

Introspection of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing

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My attitude towards psychiatric and mental health nursing is one in which I am still trying to get a grasp of. I battle between having intrigued interest and reservation and avoidance of the idea of me working in a psychiatric unit or setting. I come from a family where mental health disorders and abuse occurred in my past. My sister, inspired by my family, actually pursued a doctorate in psychology and has worked in psychiatric hospitals, and though I feel similarly, I still have a feeling of uneasiness around some of the violence that can be connected to mental health.

In short, my father was verbally abusive to me, and my physically abusive to my mother. In fact, my father's side of the family had a long line of physical and emotional abuse, manipulation, and mental illness. Luckily, my mother and I got away from the trauma, but the explosive outburst and unpredictable nature of that side of the family left an impact on me. My father was never officially diagnosed, because he refused to seek help, but other members of that side of the family were diagnosed with depression and manic depression, and there were several suicide attempts, hospitalizations, and therapies involved which I heard about. I do believe that with help, my father could have gained a more stable life and mental health status, but because he refused to admit he had a problem, he never got the treatment he needed before his death. Now, I am 25 years old and do understand that the environment in which I was raised was not normal, conventionally, nor healthy, and have established a safe and effective lifestyle to prevent myself from an environment in which those can manipulate or verbally abuse myself or the people I love so I believe because I have gained a healthy environment in which I thrive in today, the hesitation I have about working in a psychiatric health unit is one in which I am curious to discover how I will react to.

I do understand that mental health disorders are common and will be combined in all areas of nursing, in general, which I am prepared for. I am just not sure if I would like to place myself in the known setting where mental health is specifically being treated with every patient. I have reservations that I would like to explore with clinical rotations and even believe that with exposure, my opinion may be changed. None the less, the hesitance is still there. My fear possibly stems from the fact that it has been a period of time in which I have not had to face similarities of the situations I faced when I was younger, so I am mostly anxious about the emotional wave I may feel when I see psychiatric patients act the way I have been exposed to in the past, but I would say I am very resilient to high stress environments and I also believe I may do well in a scenario such as what I previously mentioned.

My expectations for myself for the module are that I hope to dive into the environment and process the realities of mental health disorders, I wish to learn how a typical shift or week is like for nurses working in a psychiatric unit or hospital, and finally I wish to challenge myself to explore my feelings regarding mental health and hopefully gain a better understanding of those who experience psychiatric disorders.

What I wish to learn during this module about psychiatric health will include how to better adapt myself to avoid stereotypes for those with mental health disorders, how to serve the community that seek help regarding their issues, and how life is for a nurse who cares for those who are vulnerable day in and day out and the challenges those nurses face. I want to know: “What is life for those like who treat the mentally unstable, and specifically how do they go home without the heaviness of the struggle of a mental health focused environment affecting them?”, “How do those nurses actively advocate for mental health disorders and the stigmas that surround them?”, and “How do I feel about myself in an environment in which I am unsure of?”