Mental Health First Aid Course Reflection

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1. Mental Health First Aid was a necessary foundation for this course because it gave a brief overview of common mental health diagnoses, and set us up to respond appropriately in emergencies. The skills we learned in our training will help us when having discussions in class, and will be very useful in our clinical setting. While at clinical we will be interacting with clients and performing assessments and this class gave us a base of knowledge and a plan for how to go about these assessments.

2. One thing that I learned and felt was very important was asking questions regarding suicide and self-harm with confidence and straightforwardness. Another thing that was useful to learn is the importance of language, body language, and facial expressions when asking a client about their mental health. I will apply these skills in my nursing practice by being direct with clients when asking them about self-harm and suicide, and being mindful of how I present to my clients. I will have open and receptive body positioning with appropriate personal space and posture, and make comfortable eye contact with my clients so they feel listened to.

3. Prior to taking this class, I knew a bit about mental health and how diagnoses are made. I had a basic understanding of some things to say or not to say to someone who may be experiencing mental health issues. One thing that changed after the course is how I would ask questions without using a disclaimer. When nurses have asked me uncomfortable mental health questions they often say “I have to ask this” before or after, and I learned that this can be received as disinterested and prompt a dishonest response from the client.

4. I will be conscious in how myself and my colleagues refer to clients and will be sure to not let their mental health diagnoses be their identity. I will hold other team members accountable in treating clients in mental health crises as human beings, deserving of patience and empathy. I will be active in de-stigmatizing mental illness with all clients, colleagues, and community members by talking about it openly and respectfully. I will advocate for my clients by continuing to educate myself and others as needed.

5. Overall, I had a great experience at the Mental Health First Aid Course. I learned a lot and the instructors kept things interesting and engaging. They provided wonderful real-world examples to the content and asked us good-prompting questions. The important material, such as the acronym “ALGEE” was repeated enough to stick with me and will absolutely be useful in my practice. I wasn’t looking forward to this course but was pleasantly surprised with my experience and am looking forward to applying the content learned.