

**Psychiatric-Mental Health Journaling Assignment**

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Nursing 1206 Childbearing Family and Acute Psychiatric Nursing Concepts

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While preparing for this assignment I realized how little thought I have given to the importance of understanding mental health in nursing. Honestly, I was not looking forward to this topic, because I have no intention of pursuing mental health as a nursing specialty. However, while brainstorming ideas for this assignment, I realized, as a nurse I will deal with mental health issues of patients and their family members in any specialty. My feelings about mental health vary widely depending on the degree of illness. I believe most people have some degree of mental illness at some point in their lives. I must be honest when I say that severe illness, however, is something that I have no experience with and therefore it frightens me to some extent. My personal experience includes substance abuse, depression, and anxiety of family members, and more personally, a level of post-traumatic stress in myself. I hope to gain more extensive knowledge and understanding of mental health issues during this module so that I will have more confidence and compassion when dealing with those affected in the future.

When I was younger, I considered mental illness only in the most extreme of examples. The image portrayed in movies of people in fits of rage or locked in “strait jackets”. I never even considered the things that I saw my family members dealing with as mental illness. I just assumed everyone struggled with these types of problems. I have come to understand that mental illness can come in many different forms and at many different levels. My compassion for others has grown a great deal with age and I truly feel empathy for those that struggle with debilitating levels of mental illness. I do not know what to expect in the clinical setting, and it would be dishonest of me to say I am not a little apprehensive. My concerns are not that I will struggle with compassion, but that I will not know the right things to do to help someone who is severely struggling. Personally, my coping strategies for my own struggles are to just “suck it

up” obviously that is not acceptable for patients with the level of illness that requires hospitalization. Therefore, I realize I have a great deal of learning to do during this module.

My personal experience with mental illness ranges from observations of family members to my own trauma induced triggers. Several members of my family deal with depression and anxiety at some level, but nothing that ever required inpatient treatment. My mother struggles with opioid dependence and has my entire life. It has taken me a lifetime to finally begin to understand that she has an illness. If I am being honest, I have a tainted view of narcotics due to my experience with my mother. I never thought mental health could affect me directly, until I discovered my ex-husband was abusing our daughter. It took me many years of therapy to get past the stigma put on mental illness and admit that I suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress. Although much better than it used to be, there are still many things that will trigger anxiety in me due to this experience. It has however given me a much different perspective on being kind because you truly never know what people are dealing with inside themselves.

During the mental health portion of this module, I hope to gain a better understanding of mental illness. I hope to lose some of my preconceived opinions and beliefs about what it truly means to struggle with psychiatric issues. I hope to learn strategies that I can apply as a nurse to assist my patients and their families. I want to have a better understanding of severe illness so that I can lesson my fears when treating these patients. Three questions that I hope to find answers to are, what qualifies as mental illness, what are some of the most successful treatments, and how I can provide the best, most supportive nursing care to those struggling.

In conclusion, I have come to realize that mental illness can affect anyone at any time during their life. I have a great deal to learn and a lot of fears to overcome related to caring for

patients with severe illness. I am looking forward to learning and overcoming some of my own judgments I have personally placed on mental illness.