The Craziness of Mental Health

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Teaching Mental Health

1. Students fear mental health
2. Students minimize its importance
3. Students believe the distorted view of the mentally ill from horror movies, media, and society’s stigma
It’s All in the Presentation

• The instructor sets the tone
  • Teach that mental health is a disease process like diabetes or hypertension
• Review how the mentally ill have been treated historically
  • Teach self-reflection

*Be a positive role model*
The Clinical Experience

• Prepare (don’t scare) students with outline of the rotation and expectations
• Encourage them to research the mental health clinical site online
• Keep your door open for students – they will share their fears
• Be a positive role model
The journey begins . . .

- Welcome letter
- Tour of the County Jail
- Orientation to the Forensic Center
- Tour of the Forensic Center
- Begin two, 6-hour clinical days for six weeks
Be a Role Model

• Introduce students to patients
• Initiate and participate in activities
• Allow students to observe your interactions with patients
• Know when to intervene with student-patient conversations
Reflect

- Schedule a daily pre-conference and a daily debriefing... this is a priority
- Allow the post-conference conversation to begin with the instructor but take shape by the students
- Dynamics of the day’s events will guide the conversation
- Support, encourage, affirm
My goal for them . . .

Students will learn about themselves, share their personal experiences, talk about how mental health has affected their lives and the lives of their loved ones, and obtain a new awareness because of the compassionate and nonjudgmental support.

“I believe that the mental health clinical experience teaches us more about ourselves than any other clinical rotation.”
Be Open

• Share your own vulnerabilities with students
• Share your own growth with students
Talk about Mental Health Often

- Display newspaper articles about mental health events “in the news”
- Discuss current mental health policies in legislature
- Include mental illness in med/surg didactics or labor and delivery case studies
If you talk to God, you are praying.
If God talks to you, you have schizophrenia.

~Thomas S. Szasz
Questions

Thank you for your presence.