

Current Theories Reflective Journal Assignment

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After taking courses that have a core focus regarding patients' physiological health, I am looking forward to focusing on the psychological health of these individuals. Since coming to college, I have developed a great interest in mental health and how it affects individuals from various backgrounds. Before college, I would associate the population that struggles with mental health with drug use and/or poverty. Now, I realize that mental illness can range from a typical college student that struggles with depression and anxiety to a schizophrenic homeless man. I am very eager to have the opportunity to speak with others that struggle with different mental illnesses and how it affects their daily lives. One concern I have regarding my clinical experience is safety. Because I am a small, young female, I could see how some patients might view me as an easy target. To avoid placing myself in any dangerous situations, I plan to use my experience with those that struggle with mental illness and implement the appropriate precautions that have been given.

Before coming to college, I had never experienced or been around mental illness. I am very fortunate to have an exceptional home life and a very supportive family. Despite these factors, while being in college, I have struggled with both anxiety and depression. Because I had never discussed the signs and symptoms and how severely they can affect an individual, I did not believe anything was wrong. I just assumed I was struggling everyday due to school or what was happening in my social life. I continued to not take action regarding my condition and eventually didn't even recognize who I had become. I had quit eating, I had quit speaking to many of my friends, and I often found myself lying to my family about how I was feeling every day. I waited until I had lost almost thirty pounds and changed into a completely different person before I decided it was time to reach out to someone. Because my family has never struggled with mental

illness, my mom did not know how to react when I reached out to her. Together, we decided it was best if I tried to have more structure in my everyday life before visiting with a doctor. Since the conversation with my mom, I have started working out every morning, eating healthier, and surrounding myself with people that impact my life positively. Although some days are better than others, doing these simple things has improved my mental health drastically. Along with my own personal struggles, I have also witnessed two of my very close friends battle with disorders such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. By having such strong friendships with these two, I was able to witness their daily struggles and be there for them when they were in need. Throughout our friendship, I learned how to effectively communicate with them during both good and bad days. Experiences like such are truly eye-opening and have given me a wider perspective when dealing with psychiatric illnesses.

My fears and concerns stem from my experiences with my two friends. By being there for them when they were having bad days/nights, I realized how quickly situations can escalate if they're not handled properly. I learned that although you may feel like you know someone, when a person with a severe mental illness is under distress, no one knows what they are capable of. It is very important to take these situations seriously while remaining calm.

Throughout this module, I hope to gain a better understanding of both the disorders I have witnessed/experienced and those I am not familiar with. I am very interested in learning about the pathophysiology associated with different mental illnesses along with the modifications individuals living with these illnesses make during their daily lives. My three questions that I would like to find the answers to in this course are:

1. What are the physiological effects depression and anxiety can have on an individual?
2. What is the difference between schizophrenia and psychosis?

3. Can substance abuse induce permanent mental illnesses?