

**PMH Journal Assignment**

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Psychiatric mental health and illness have only recently become “acceptable,” or a subject people are allowed to discuss. Growing up, I did not know anyone with a “mental illness” such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, etc. I have realized in the last few years that everyone experiences a form of mental illness at one point in their life, and it does not have to be something extreme like schizophrenia. It can be something like anxiety or depression. With my understanding and beliefs changing about mental illness, I am very interested in learning more about diseases and disorders many people face and how they cope. However, I am a little hesitant about doing psychiatric assessments or evaluations on a person in an in-patient facility. I would not say that I am fearful, but I am anxious about the experience.

Ironically, I say that I did not know anyone with mental illness, but in all reality, I have had extreme anxiety my entire life. However, it has only recently been clinically diagnosed. When I was about five years old, I would get so anxious when I didn’t feel well or when I had a big project or exam coming up, and I didn’t want to inconvenience my parents and tell them that I was worried. So instead of telling them upfront that I was sick or anxious, I kept it bottled up inside until I physically made myself ill and spent all night throwing up. It was only after the fact that I would then come clean and tell them what was bothering me. We knew nothing about anxiety at the time, so when my “episodes” became more frequent, my pediatrician chalked it up to a gastrointestinal disorder. Still, after many tests, no one could find anything physically wrong with me. From then, we just ignored the problem and went on with life.

When I started college and nursing school, I found that many of my friends struggled with anxiety and were very open about it. I spoke thoroughly with several of them, and I began to see a trend that was very similar to my experience. I began to evaluate myself and started considering the idea that I may have anxiety, so I decided to make an appointment with my

primary care physician. When I sat down and took the anxiety and depression quiz, it astonished me how bad my anxiety and depression were. After taking the quiz and discussing the results with my physician, she and I both agreed that in order for me to cope with the stress of nursing school, I needed some anxiety medication to help me sleep at night. Since I began taking my medication, I have genuinely noticed a difference and realized that having anxiety doesn't mean I am crazy. It just means I need a little extra tenderness, love, and care regarding my mental health.

I am somewhat fearful that I may be triggered, however, it has nothing to do with my anxiety. Since COVID began, my mother has become an alcoholic and very emotionally abusive. She would probably be considered a "high-functioning" alcoholic during the week because she still works as a school secretary and does well. However, when the weekend hits or school is out on break, that is a whole other ballgame. She has probably been this way for a while, and I was too young to realize it, but nonetheless, it has escalated since COVID. She is very narcissistic, and since I am her only child, she treats me as though I am five years old and wants to keep me locked away with her forever. She has never physically abused my father or me, but she does become verbally abusive, especially when she has had a few too many drinks. Because of this, there has been a wedge driven between my mother and I, so home life is very tense at times, which makes it hard to concentrate on school and other things. I am unsure whether or not talking about these things will trigger me, but I know that I am at the point in my life where I am ready to leave home, and it makes me angry when my mother does the things she does.

As far as this module goes, I am still determining what my expectations are for the psychiatric part of it. Mother-baby is where I hope to work, so I know that I am incredibly excited about that part, but I'm unsure what psych will entail. However, I hope to learn as much

as possible about mental health, coping skills, and possible triggers. I think that the three questions I would like answers to are as follows:

1. How do you talk to someone who does not believe they have a problem?
2. How do you approach someone who is a narcissist and has mastered the art of gaslighting?
3. What can you do to help reverse the damage done by verbal abuse? What are some things victims can do to remind themselves that they are not to blame for what is happening?