

Current Theories and Practice: Journaling Assignment

Meredith Edwards

Covenant School of Nursing

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Mr. Jeremy Ellis

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When it comes to mental health and one caring for their mental health, I am a huge advocate. I worked for around 18 years in some form of social work or hands on care for individuals with mental health diagnoses. I have worked with an array of ages and diagnoses, and no matter the topic at hand I am passionate about people caring for their mental health. I was raised in a time where discussion of mental health was seen as a weakness or that you were “crazy”. I am glad to see that society is evolving with this topic and learning how serious mental health is. I see mental health as equal to physical health; not one or the other is greater than the other. It is essential to not only take care of your physical health through yearly screenings, good diet, exercise, among other things, but it is essential that you care for your mental health. I often think of my beautiful mother-in-law, who died too soon, and I am a firm believer that the trauma she endured along with her not seeking the help she truly needed led to her death. She was a person who ate very healthy and exercised 5 to 7 times a week, but she struggled to find the help she needed to process her mental health and trauma she had endured. I often say you take all the vitamins you want and do all the things to care for your body, but you have to take care of your brain and the emotions attached to it.

I have an extensive background with psychiatric health whether it be through my personal life or my career for 18 years. I was raised in a family where mental health was always on the table and we were always worrying about someone’s recovery. I come from genetics that included Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder I and II, Depression, PTSD, OCD, ADHD, Panic Disorder, and a variety of addiction disorders. I am no stranger to mental health disorders but know there is always so much to learn about mental health issues. I don’t want my upbringing to sound too down, there were many, many beautiful moments too, but overall, the hand I was dealt led me to want to help others, as well as myself. I found myself graduating with a psychology degree with big dreams of being a psychologist, to end up being a social worker for 18 years. I had a love hate relationship with social work, the good days were when we

could actually make a change in someone's life through saving them from attempting/committing suicide, but the bad days were when the paperwork was piling up and there was no time to get it all done. I was able to learn how to not only help others but found how I too needed help with my overwhelming anxiety and ever nearing depression.

I think all people have fears, some common like heights or snakes, but my greatest fear in this life is to continue to endure loss. I have lost more people in my life than I would like to admit, and it has over the years taken its toll on my health. I am a stubborn person who is always determined to bounce back and keep going, but I can find myself perseverating on the idea of loss. Cancer has taken 5 of my family members, and 4 of my dearest friends have gone to their resting place. My triggers can be as simply as the day and so complicated that even trying to identify what the trigger was is still tricky. The only solution I have found in this life to dealing with pain, depression, anxiety, grief is the belief in God, a good psychiatrist, and a great counselor. I will admit that my anxiety and depression can affect my interactions with others as I often shut down and can be withdrawn if I am upset, but learned coping mechanisms help me to process and move past things.

I have the expectation to further my knowledge of psychology from a nursing standpoint. Although I have experience in social work associated to psychology, I have much to learn in the area of nursing and psychiatric patients. I expect to find myself continuing on my journey of advocacy for individuals with mental health and to have that much more knowledge to better care for my patients. I have the expectation of being a more proficient nurse as I grow and learn about this topic. I often think about my care for a patient as a social worker could be uncomfortable, but I find myself nervous about having to possibly draw blood from an individual who mental health may be unstable at that time. I wonder what that will look like and how will I build confidence in this matter. I am adjusted to having conversations that can be challenging but I have never had a needle in my hand needing a blood sample. I feel that this

leads into a different perspective from the patient and more of an effort to assure the patient. I look forward to the next 8 weeks and seeing how much further I can grow as an individual in my nursing career and with my overall understanding of mental health.