to ask content questions, studying plan questions, any questions at all. Our Facebook group is really one of the best corners of the internet. We've even had students find study buddies in the group to meet with in their area or just check in to see how they're doing.

Having someone to connect with who truly understands the demands of pregnancy, parenthood, and studying for boards is going to be invaluable. So do not be afraid to ask anything and everything in our Facebook group, because we are all here to lift each other up.

Beyond finding a good support system there are so many other resources out there that can take away some of the mystique of the exams. Both AANP and ANCC release exam outlines, which can be immensely helpful in understanding exactly what you will be tested on so there are no surprises. I encourage all of my students to take a look at these exam outlines prior to testing.

And another great resource that we have for our SMNP review students is our one-on-one sessions. One-on-ones are private review sessions between you and one of our NPT members, where you're going to be quizzed on all kinds of different topics. And at the end of the session that team member will tell you specific feedback to help you focus your studying, or oftentimes they give you that green light to go ahead and take your exam.

When you're so busy with everything that comes along with pregnancy and parenthood, getting personalized direct feedback like this can be absolutely invaluable and save you from stressing over what you know and what you don't.

There are also resources available to you during your exam if needed. If you're pregnant, recently postpartum, or just feel like you need special accommodations, always reach out to AANP or ANCC. They can generally

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work with you to make reasonable accommodations when needed during your exam. But I would do this sooner rather than later if you think you would benefit from this so you can be sure you have everything you need in place for your exam day.

So, you have your realistic expectations, you have your study plan, you're ready to utilize your resources. And now I really want you to listen close to my last and biggest piece of advice. Please make time for yourself. Part of keeping your mind sharp and ready to go for your exam day is keeping your mind and body healthy and cared for. That means trying your best to get adequate sleep, and nutrition, and reset time.

And I know, I know, I hear all those people that say, "Well, sleep when the baby sleeps," or, "Enjoy your pregnancy sleep because you're never going to sleep again." All those very lovingly misguided words of advice. But I'm here to truly encourage you to ask for help when you need it, so you are able to take care of yourself. Because if you can't take care of yourself, not only you not going to be able to pass this exam, you're not going to be able to take care of your baby either.

There is never any shame in asking for an extra hand or support from those around you. And so many times in our careers as nurses we are made to feel like we need to handle absolutely everything flawlessly. And that is just not the truth. Everyone out there needs support and help sometimes. And asking for this so you can best take care of yourself, especially in what can be such a stressful season of life is key to your success.

So I encourage you to find little ways in which you can deload some of your tasks. And definitely find what works for you to help relax your body and mind. Some students take a daily walk, I'm really good for that one. Some plan for 30 minutes of quiet time in the morning. Some have family or friends help out with their children or meals so they can have a break.

Whatever it is that you need to do, do it. This is not the time to try and tough it out. Lean on those around you so that you are able to be your best self and in the best mindset to pass this exam.

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So there you have it my friends, whether you are pregnant, recently had a baby, or caring for little ones at home, I truly want you to know you can still study for and you can still pass this exam. Now it may take a little extra planning, definitely going to require some extra discipline and hard work. But you've already come so far in your career and your schooling, and this is the last step to becoming that real deal nurse practitioner you are meant to be.

Remember, celebrate those small victories along the way as well. Studying while pregnant or when you have children is no small feat. But I know you can do it and I look forward to seeing your passing post soon. Talk to you next week, friends.

As an extra bonus, friends, if you're looking for support, no matter what phase of your nurse practitioner journey that you're currently in, I have communities available for both students and new nurse practitioners. In these communities we work to uplift one another and grow this profession together every single day. Links to join will be included for you in the show notes.

Thanks for listening to *Becoming a Stress-Free Nurse Practitioner*. If you want more information about the different types of support we offer to students and new NPs, visit [stressfreenp.com](http://stressfreenp.com). See you next week.