

Mental Health First Aid Clinical Journal

The clinical journal is a reflective assignment after completion of the Mental Health First Aid Course. This journal is designed to help you explore what you have learned, and what you may apply as a nurse caring for these types of patients. Please address each of the following points with 3-5 sentences. You are not limited to discussing only these points and may write more if you wish. This is not a formal paper and does not have to be in APA format.

1. How does the Mental Health First Aid Class relate to this course?

I feel that the Mental Health First Aid Class honestly did a pretty nice job at reinforcing content we already discuss in this course. Two of the things that stuck to me which I obviously recall covering during lecture were: If the person is suicidal, reference their suicidality directly rather than dancing around the question; The class's methods of therapeutic communication. Although the class did not reference their communication as "therapeutic communication," it worked off similar questions and formulas: "You say you feel [x], can you help me understand [x]?" I think the timing of this class would have more beneficial to our learning at school if it had been earlier in the semester, but I do feel that our having covered a lot of that content in lecture helped us to excel in the class.

2. Name 2 new things you learned in the Mental Health First Aid Class and how you could apply these skills in nursing practice.

As I sort of mentioned, a lot of the content covered in this class was already discussed in our lectures, so I think the main things that stick out to me are the statistics I wrote in my notes – 1/5 people in the United States have some form of mental disorder; Women attempt suicide more often, but men succeed more often. The first point is applicable by pointing out how common mental illness is at what I believe is the low end, as the degree of underreporting is very pertinent in my opinion. Even with underreporting, 1/5 is nothing to sneeze at. I relate this to my current job in that the pod I'm most often assigned to has 6 beds, meaning it's very likely that at least one of those patients will have a mental disorder. This can encourage a nurse, student nurse, and even tech to be more mindful and prepared to deal with this in a patient. I think my second statistic is less applicable to general patient care but is certainly useful in mental/behavioral health. I don't want this next sentence to sound like I think men should be taken more seriously than women, so bear with me: I think it is important to know that a man may present with fewer obvious symptoms of suicidal ideation since women attempt and fail more often, so if a male patient and a female patient describe the same symptoms but the female patient shows more signs, it is important to consider that the male may be just as likely to attempt suicide even if he presents less "seriously."

3. Explore your self-awareness about mental health after completing the Mental Health First Aid Course. Did it change?

I would not say my self-awareness about mental health in general has changed after completing this course, but going through this course and discussing mental health in lecture has encouraged me to want to seek psychiatric/psychologic care. I want to be able to provide the best possible care for my future patients, and the MHFA class and our lectures have led me to realizing, “Hey, Eli, you could benefit from some treatment, too.” Reading about the signs/symptoms of all the various mental disorders/illnesses has led to quite a bit of introspection when I find myself relating to some of the things discussed, so I’d say I’m more aware of MY OWN mental health coming out of this class.

4. How will you use the knowledge gained in this course to advocate for clients with mental health conditions?

Honestly, my answer to this question strongly relates to the points I discussed in my answer to question #1. I would agree with the statement that I have been afraid of being direct about a patient’s suicidal ideation, so hearing over and over that it is advisable to, in fact, be direct about assessing this in a patient is going to prove helpful in getting to know them better, which will better help me to know my patient’s needs and what I need to prioritize to meet those needs. Additionally, strengthening my therapeutic communication is an ongoing thing that I’m continuously working on. I could use better therapeutic communication similarly to being more direct about my patient’s mental health condition – by establishing trust with my patient and coaching full answers out of them, I’ll better know how to not only shape my own response in treating them but also the provider’s response.

5. Reflect on the overall experience after attending the Mental Health First Aid Course.

Attending the Mental Health First Aid Course was definitely a positive experience. I think it provides both a supplement and a reinforcement to the content we cover in lecture, and it also is nice to be in a community setting talking about mental health in a positive light. I think in class, it’s less of a surprise to be surrounded by my peers and hearing them discuss ideas/ideals about mental health that I can relate to, while going to a community-led class and hearing people of many different backgrounds talking about how *they* view mental health – being that seemingly everyone is prioritizing it in both themselves and others – was an affirmative experience that it’s becoming more and more normal to discuss difficult topics. There were a few elements of the course that I perceived as mundane, such as the ALGEE acronym (the exact meaning of which I have forgotten) being repeated over and over in ways that feel forced and very out-of-place from the rest of the content, but I am still very much in favor of students attending the class!