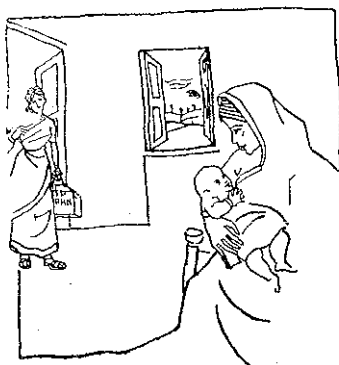




The Students' Role in Community Living within the School Hostel and Community

BY

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CAN we each remember, as we look back to our first day in the hostel, how alone we felt among the group. All students at first find it difficult to adjust to hostel life; the amount of difficulty depending upon the emotional maturity of the student. The student from a large family in a remote village may find it less difficult to adjust than an only daughter from a small family in a larger city.

What is the student's role in community living in the hostel?

1. She must learn to live compatibly with the group, often times sharing a room with one, two, three or more students, who may or may not speak the same language, be of the same religion and have different tastes from her own.

2. She must learn to budget her time so that she is able to fit into the picture without upsetting others in the hostel.

3. She must learn to listen to others as well as to express her own opinion.

4. She must learn to lead sometimes and sometimes to follow others.

5. She must learn to get along well with her classmates if she is to be happy.

6. She must learn to observe hostel rules for rising, going to bed, for recreation, for study, for the bathroom, for eating.

7. She must learn to eat new foods, cooked differently from those to which she was used.

8. She must learn to be tidy about her room and the hostel in general.

9. She needs to learn to share with her fellow students.

10. She needs to learn to be tolerant of those of other religions, languages and customs.

11. She must learn to think and work independently as well as in a group with others.

12. She must learn to be responsible for not only her physical but her emotional, social and mental health, to become a mature well-rounded personality.

13. She should be allowed to help develop programme. Because only as she does so, does she learn to assume the responsibility she is allowed.

How can she be helped to do so?

1. The director of nursing education, the nursing superintendent, the sister tutors, the staff, the upper classmen need to try to understand each student as an individual, her potentialities, and help her develop to the utmost. In turn the student will have learned "by being done by, how to do unto others". Those students who contacted the late Miss Vera Pitman in their early days will never forget her kindness in helping them when they first came to the hostel. She helped them become oriented by showing them around, seeing that they had drinking water and the little personal things needed by every girl. She always was willing to listen to them in their troubles but never accepted slack work. Upper classmen instead of being superior and expecting that now that they have juniors, that these should wait on them but should assume the responsibility of older sisters and help and guide the younger ones. They can teach the younger student who has never learned, how to study silently. As Miss Buchanan suggests they can help her to survey the material to be studied, read well, review, recite and apply what she has learned in her daily life in the hostel and on the ward. She must be able to develop her own programme and be represented on committees to do so.

2. The student, when she learns about ventilation can learn to leave the *tatties* up at night so that

the air is fresh. As the student has learned why she needs good ventilation, she can put this into practice and teach others.

3. She needs to learn to assume responsibility for her own health as she has the physical examination explained to her, why the procedures, why the regular weight, why the immunizations, why the reporting of early symptoms of physical or emotional illness. She needs to learn to apply this and assume responsibility for her own health. When she does so, she can help her patients and contacts to do likewise.

4. She needs to learn to like other foods, as Kumari Lakshmi Devi advised those from the North coming to the South for the TNAI Conference, to do. It is surprising how good these foods so often taste. As the student evaluates her diet for a week's time, perhaps, as part of her Nutrition course, she may realise that the food she is receiving has much more food value than that which she had at home.

5. She will learn to throw groundnut husks and mango skins in the dust bins or garbage receptacle, not on the floor for the servants to pick up and to cause the place to be untidy.

6. As she makes an effort to know the other students from other communal areas, why they have different customs and languages than hers, she learns that basically human nature is much alike, that there are very fine Bengalis, Marathis, Kanarese, Tamilians, Malayalees, Eurasians, or hill tribes as well as those who are not so fine

in each group. As a result cliques of Malayalees, Kanarese, Tamilians, or whatever groups are in the majority, will not form leaving the Assamese, if there be one, alone in her loneliness. If anything happens to someone of one group, the others will not be heard to say "What can you expect, she is only a Kanarese, or a Bengali, or an Anglo-Indian," or some other group. This is not following the teachings of Gandhiji.

7. Many students do not realise that they perspire profusely, that this is unpleasant and makes them unwanted. Would it not be kind to go to the student and help her to find the cause, to overcome it. Does she need more blouses? If not available, does she need to wash those which she has more often? Is a place provided for this, where clothes or her sanitary napkins will not be stolen when hung out to dry?

8. Recreation is important. I once heard a sermon on recreation where it was spoken of as "Recreation". When a student learns to enjoy the beauties around her, to hike, to ride a bicycle, to play badminton or tennis, to listen to good radio programmes, to sit with a good book, to read the newspaper, to talk with others or to spend some time by herself in a quiet corner to think, or in a place of prayer to pray, she may become recreated and helped to grow emotionally, spiritually, socially, yes, and even mentally to learn to adjust to life situations.

9. Sharing is essential—I once heard it said that "*Service is the rent that we pay for a room in life*". As we share and serve others, we begin to experience real joy in living, if this sharing is not for a selfish motive. The other day I heard a story which went something like this—a rich woman died and went to hell and created quite a fuss down there as she thought that she was not getting her right dues. St. Peter came down to find out if she had ever given even one

thing without expecting something in return. She could think of nothing until she remembered that once in her life she had given an old beggar man a carrot without expecting anything in return, but she also remembered that it was withered. She was ashamed to mention it, but finally did. When she did so, she found a carrot hanging on the end of a rope in front of her stretching up into heaven. As she sought hold of it, it began to ascend with her hanging on to this carrot. As she went up, people caught hold of her legs and arms and she told them to let go off her or the rope would break, but they would not. "Finally she said, "This is my carrot, let go," and the rope broke.

10. Those who believe in Christianity know that Jesus taught that the second commandment was that we should love our neighbours as ourselves. As the student studies mental hygiene and psychology, she learns to understand herself, and when she understands herself, to understand her classmates, the servants and those around her. Instead of projecting her faults onto others, she learns to place them squarely on her own shoulders, and in trying to overcome them, she learns to face her problems and situations wisely and to love others.

11. Not only does she learn to love and show sympathy for her classmates, but also for others in the community. She wants to learn about these people, their customs, beliefs, traditions, habits, economic status, environmental hygiene, their foods and resources available and why they do as they do. She will learn much from visiting in the homes, in the clinics, from visitors and her patients on the wards, if she is willing to listen, to observe and to plan together with the patient, relative and the family. She will want to help her patients, the family, or those in the community to plan that which will be

best for themselves and to give them the real love and understanding, such as Dr. Ida Scudder imparted, until such time as they are able to stand on their own two feet, when she will know that it is time to withdraw so that they may be independent. To know community set-up—Communities, Block Development Plan and that of the Primary Health Centre.

12. As she understands that the health officer of the community is responsible officially for the health of the community, she will work with him by attending meetings, reporting diseases, help with surveys or investigations, teach the patients how to get well and to remain well, when on the ward in the O.P.D., clinic or home, always explaining the *what, when, where, how and why*. She will encourage immunization of people i.e., smallpox to help eradicate it from India by 1963. She must understand the organisational set up in the community such as the *Panchayat Raj* and other organisations and to attend when possible and participate, if asked.

13. Every nurse is a public health nurse and a teacher, whether a good or a bad one, by the example which she sets. The student should be guided to evaluate her teaching; to see if she has reached the objectives set and if not, why not.

What kind of a public health nurse are you and I helping our students to become in the hostel, and in the community, so that they may adjust and fill the role of a good public health nurse? Do we help them to motivate the officials, the influential people in the community, but above all the public, themselves to improve their mental, social, physical and spiritual health, so that they may not only be free from disease and infirmity but live a full life?

All this means that a student must apply what she has learned to her own living.

