

**Psychiatric Mental Health Journaling Assignment**

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For as long as I can remember, mental health has been a topic of discussion in my household. Coming from an extensive line of mental illness, such as anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder, the importance of mental health is no mystery to me. Upon hearing that Instructional Module 6 included material over psychiatric mental health, I was excited, as well as intrigued. I understand that no matter where you end up as a graduate nurse, you will encounter patients with an array of issues, and that is not limited to physical conditions, such as fractures, diabetes, asthma, or anything of the sort. Such as myself, and many whom I know and love, the patients I will encounter and care for may also experience psychiatric disorders. The importance of management of acute and chronic psychiatric conditions is something that is not acknowledged enough in healthcare. I hope during this time of learning about the management of these disorders, that I can become a more compassionate, well-rounded novice nurse.

At the age of fourteen, I was diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and at twenty-two, I was diagnosed with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, also known as OCD, I believe OCD is misunderstood outside of the mental health community. When people think of OCD, they may think of someone like Monica from the TV show "Friends." In the show, she loves to have things neat and organized, and when things are not this way, she may become agitated or annoyed. They may also think of it as washing your hands one hundred times before mental satisfaction may occur or turning the lights on and off ten times before finding relief. Although compulsions like the ones listed may be a reality for some, it is not how my OCD presents. For me, my OCD focuses more on obsessive thinking and behaviors, and less on outward compulsions. An example of this would be something known as contamination OCD, which is believing items or food are

contaminated and they make you ill or even cause death. It may also present as intrusive thoughts, such as loved ones dying a horrible death, or your house being on fire while you are away, to name a few. Obsessive-compulsive Disorder is exhausting, and the obsessive thoughts occur 24 hours a day. Because of the mental exhaustion and nonstop, obsessive thinking, people with OCD are more likely to experience suicidal ideations. Because of the combinations of my two disorders, anxiety, and OCD, I have experienced suicidal ideations in the past. Luckily, I have found complete relief from obsessive thoughts, mental exhaustion, and anxiety with the aid of psychiatric medications. The experience I have had with OCD and anxiety has helped me become more compassionate toward people who experience the same, and I ensure I am not dismissive of their symptoms and emotions.

Although I do not have many fears going into the discussion of mental health disorders this module, one concern or fear that I do have is the discussion of suicide and suicidal ideations. This fear is triggered by experiencing these thoughts and feelings as a teenager and young adult. I was in a dark place when I experienced these emotions, and I was lucky enough to have a good support system to help me out of it. Understanding how dark a place someone is in when they experience suicidal ideations, and they may not have a support system like me, helps create a unique perspective as a future nurse.

One question I have for this topic during this module is “how can I be more understanding or compassionate to a patient experiencing a mental health crisis?” I know one cannot be taught compassion, but I have this question because I want to work in the emergency department one day, and I know that I will come across many patients experiencing suicidal ideations, psychosis, or other mental health crises. Another question I have is “how can I keep

patients experiencing mental health disorders safe, along with myself?” Patient safety is extremely important, and it is equally important to keep myself physically and emotionally safe as well. The last question I have is “how do mental health disorders disproportionately effect men, and do we know statistically how often men go without reporting SI, HI or other symptoms before it becomes emergent or dangerous for them and others?” I know this is not a question that can be easily answered, if it can even be answered at all, but more insight on this topic might help me become a safe place for male patients who may be experiencing these symptoms.

I do expect one or two of my questions answered in some sense. I also have a realistic expectation of becoming more understanding of these patients, even when it seems like their situation is hard for others to understand. I am excited to expand my knowledge on the topic of mental health, as I know it will make me a better nurse, no matter which unit I end up on after I graduate. I want to be compassionate, caring, and understanding in a world where psychiatric patients do not feel safe, heard, or understood.