

On March 7<sup>th</sup> 2022 I attended an AA meeting that fortunately was a walk in and anyone welcome. I didn't have to set an appointment or wait for a time that works for them. The meetings are held 7 days a week and at four different times through out the day which is very good for people who may need to get the group support that they need as often as needed almost any time. When I first walked in, I was welcomed right away with friendly people who offered me a book to be able to read along as they go. They asked about me and I told them I was a nursing student there to observe and gain some experience. They were glad to have me and told me they have nursing students come all the time and they welcome us to come back anytime regardless of not technically being a recovering alcoholic because we would still be able to gain some insight on how to help our future patients as well as direct anyone we may know in our personal lives to them for help if needed. After people began to trickle in some sat at the table and some sat away from the table. There was a leader that read through some of the up and coming activities in town for anyone who would want to go and enjoy. They then began to read from the book of 12 steps and what their group is based off such as recognizing they didn't have control over the alcohol and that God was the one who they could go to for the healing they needed from the addiction as long as they went to him for the help. I loved to see that they were referencing to God because I believe that is the best first step. They each told a little bit of their story on how they struggle to this day with staying away from the alcohol. There was one lady that said when she first got sober she had to take it minute by minute and now she takes it day by day. I can't imagine how it would feel to have every minute of the day consumed by fighting my self and maintaining that self discipline. Another lady agreed with the first lady on how hard it is for her as well and she said that when she thinks about how she can't have a drink for the rest of her life, it seems overwhelming and impossible so she learned to concentrate on the now and getting through each day one at a time. Some of the men discussed how they didn't like who they became and had to hit their rock bottom in order to get the "gift" of desperation to make that first step. I just sat there and listened to each persons story and at the end they asked if there was anything I wanted to say. I wanted to share an experience of mine where I realized I was heading down a destructive path and show that I could in some small way relate to them. There wasn't a whole lot of time left and I don't really know how to summarize very well so I was trying to get all the thoughts out that came to mind as I listened through the meeting to everyone. I mentioned how in my past I made a friend who drank very often and how in the beginning of that friendship I was strong and a big help to her but as time went on, I began to slowly follow her footsteps and next thing you know, I knew I needed to reprioritize my life and make some conscious decisions . I mentioned the saying " You are what you hang around" and explained how that took place in my life in this particular situation. There were only 2 minutes left and one of the ladies told me to wrap it up and not necessarily in a soft or kind way. That made me feel like she didn't care to hear anything from me and she was not trying to stay later than she had to. Later that night I replayed the meeting and analyzed myself and thought that maybe I offended her or someone with what I said. I thought about how they are learning coping skills and ways to encourage and talk therapeutically to each other without coming off as condescending. I was troubled about whether I should have spoke at all. I always thought I was pretty good at my social skills and I love helping people and relating to people but I couldn't get the way she looked and spoke to me out of my mind. I kept thinking I just wanted to relate and be willing to be vulnerable with them and now I may have said something that didn't follow their protocol on how to communicate effectively. This could all be in my head as well considering she left in a hurry and probably just had somewhere to be. I was able to let it go once I realized I was making it about me and I needed to take in account what she may have been going through. This was a good experience for me to take with me in my future nursing career because I know I have to have thick skin. I thought about our PowerPoints on therapeutic patient relationship and how important it is to stay conscious and aware of how we say things and how easy it can be to offend or irritate someone who is battling things in their life. I spoke because I wanted to not only observe but to put effort in making myself apart of the

experience and when I went to Dove Tree in my previous clinical, they also insisted on me taking part in the experience, but that was a very different experience. They didn't seem rushed or on some sort of super strict time schedule. They seemed very calm and humbled. I think I will take this experience into my future as a nurse and get better at not taking it personal when someone seems agitated. I will also make an intentional effort to think before I speak which can help not just in my career but in my everyday life as well.