

Current Theories and Practice Journaling Assignment

Daisy Y Armendariz

Covenant School of Nursing

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Mrs. Harrison, Mrs. Neel, Mrs. Maya, Mrs. Soliz

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The topic on mental health is still a new subject for me in that I am learning more about it myself and how it applies to me. I am learning about what mental health is or what would be or not be considered a psychiatric issue? I grew up in a small town and you could say we are pretty much sheltered from what the real world is. It wasn't until I moved to Lubbock that I encountered situations or had experiences with learning more about psychiatric illnesses and realized how much of it I had already experienced myself. It was really scary at first and kind of made me feel like something was wrong with me or I wasn't good enough. One of the best advices I was given was when you are sick, you go to the doctor. When your car breaks down, you take it to a mechanic. Spiritually, you go to church. So why wouldn't you do the same for your mental health?

I was raised in a strict Mexican culture, and when it came to mental illness, you did not talk or mention anything about it. It was seen as a weakness, a form of complaining, or not being grateful for what was good in your life. So, if you were struggling with something, it was kept to yourself and you had to find a way to deal with it on your own. We as a family just didn't share things like that or talk about such feelings. My first encounter was in high school when I was struggling with testing, it has always been a problem of mine, and we had no clue how to approach it. At one point I got super sick and hyperventilated not knowing what was going on. I never really went to the doctor because I didn't have the health insurance for it. Finally, a schoolteacher helped my mom with setting me up with an appointment to be seen and see if anything could be done. All I knew was that I was given some medication to help me focus better and help with my "freak outs." I only took my medication my junior year, and after that, I never took anything again. It wasn't until years later that I realized that I was diagnosed with Attention-

deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and anxiety. My mom didn't speak English, and English was my second language, so back then it wasn't very common to have a language interpreter explain things during the appointment. Unless it was something really serious, and back then I don't believe mental health was even considered? So, we would just show up, learn how to take the meds, and get my refill.

Once I moved to Lubbock and started college, that's when I was exposed and educated about what psychiatric illnesses were and learned more about it. In learning more about it, it pushed me to ask for help, especially when starting nursing school. I have always struggled with school, but instead of asking for help and be ashamed that I needed more help, I decided to do it on my own and work harder. Once I started nursing school, I quickly realized I was going to need help, and thanks to some amazing instructors, learned that it was okay to ask for help. It encouraged me to see a psychiatrist and find methods that are being used to help me be successful in school.

My second biggest encounter with a psychiatric illness was depression, and this one has been a tough one to manage. I think depression was scary because I couldn't explain how I was feeling or understand why I was feeling such a way? And the guilt that would come with depression! I lost my sister to breast cancer and was 5 months postpartum. I knew to keep an eye out for the baby blues, as this was my second baby, so when I lost control of things, it broke me. Talking to my parents about it was a big no-no, because I'm the oldest, I'm a mom, a wife, I have to have my things in order. Thankfully my husband was a trooper and strong enough to carry me through the dark times. I still have my moments, triggers, but I am working at it every day. I completely understand the saying "getting out of bed is a big accomplishment," because it has been tough. It didn't affect my kids in that I still made sure they were taken care of, but I knew I

wasn't giving them the best version of myself. And that made me even more sad, and it made it even more difficult! But once again, as hard as it was, I knew I needed to ask for help. My pride, I had to really work at not letting it get in the way and ask for help from my husband, and my family. My family kind of understands, but in typical Mexican style, if we don't talk about it, it didn't happen. Growing up you prepare yourself to lose your grandparents, lose your parents, because it's the way of life. Nobody prepared me to lose my sister though, losing family was something we were supposed to take on together, be there for each other and help each other stay strong. My sister was my biggest help when I had a miscarriage, so when she was the one gone, I felt completely alone and lost.

These are some of my experiences with mental health, and how it has affected me. Knowing what I know now, I strive to help my family with their struggles and educate them as well on how important taking care of our mental health is. I am better at understand why my mom was so sad at times, see that my anxiety probably comes from my dad, and to be there for my sister-in-law as she struggles with the baby blues herself. I have so many questions and still so much to learn about psychiatric illnesses, but my first one is I want to learn more about ways or approaches to help someone with a mental status. Continue to grow in this area and have a better understanding so I can provide help for those that need it. My second is with the number of suicides growing, how to be more aware as a parent and work towards preventing this in my kids and other kids lives. The third one is how to use the correct terms when it comes to mental and psychiatric health topics. I wish Lubbock had more resources available for the community, especially our teens, but I think it's amazing how light is being shined on mental health and that people are starting to pay more attention to what it is. That people are advocating more about it and still working towards better understanding the psychiatric world.