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N 324
Therapeutic Communication Assignment

Pre-assignment:

1. Which of these two statements is most important to you?

- I want to live as long as possible regardless of the quality of life that I experience.
- I want to preserve a good quality of life even if this means that I may not live too long.

The second statement relates most to my view on life. While I want to live as long as possible, I believe it is more important to have a good quality of life. The time spent here on earth will be much more enjoyable if it has good quality. Living a long life, regardless of the quality, could end up being a life full of regret and unhappiness. I want to be able to look back on my life and feel content with how it ended up.

2. Do you feel you have full autonomy for decision making?

At the current stage in my life, I feel like I do not have full autonomy for decision making. I have a husband, one son, and another due very soon. I base most of my decisions on my family and how it affects them. Many of the decisions that I make affect my family in some way, which is why I cannot say that I have full autonomy. My husband is great about letting me make my own choices and values my opinions. If there is ever a situation that only affects myself, I do have full autonomy in that regard.

3. How do you feel when people make decisions for you?

The answer to this question is very situational. If my husband were to make a decision that affected myself without consulting me, I would honestly be a little hurt. I also trust and value my husband's opinion and thankfully have not run into this situation yet. I do, however, run into this issue a lot with my mom. She tends to volunteer me for things without asking first. When she does this, it causes much frustration because it is often something that I would never volunteer for or do not feel comfortable doing. My time is spread very thin between school and raising a young family, and it puts me in a tight spot when she is adding extra commitments to my schedule.

4. What do you see as important in your life?

The most important thing in my life is family. They are the focus of most decisions and how I live my life. My family has always been close and love that they are such a significant part of who I am.

5. What risks have you taken in the past that has affected your quality of life?

The most significant risk I have taken that has affected my quality of life was deciding to quit teaching. I taught third through twelfth grade for five years and knew from the beginning that teaching was not something I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I decided to stick it out, but it honestly did affect my quality of life and happiness. After the birth of my son, it was so difficult to go back to work that I decided to finish out the year and then end my teaching career. Since then, I have been a much happier person. The amount of stress I was under is almost completely gone.

6. What risks have you taken in the past, and how has this affected you?

A risk that I have recently taken was to start nursing school. While I was teaching, I always thought about being a nurse and felt a calling to go to nursing school. However, I just wasn't convinced that I wanted to go back to school and start from the beginning again. I am so thankful that I took the risk of going back to school. I am a much happier person, and school is enjoyable when you are learning about something that you feel passionate about. Going back to school has been difficult with a young family, but It is just a short phase of my life, and it will be worth it when I complete the program.

7. What risks do you want to take now?

I am currently pregnant with my second child and will be delivering any day now. I see this as a risk because it has affected my progress in school and put me behind a semester. I had initially planned to take a full load this semester and continue on as usual but had to make a big decision about whether or not that was the best choice for me. It was difficult to drop my load and accept the fact that I would have to push graduation off a semester. It was risky because that is another semester that my husband is the only one working, and it affects our family. If I ended up being too overwhelmed and had to withdraw or fail a class, the situation would be worse.

8. What risks are you not willing to take?

I am not willing to take a risk that negatively impacts my family or puts them in any sort of harm. As a mother, I am always thinking of my family and how my choices affect them. I think that is why I have such a hard time making decisions because I am always thinking about how my decisions affect others.

9. How would you explain to the people who love you why you want to take this risk?

I would explain to the people that I love that even though my decision comes with a risk, it is something I have thought very hard about and am willing to take the risk. My loved ones trust the choices I make and know that I always think things through thoroughly.

10. What frightens you about taking this risk?

The thing that frightens me most about taking a risk is that it will not go the way I had planned. You never know how something will turn out until you act upon it. I like to be in control of

situations, and not knowing how something will turn out can be very frightening to me. It takes trust to know that whatever decision you made was the best, and it will all turn out okay.

Interview:

1. Which of these two statements is most important to you?

- I want to live as long as possible regardless of the quality of life that I experience.
- I want to preserve a good quality of life even if this means that I may not live too long.

“Preserving a good quality of life is important to me. Especially now that I am in my 80’s. I want to be happy with the life I lived and not spend the last few years of my life regretting.”

2. Do you feel you have full autonomy for decision making?

"I do not make too many decisions without your Grandpa, but I always know that I have the freedom to make whatever choice I want. We still live on our own and run our own lives. I am thankful that I have been blessed with good health so far and have been able to be so independent.:

3. How do you feel when people make decisions for you?

"I tend to be pretty stubborn and do not let too many people make decisions for me. Recently, your dad and his sisters had a conversation with me about your grandfather and how I was going to take care of him as his health declined. I guess I felt frustrated when they said they had discussed some things together ahead of time. I am still fully capable of making decisions for myself and didn’t like how they had talked about things without me.”

4. What do you see as important in your life?

"When I was your age, the most important thing in my life was my family. Now I guess I am more concerned with my happiness. Luckily, family is something that makes me happy, so it still very much revolves around you guys. I am much more content with staying home and doing activities that make me happy, rather than focusing solely on what makes my children happy."

5. What risks have you taken in the past that has affected your quality of life?

"The biggest risk that I have taken was moving to Florida with your Grandpa. At the time, we had been spending almost half the year there during the winter. It just made us so much happier to be there. The weather is so much more enjoyable. It was a tough decision because we would be so far away from family but knew you would all be able to come and visit. We had to sell the house that we raised our children in, and that was very hard. But we have made many new memories here in Florida, and I think it has been worth it."

Interview Evaluation:

1) What therapeutic communication techniques did you use during the interview? Provide examples

During the interview, the therapeutic techniques that I used most were silence, restating, and offering leads. I interviewed my Grandma through facetime, which I thought would be challenging to use therapeutic communication. It ended up going better than I expected. I mostly used silence after I initially asked the question. She had more time to think about a response and not have to rush into an answer. I had to restate the questions quite a few times because she would either not hear what I said or needed some clarification. I mostly had to offer leads to get her to provide more information. She would provide a lot of one-word answers, so I had to find ways to get her to give me more information.

2) What went well?

Overall, I think the whole interview went well. I was nervous because I had never interviewed my Grandma before. She is very strong-willed and stubborn, so I didn't know how she would respond at first. She also isn't known for sharing anything personal about her life. I think she ended up being thankful that we were able to have a conversation with just the two of us, and it went much better than expected.

3) What would I do differently next time?

I think it would be easier to have a conversation in person rather than through technology. Its harder to understand what people say, and things are taken a different way than when you talk to somebody in the same room. We were able to see each other through the computer, but there were still some technical difficulties we had to deal with. Another thing I would do differently is to share more of myself during the interview, maybe. It was very one-sided at times, and I wish I would have shared more from my end.

4) What are the major take-home lessons after interviewing an older adult?

Older adults have so much knowledge and experience to share with people. I found it so interesting how, when my grandmother was my age, she too felt like her life revolved around her family. I was also surprised when she told me about feeling hurt when my dad brought up the issue of her taking care of my Grandpa. I never thought about how something like that would affect her. It is important to be sensitive to all the changes that older adults are going through.

5) How can I adapt my nursing practice to be more responsive to the unique needs of an older adult client?

I can be more receptive to their feelings and needs. Using therapeutic communication techniques and just asking them how they feel about something is very helpful. It can be hard to relate to an older adult when you have never been through that stage of life yet, but just being aware that they have similar wants and needs as yourself can help.

6) In what way am I building my nursing skills?

I am building my nursing skills by using therapeutic communication and creating more experiences working with older adults. Nursing involves so much more than just giving medicines, taking vitals, and managing the health care needs of a patient. Talking with patients and making them comfortable with you is so beneficial in the success of their care. Understanding ways to communicate with older adults is vital to being a successful nurse.