

**Current Theories and Practice: Journaling Assignment**

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I honestly have never put a whole lot of thought into mental health/illness before, but I do know that I don't know a whole lot about it. I used to think that the term "mental illness" was overly used, possibly even abused, and feel like in some cases can be utilized as an excuse. I understand that mental illness is definitely very real, but I think some people who commit crimes blame their actions on a mental illness way too often. As I've gotten older, I've realized that mental illness is actually a huge problem in our country. I think the system is definitely failing people who suffer with mental illness, and I think it's a shame that we don't do more to help these people. I'm not sure exactly where my nursing career will lead me someday, but I do know that I want to be a HUGE advocate for my patients, and I'm not scared to stand up and be different. I am definitely exploring all of my options, researching the possibilities, and asking any and all of the nurses that I know or meet about their experiences, and what advice they have for me. I've never really been that interested in mental health, but who knows? I might end up liking Psych way more than I thought I would.

Other than being told about my maternal grandmother having some sort of mental issues and my aunt being bi-polar, I have never seen either one of them have any kind of manic episode, nor have I really had any experiences with mental illness before. Actually, I should say that I have never seen any abnormally weird behavior, in which I typically associate mental illness with. However, I do know and understand that there is way more to it than just "weird"/abnormal behavior, as I actually live with two people who suffer from mental illness. My twelve-year old daughter struggles with anxiety, my husband suffers from anxiety, depression, and I think he might even possibly be bi-polar, and I have a younger brother who also suffers with anxiety and depression as well. I consider myself to be a pretty laid back, strong

minded person, and I have had some difficulty understanding how to “deal” with people that I’m close to that have a mental illness. It’s not that I don’t have compassion, it’s more so that I lack the knowledge and words to help them when they’re struggling. I think learning more about the different types of mental illnesses and how we, as nurses treat those who suffer from these issues, is going to be extremely helpful for me. Some questions I would really like answers to are: What are common behaviors of someone who is bi-polar? How do you encourage someone to get checked for possibly being bi-polar? What education would you give to a family that lives with someone who is bi-polar? What education would you give to parents of an adolescent who has anxiety? In what ways can these parents help and support a child with anxiety? When seeking a counselor, what should a person consider/look for? When do you know that it’s maybe time to start looking for another one? Can mental illness develop after a person has had a rough childhood or is that more of a behavioral issue? Can mental illnesses be cured or just treated?

I’m not going to lie, I guess you could say I’m a little apprehensive about my upcoming clinicals, not knowing what to expect. I honestly don’t, or at least try not to ever judge anyone, knowing that I have no idea what that person is going through or has gone through. But I will say that I have had one clinical experience in the past that I never really thought I would be presented with and had absolutely no idea what to think or how I really felt about it, other than being a little freaked out. It didn’t happen to me personally, I just heard some of the other nurses talk about a patient that they had to take care of that was a bit unusual. As I heard them describe the events that had taken place, my mind of course wondered, and I had no idea how I would have reacted had I been in a similar situation. Basically, one of the questions I have is, if a patient is claiming to know black magic and threatening to put curses on the staff, how should the nurse go about the situation? Would this be considered a mental health issue?

With that being said, I hope to have a better understanding of what exactly patients with a mental illness experience, and as their nurse, what these patients need from us. I'm looking forward to re-reading this after I have completed Module 6, seeing if and how my perspective on mental illness changes.