Mental Health Reflections: Learning through Journaling

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Learning Objectives

- Discuss journaling as a teaching strategy
- Identify the pros and cons of journal use in nursing education
- Analyze how journaling can be integrated into a nursing clinical course
Literature


- Reflection in-action: concurrent critical analysis of an action or event and evaluating for the most effective intervention.
- Reflection on-action: retrospective critical analysis of an action or event after it has occurred to explore alternative ways of response in similar situations.
Literature

- Greatest chance of success with robust orientation, guidelines, and measurable goals
- Is fairly commonplace (in some form) in nursing education
- Increases confidence, improves clinical judgement
- Increases compassion and empathy
Journaling as a Teaching Strategy

- Especially beneficial for clinical learning
- Limited clinical hours
- Complex care
- Assessment of critical concepts
- All students participate
Format of Journal

- Can be formal (guided) or informal
- Examples:
  - How did it make you feel? (a video or a patient)
  - Why do you believe we are studying this objective?
  - How can you apply this concept to your everyday life?
  - What is the most important thing you learned today?
  - What made you curious today?
Benefits

- Evaluation of judgment/critical thinking skills
- Safe place for expression of feelings
- Identification of students at risk for early intervention
- Alleviation of stress
- Evaluation of previously held beliefs/development of empathy
- Attaches meaning to experiences
- Source of research
Barriers

- Careful consideration of components
- Can be lengthy
- Requires time to read
- Not often graded on a scale
Integration into a Clinical Course

- Reflective questions can be added to any clinical course assignment
- Begin with pre-reflection to examine previously held thoughts and beliefs
- Following the clinical day, provide guided questions for reflection (give them a due date)
- Conclude with a final reflection of the entire experience, including the pre-reflection journal entry
Example: A letter to myself

Pre-reflective course paper, 1-2 pages in length

- Begin the paper with the words: “Dear Self, during this semester in the mental health course I hope to learn…”
  - Write what you hope to gain during this semester (objectives about theory content, clinical expertise, a good grade, to get through it and move on, etc…)
  - Personal reflections and thoughts about mental health in general (mental wellness as well as mental illness)
    - Thoughts on cultural and societal perceptions about mental health, past patients or experiences, people that you know, leave out identifying information to protect privacy
Assessment

- On the clinical unit, students (in most courses) complete an assessment form/concept map/care plan.
- Reflection should be ongoing, however most students are busy/nervous/stressed and often don’t engage in reflection.
- Post clinical reflection via journal is an excellent mechanism to integrate complicated issues such as stigma, social justice, and patient rights.
Example Reflection of a Clinical Day

- Was the psychosocial **assessment tool** you used appropriate for the patient? Explain your answer (diagnosis, communication issues, etc.). If not, what other assessment tools might be appropriate for this patient? Why?
- What interventions or **community resources** might be necessary to assist this patient after discharge?
- What was your first thought about your patient? (BE HONEST). What were your thoughts of your patient after your assessment?
- Identify 2 **therapeutic communication** techniques (found in your textbook) that were effective and utilized during the conversation with your patient.
- Describe a portion of your conversation that was ineffective. Which therapeutic communication technique (from your textbook) could have been utilized to increase effectiveness?
- Reflect upon the **main site clinical objectives**. Did you meet or not meet the objectives? Why or why not?
Additional Reflection

- **Critical Behaviors**: All of your experiences are being evaluated by your clinical instructors based upon the CCN critical behaviors. From the following selection of CCN critical behaviors; choose a different one to discuss for each main clinical day. Explain your strengths and/or weaknesses in that behavior. Give specific examples of your actions.

- **Interdisciplinary Team**: Find a different member of the interdisciplinary team for each day of your main site clinical. Research (in your book or online) the following:
  - What is their job responsibility? How do they interact with patients? How do they contribute to the interdisciplinary team?
  - What education is required to obtain the job?
  - Are there licensure or certification requirements for the job? How often does the license have to be renewed? Are there requirements for renewal?
Additional Reflection

- **Evidence Based Practice:** Based upon your patient’s diagnosis and/or interview, go to the literature (UA Library) and research one current, innovative, research-based article related to diagnosis, medications, therapies, etc. Summarize the research methods and important points/findings of your article. State why this finding is important to (1) you as a future nurse and (2) your patient. Include the article reference in APA format. *Current articles should be no more than 3 years old, summary no more than ½ page length.*
Example Reflection of a Clinical Day

- Summarize your clinical day (areas where you were involved, the types of patients you saw, what you did, what you thought about the site). Provide an example of each of the following:

- The provision of **patient centered care** (how involved were staff in the patient’s care, what kinds of activities did you see, how did you spend your day interacting with the patients).

- The exhibition of **teamwork and collaborative care** across medical disciplines (who was there besides the nurses, what did they do for the patients, how is the care they provide different from what the nurses did).

- The incorporation of **evidence-based practice** (what types of therapies did you see being implemented, for example: cognitive/behavioral, pharmacologic, music, group, occupational, art, etc…). Was there anything new or interesting being done to treat the patients at the site?

- The utilization of **informatics tools** (did you see computers, what type of charting did you see, any use of electronic tools, iPads, etc…).
Final Reflection

Part I: Print your pre-reflection in your journal directly behind this entry. Reflect upon your initial thoughts about this course.

- Did you meet your initial learning objectives? Did your thoughts about mental health (wellness or illness) in general change, if so how and why? Are your thoughts about the cultural and societal aspects of mental health different now than before the class started, if so how?

Part II: What was your most valuable learning experience during your mental health clinical? Discuss the various clinical sites; did you meet the pre-defined learning objectives? Why or why not?
Journal Management

- Individual clinical days submitted online within 7 days of experience
- Completed journal turned in as a hard copy to assigned instructor within 7 days of final clinical experience
- Journal is pass/fail
- Returned to student with comments
References