

# Adjustment and the Student Nurse

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## Introduction

The Student Nurse is entering a vocation which deals with all kinds of people. Before she can develop an understanding of other people, however, she must first seek insight into her own behaviour and what lies behind it. She needs to recognize that behind every act of her own, there is a motivating force which must be examined before self insight can follow, before guidance of others may even be considered.

An understanding of origins, an appreciation of values and a constantly increasing power of self-discipline may result from the study and application of psychology. Self-discipline is, we recognize, an aim never fully attained, but the more we understand about our nature and the more we learn of the intelligent directing of forces underlying them, the greater is the degree of possible self-mastery, when the student nurse, realizing this, has learned why people behave as they do, she will be able to guide others, as well as herself, and control the situation.

## What Makes an Effective Student Nurse

It is a well established practice for Schools of Nursing to require a personal interview with applicants for admission. Many students will recall the question "What makes you think that you would make a good nurse?". Some had not explored their reasons for interest in nursing, and found it a difficult question to answer. Yet, probably all will agree that every prospective member of the profession should not only know herself, but should strive to match that self with the qualifications which we seek in the nurse when we bring her to the bedside of the sick and to the homes in our communities. Suppose, then, we examine some of the attributes which contribute to success in nursing.

### 1. Mental and Physical Well Being

We require that a young woman who has the right kind and degree of aptitude shall not only master subject matter but shall think through its relationship to life, its connection with the procedures which she practices daily, and that she shall recognize when changes in behaviour, based on more knowledge, are indicated. Important too are a wholesome, cheerful approach to each day's activities, cordial relations with the people, the ability to keep going with a smile, when the average individual would be inclined to give up. This ties up closely with sound physical health. Therefore, Schools of Nursing try to ensure this quality by a thorough physical check-up and necessary correction prior to acceptance into the school.

A problem which faces the student is how, when

she is surrounded by illness, she can safeguard her own health. Early in her programme of study are included lessons on personal hygiene and the reasons, based on physiological and psychological principles, for developing regular habits of self care. It is an essential for the nurse, who, in her spotless white uniform, symbolises health. It is achieved only when the student nurse makes application of the learning in this area which are made available to her. To develop a programme of self care, based on scientific knowledge, is important; to follow such a programme faithfully requires the belief that positive health is of the greatest value. It is easy to be casual and careless in such practices, but neglect constitutes a hazard to well-being. Such indifference in the student nurse disqualifies her as a teacher of health.

### 2. Spiritual Sense of Security

The Student Nurse who is in the School of Nursing too far from her own home to continue attendance at the holy spot of her affiliation is encouraged to seek Mosque, Temple or Church of the same denomination or of a similar creed in the community where she now is. When hours of duty interfere with the same attendance in the morning, she may be able to attend an afternoon or an evening service.

It is a definite asset when a student nurse is adjusting to a new situation and people to continue the familiar practise of meditation, prayer and worship which contributed to her serenity and security while at home. It does require some effort to fit her religious programme into the busy schedule of school and hospital, but it can be managed to the benefit of the individual.

Usually Churches have programmes of activities for young people which provides an opportunity for newcomers to meet and become acquainted with both young men and women in that community. Since nurses are expected to be both well informed people and well rounded personalities, it is desirable for them to know their contemporaries who are engaged in the various fields of work in the community and not to confine their companionship to people in their own profession which offers this opportunity as well as the important centre for worship which answers a need felt by many people.

### 3. Good Habits of Study and Work

The programme of study demands sincere interest and eagerness to learn, as well as specific habits of application to work. Insight and skill will result only when the individual has the persistence to keep trying, when she frequently examines her progress in learning and its relations to what she is doing; when she gauges her skills in practise and is willing to pro-

fit from constructive criticism; and when she voluntarily seeks the guidance of supervision from those qualified, so that her errors and weaknesses may be discovered and corrected. It is a great morale builder for the student nurse to become aware of her own daily progress, to derive satisfaction from the little things, and to take pride in doing well whatever she does. She needs to understand that growth is inevitable if she brings to each class and each task a willingness to learn, that she may begin each day anew with the advantage of the knowledge gained yesterday, that there are always desirable goals left for the future, and that deferred satisfaction are inherent in the social professions.

#### 4. Effective Behaviour in New Situation

It is important for the nurse to maintain emotional balance and serenity when others cannot. This requires a nervous system stable by inheritance. Very important too, are the emotional habits which have functioned through the early years of life. If she has indulged in frequent fits of anger, or yielded to moods of elation and depression, with their characteristics behaviours, the development of self control will present a problem; if tears have been the usual response to trying situations, the changing of this response will be difficult. Shyness, self consciousness, extreme sensitiveness to the opinions of others present handicaps, although not probably serious ones as excessive self assurance, without either comprehensive knowledge or experience as a basis. It is exceedingly important then, to determine what measure of self control the nurse, as an individual, can develop. Faith, knowledge, experience and a sense of humour contribute to that inner strength which enables people to meet the unexpected with poise and to maintain a perspective. Nursing is a field for individuals who are developing the self control basic to that unified behaviour through which the nurse may devote her thoughts and energies to her patients' need in all situations.

#### 5. Commendable Attitudes Expressed in Action

The social adaptability of the prospective nurse is also an important factor in her success. She will come in contact with persons of all levels of social origin and security and in all vocational fields. She needs to have respect for the dignity of all individuals, regardless of race, religion, education, occupation or appearance. Attitudes and consequent behaviour of young people reflect their home training and backgrounds. Has she, in the give and take family life, learned the practice of consideration of others, the daily courtesies which one associates with good breeding? Have her parents encouraged her to make choices and decisions which her growing maturity qualifies her to make, or has she continued dependence on parental decisions? Does she respect parental authority and respond obediently to it, or does she resent and evade such guidance as may be attempted?

Difficulties in adjustment to home life, unless examined and corrected, may well lead to residence

problems for a student nurse. In dormitories, where large numbers live together, some rules and regulations make for greater comfort and security for all residents, they do so, however, only in so far as each resident upholds them. Willingness to compromise on privileges and on matter of minor consequences and cooperation towards the greater satisfaction of the majority are exceedingly important where people of many varying personalities live together.

The trend is more and more towards various forms of student co-operative associations. Here students and faculty share in determining rules and privileges, the students, however, carrying the major part of organisation, development and administration. This co-operation is an important step in assisting students to learn by practice, self-discipline and good citizenship. It requires more time than the old fashioned way, but usually results in happier students who enjoy the responsibilities of adulthood in their personal as well as in their professional lives. It is one more experiment in the democratic way of living. In the words of 'Poincare', "Experiment is the sole source of truth. It alone can teach us anything new, it alone can give us certainty. But to observe is not enough. Science is built up with facts as a house is with stones. But a collection of facts is no more science than a heap of stones is a house."

If living arrangements are such that two nurses share a room, this is a chance to show that the shared life can be fun. A nurse sharing a room with another should observe the following rules:

She should keep her belongings in her own space and make it a neat dwelling place; she should not borrow cosmetics, clothes or money; and by the same token, she should not lend; she should waste no one's time—there is never quite enough as it is; when the room-mate is studying, neither conversation nor radio music should obstruct the effort. She should avoid boasting about her popularity, possessions, exploits, family prestige or cleverness—It is far better to be discovered than to be found out; She should observe the "hear not, see not, speak not" adage when it comes to gossip, which has a corrosive effect on all it touches. She should be a good companion, a real friend without inviting dependence or expecting her room-mate to carry responsibility for her or her possessions. It is an art to live in such close proximity with another person, maintaining cordial relations and without one of the participants imposing on the other—but it can be done.

#### 6. Continuing Previous Interests and Activities

The educational opportunities and cultural advantages which a nurse has had contributed to an interesting personality. Appreciation of the things which make life richer, more beautiful and more wonderful is a definite asset; a nurse well rounded in her interests and activities has resources to draw from in leisure moments, as well as in the care of her patients. This circumstance is no small factor in the patient's mental recovery.

The student nurse should acquaint with the recreational and cultural facilities which exist in her new surroundings. There are usually programmes, concerts and lectures which may be enjoyed at relatively small cost. Since there is so much that is new in her environment, it might be preferable for her to continue developing a previous interest in her leisure time programme. An interesting illustration from one text book is cited :

Every morning at 7.15 as the author passed through the living room of the nurses' residence, she observed that a graduate nurse was playing the piano. She played beautifully and it was a temptation to linger and enjoy the music. Curiosity finally led to the question. How does it happen that we are favoured with such a pleasant concert at this hour of the day?" This nurse, as a child, had always practised her music lesson every morning immediately after breakfast. She continued this practise through high school. When she entered the school of nursing, she found that she felt better about things and the day went more smoothly whenever she could spend a period of time, although brief, with her music. She decided that if she got up in the morning fifteen minutes earlier than her classmates and spent that amount of time at the piano, she would be satisfied. She followed this schedule during her three years as a student nurse, since she graduated, she has been in One hospital where it was not possible for her to continue the practice. When she changed her position, she made sure that she could continue to grow in her avocation as well as in her chosen profession. She is now taking music lessons, since her nursing classes and study no longer demand so much of her time. Thus, while preparing for her profession, she did not permit herself to forget the skill which she had developed in a special field, but rather grew in this aptitude. From her music, she secured satisfaction, enjoyment and release for tensions when there were difficult days in her regular line of duty.

### **From Far And Near**

*(Continued from page 2)*

definite connection that exists between shelter and health, and invite them to be guided in their policies and decisions by this awareness. I invite them, being so guided, to renew their determination to address the shelter crisis. It is clearly a matter of life !"

### **Indians Prefer Health to Wealth**

An overwhelming majority of the Indian public—as much as 77 per cent—is prepared to accept lower standards of living with fewer health risks if the choice is between that and a higher standard but with greater risk to health.

Only 20 per cent of the Indian public voted for better standards with greater health risks, according to a poll conducted in India (Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Cochin and Lucknow) by the Louis Harris organization and its associates as part of an international poll of 14 developed and developing countries in four continents.

The poll was conducted for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and is the first of its kind on such a vast scale.

By a massive 98 per cent vote, the leaders said they believed the environment was worse now than it was ten years ago, but only 63 per cent of the Indian public agreed to it. However, both groups concurred that the govern-

The information was not secured whether she attended concerts and operas as opportunities arose during her student days, but from the quality of her morning selections, one would conclude that she has extended her appreciation in this area beyond her own performance. Her music will be an asset as a topic for conversation with hospital patients, in the care of psychiatric patients, or in home nursing, and it represents a social accomplishment of great value.

Each person has aptitudes which are waiting to be developed and expressed. The nurse must consider the activities in her experience which responded in her outstanding satisfaction and must explore the possibilities for continuing growth in the aptitudes which she has already discovered are part of her heritage and in the skills in which she has achieved some proficiency. They will serve to broaden her point of view in daily living and they may contribute an ingredient to nursing care which will be refreshing and interesting to the patient.

By now it is surely apparent to the reader that to become a good nurse presents a challenge which is not for the half-hearted, the indifferent, the lazy, nor for the young woman who wishes merely to please a parent. It is a field for young women of fine intellect, who are willing to work to secure preparation which will make for effectiveness in their professional as well as personal lives.

The purpose of this article is to give guidance for her best growth and development as a person and as a nurse. To read is not enough. She should think over and discuss what she finds here with classmates and instructors, investigate suggested references as time permits, and compare the points of view of the various authorities. In her daily work, she should look for applications of this subject matter so that she may reach her own conclusions and recognize generalizations which underlie good adjustments in her personal as well as in her professional life.

ment should be doing more to protect the environment and curb pollution of all kinds.

### **2 Indian Cities among 10 Largest !**

Two out of the ten largest cities in the world will be Indian by 2000, according to a Pentagon working group's projection.

Calcutta made it in 1950 but by 1975, there was no Indian city in that category. By 2000, it estimates that Mexico City will have a population of 31 million, Sao Paulo (Brazil) 25.8 million, Tokyo 24.2 million, New York 22.8 million, Shanghai 22.7 million, Beijing 19.9 million, Rio de Janeiro 19 million, Bombay 17.1 million, Calcutta 16.7 million and Jakarta 16.6 million.