

YOU ARE THE WHOLE HEALTH CONNECTION

**APNA TIPS AND GUIDANCE FOR
PMH NURSES**



**American
Psychiatric
Nurses
Association**

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APNA TIPS AND GUIDANCE FOR NEW PMH NURSES

Welcome to psychiatric-mental health nursing!

You are now a part of community of nurses that provides holistic care to promote wellbeing. By connecting with patients and providing vital mental health care, you can make a difference.

To help you acclimate to your new field, we asked PMH nurses in different care settings and specialties for their words of wisdom. Here is what they say.



"CONNECTIONS ARE VITAL. They are what make us who we are as psychiatric-mental health nurses. The face-to-face interactions that we have with our patients who are often otherwise isolated - the connections we build with them - these are all serving to support their whole health. This is how we help them thrive, not just manage their illness."

APNA President Gail Stern

"Gain as much exposure/experience among the many different sub specialties which psych is famous for. Once you feel more confident you may find yourself specializing in one particular area. Also, since psychiatry is about multiple professions working in the field I found it extremely helpful to gain insight from those professionals, such as psychologists and social workers as each is trained with a different perspective."

Rosanne Visco

"Psychiatric-mental health symptoms and diagnoses permeate every nursing specialty and patient population...I consider public health to be a vital component of psychiatric-mental health care within our communities."

Michelle Kuo

"All nursing is psych nursing...It is the most holistic nursing you will ever get the chance to do."

Susan Corkran

"Be proud of being a psychiatric nurse and spread your knowledge to all nurses. Our society is begging for our help and remember to use your knowledge to keep yourself healthy and grounded."

Alexis M. Norris

"Recently, a patient told me that when they first met me they were afraid of another person judging them. But, they said, 'I realized that you saw my heart, not my addiction.'

SEE THE PERSON, NOT THE DISEASE.

Look beyond the symptoms, then treat the person – this practice will never fail you."

Janette B. Espinoza

"As a psychiatric-mental health nurse, I am consistently humbled by the little moments. Take the time to tell a joke to a patient or bring someone tea. The power in making someone smile will last longer than you realize."

Hannah Biernacki

"The first few minutes of an encounter with a patient can determine whether they will buy into what you are saying by your verbal and non-verbal language, so be honest, be present in the moment, and listen to their story."

Gisela Catano-Mahoney

"When you meet with a patient, **HAVE AN OPEN MIND** and treat them with the respect that they deserve as a human being with an illness. Listen to your patient, watch what they are doing, remember that the majority of communication is non-verbal. Ask them what works for them, and what doesn't. Remember that sometimes the difference between where they are and where you are, as the old proverb says, can be as simple as a single straw."

Brenda Severson

"I have found that being a student member of the APNA and following the discussion boards to be a valuable resource."

Heather Wiegand

"Trust your instincts and listen to that 'sixth sense'."

Anna April Schwartz

"You need to know from the start that the symptoms and behavioral issues your patients are experiencing are due to an illness. It's vital to understand patients may lash out at you but you can't take it personally. Remain calm and collected. "

Camille Watson

"Remember these patients are people just like you and me."

Patricia Houle

"Always remember that interactions with those in need of mental health nursing is not about you: it's about them. This is often an extremely challenging transition during the early years of psychiatric nursing. Always try to meet them where they are and with unconditional positive regard."

Adam Barkeloo

"**FOCUS ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP** with your patients. It is the therapeutic alliance that impacts treatment adherence and outcome. Show that you are reliable, honest, approachable, and consistent. Listen to their stories, to their perceptions. Ask questions. Ask about what's important to them; explore their goals. (Those can give you insight into motivational factors you might be able to engage later.) Through your collaboration, your humanity, you can form connections, through which you can demonstrate respect, positive regard and similar qualities."

Sharon Van Fleet

