**REFLECTION AND JOURNAL GUIDELINES**

Reflective journals are used to:

* Promote self-awareness and dialogue between students and instructors
* Expand knowledge base in psychiatric/mental health nursing
* Process and “make sense of” the experience in the psychiatric mental health clinical by providing a forum to discuss feelings and thoughts in relationship to clinical experiences
* Acknowledge changes in clinical performance/personal growth during the clinical experience.
* Develop critical thinking skills used to analyze and to integrate clinical concepts to practice
* Increase observational, assessment and recording skills

Guidelines for journals:

* **Journal entries contain confidential information** to be shared between you and your instructor and should be treated as such. Use only the initials of clients who are referred to in your journal entries.
* Journal entries must be submitted in a folder with a nontransparent cover. Entries should be typed. Label each page of your journal entry with your name, and number the pages of each journal entry and date. Use journal entries returned by your instructor, for reference throughout the semester.
* Journal entries should be written in a timely manner, complete soon enough to prevent forgetting of events and their meanings while allowing sufficient time for reflection.
* Clinical instructors will provide written feedback on journal entries. ***A clinical instructor may require a written response to questions posed in feedback on journal entries.***
* See first and final journal guidelines.

**First journal entry: Introduction**

Address the following areas:

* Describe any experience you have in mental health or with someone with mental illness.
* What is your view of mental illness and persons with mental illness?
* Discuss any concerns you have regarding this clinical.
* Identify personal & academic/professional goals for the clinical.

**Final journal entry:**

Self-awareness within the context of a clinical situation is crucial for the ability to establish a therapeutic relationship with patients. One of the most valuable outcomes or goals for clinical is the recognition of one’s feelings, prejudices and biases in a situation, appropriate management of them along with the ability to manage our anxiety and wellbeing. It is this self-awareness that allows us to “be with” our patients in an open and authentic way. This is done through listening, reflecting upon and validating the existence of another. This is the essence of a healing therapeutic relationship. Use your final journal to reflect on your success in achieving this outcome and meeting the goals you set for yourself in your first journal.

**Questions to address in your final reflection include:**

1. What feelings, prejudices and biases did you experience during your clinical experience?

2. How did you manage them?

3. How did you manage your anxiety?

4. What assumptions did you make about mental illness and persons with mental illness?

5. What awareness did you develop during your clinical experience?

6. How did you change as a result of your clinical experience?

7. How will this experience impact on you as a nurse?

**Subsequent Journal entries (weeks 2-10) should include the following:**

* Describe a significant event from your clinical day. Discuss the impact the event had on you in terms of increasing your understanding of mental health nursing, psychopathology and or the nurse patient relationship. Your journal entry should be reflective of your specific learning/development of insight.
* Identify the learning that resulted from reflecting on the described event. What specific thing(s) did you learn and how will you apply that learning in your practice?
* In the event you cannot identify a significant event from your clinical day, reflect on the journal prompt for the week listed below.

1. **WEEKLY** **JOURNAL FOCUS PROMPTS**

Journal 1: Introduction\* (Submit additional copy to course clinical coordinator)

***\*See reflection and journal guidelines***

Journal 2: Discuss your feelings regarding your first Psych clinical day. How did it compare with your expectations? Discuss the milieu on the unit, is it a therapeutic milieu? Give examples of how it is or is not. Does it provide a safe “holding environment”?

Journal 3: Explore your personal strengths & limitations and their effect on the student/patient relationship. Include reflection on your therapeutic use of self.

Journal 4: Describe an interaction between nursing staff and a patient that demonstrated empathy, advocacy, or a therapeutic alliance. How does this compare with principles of the Recovery Model?

2. Journal 5: Discuss a legal or ethical issue you have encountered during this clinical? Consider the ethical principles that were evident in the situation and how these principles were adhered to or violated. What did you learn from this experience & how will it impact your practice?
3. Journal 6: Compare and contrast 2 patients with the same diagnosis on the unit.
5. Journal 7: Describe a group activity you facilitated (if placement did not allow for student led group, describe activity you attended) **OR** Describe how you addressed patient education and any obstacles you encountered. What did you learn?

Journal 8: Discuss the role of the nurse in maintaining safety on the unit. What assessments

are made by the nurse? What interventions support patient safety?

2. Journal 9: Discuss your ability to work with the multidisciplinary team and any
3. barriers/obstacles you encountered. What is the role of the nurse on the team?
   1. Journal 10: Final journal\*, submit final journal entry to clinical instructor & a copy to the course coordinator
      * 1. **\**See reflection and journal guidelines in clinical handbook for final journal***
4. **NOTE: If you experience a significant event/encounter on any clinical day that impacts you in any way (positive or negative), make that your journal focus instead of the identified focus for the week.**
5. ***The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.***
6. ***~M. Scott Peck***