

STUDENT NURSES PAGE

How the Study of Psychology can help us do Better Nursing

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C. Psychology applied during the time the patient is in hospital

1. Reactions to illness :

Now that our patient is hospitalized and the early causes of disturbances have been eliminated, let us think of his reactions to the illness itself.

When a person falls ill, it is a shock to him, and his self-respect is disturbed. Until this illness he may have taken health and life itself very much for granted. He is the head of the family, but now he is no longer able to carry his responsibilities. Similarly a mother is unable to care for her children and home. The status of the individual may be effected and self-esteem suffer.

(a) *Faith in the doctor.* One amazing and not uncommon reaction is the utter dependence and blind faith in the doctor. This is valuable at times, because the doctor can then exert a great influence on the patient and give him courage and hope. It is important that we should help the patient to have confidence in his doctor.

(b) *Anxiety.* There are some apprehensive people who become very anxious. They watch the doctors' and nurses' faces continually. If they see a slight frown they are sure that their conditions are serious and get very tense. Such patients need sympathetic understanding, with careful explanation and re-assurance from the nurse.

(c) *Depression and Sadness.* Some patients feel sorry for themselves and cry easily. The great thing is to make them

feel that they are respected and wanted and loved. They must be roused out of their apathy and helped to take interest in the affairs of family and home. Recreation and diversion is necessary.

(d) *Regression.* In acute illness, a patient may regress or slip backwards into the helpless state of an infant still in the care of his mother. When these patients are better, they still expect the nurse to be interested in their care alone. For example we had an adult patient who had had a urito-lithotomy. He used to talk like a small child, immitate others and always wanted the nurse to do things for him even when he was able to it himself.

2. Psychology applied to daily nursing problems.

Now let us consider some of the daily nursing problems and how psychology can be applied.

(a) *Approaching the Patient.* What should be our first approach? Let us approach the patient thinking that here is an opportunity to meet an interesting person, who needs skilled care. Dignified kindness, consideration and conversation on impersonal topics will inspire the confidence of the patient.

(b) *Nursing procedures* and the purposes of treatments should be explained beforehand in terms of the benefit to the patient.

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