

**Current Theories and Practice: Journaling Assignment**

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Instructional Module 6

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As a kid, I never understood the importance of mental health because it wasn't something people talked about often. To be completely honest, I probably would have been one of the people that said mental health had nothing to do with healthcare. As I have grown up and been around more people with mental illnesses and even experienced trauma of my own, I understand the importance of mental health more than ever. I also believe that people being more open and willing to talk about it has made it less of a "taboo" thing and encouraged the population as a whole to be more understanding and want to learn more about mental illnesses. Even though I understand mental health better than I did in the past, I still feel as if I don't know enough. I am excited to learn more about mental illnesses that aren't well known and that may be misperceived by the public.

As I previously stated, before experiencing trauma within my family, I didn't know much about mental health or how it could affect a person or a family as a whole. When I was 15 my older brother passed away unexpectedly, leaving my family in a wake of grief. For months after my brother passed away I watched my mother fight depression. I had always seen my mom as the happiest most loving person, but when she lost her son, she became someone I did not recognize. This was hard on me because although I was grieving too, I couldn't understand why my mom was allowing herself to fall apart when she still had a living child that needed her. What I didn't know but later realized, was that I was also battling depression. For years, I went down a dark path that I believed no one could help me through or even begin to understand. If it wasn't for my mother's strength and determination to get her family back to a healthy state, I'm not sure I would be where I am today. After going through my own battle with a mental illness, I have much more compassion and empathy for those who deal with the struggles of mental illness on a daily basis.

In the past, I haven't liked to share how my brother passed away because for so long I believed people would judge him or judge my family for his choices. I don't believe my brother was an alcoholic, but he tended to abuse alcohol when he would occasionally have a drink. When we learned that my brother's death was due to alcohol poisoning, it was a shock to all of us. I don't mind talking about alcohol poisoning or alcohol abuse, but one of my biggest triggers is people making insensitive comments about people who struggle with alcohol abuse. I know there are people that don't understand that alcohol abuse or alcoholism is a disease and I sometimes find it hard to give these people grace. With that being said, I am not one to cause a scene, but I will remove myself, without an explanation, from a conversation that is insensitive.

I hope that from this module I am able to gain more knowledge about mental illnesses that I am not familiar with. Not only do I hope to learn more about these mental illnesses, I expect to be able to walk away from this module with a greater confidence in this area of the nursing profession. As a nurse, I want to be able to leave my patients with the confidence that I made an impact on their life, and I believe knowing more about mental illnesses would give me a great advantage. Even though I have experience with a mental illness, I still feel as if I am ignorant to a lot of the mental illnesses we will talk about and see during this module. I don't want to downplay the seriousness of depression or anxiety, but I know there is much more to mental health than those two things. To my knowledge, I have never been exposed to someone with a mental illness that is not depression or anxiety. I fear that because those are the only things I have personally been exposed to, I may come off as insensitive sometimes. This may not count as a question, but I would really like to know the most appropriate way to approach and talk to a patient with a mental illness. I know I need to treat every patient the same and not make a patient feel different just because they struggle with a mental illness, but I am not sure how to

effectively communicate with a patient with a mental illness. My second question is how medications such as an antidepressant work in order to minimize someone's symptoms. I find the way medications work to be one of the most interesting things about healthcare, so I am excited to learn about psychiatric medications. My last question is, what is the most appropriate action for me to take as a nurse when I'm in a potentially dangerous situation with a patient? I wouldn't say I am scared of a psychiatric patient that could have dangerous tendencies, but I am interested to know how you ensure your safety while being efficient as a psychiatric nurse. I am excited to learn more about Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing and can't wait to gain experience!