

For SNA Members

How the Study of Psychology can help us do Better Nursing

By

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A. Psychology and Why We Should Study it.

1. Definition of Psychology.

Psychology is the science which deals with the way in which our minds work. It deals with the way in which we feel—our emotions, the way in which we think and reason our intellect, and the way in which we behave as a result of the interaction of our emotions or feelings without thinking and reasoning.

We as nurses deal with people. We deal with our patients and their relatives, with surgeons, physicians and our colleagues, with technicians and workers in related fields, with clerical and domestic staff as well as many others. We come in intimate contact with sick people who are under our care while they are passing through the ordeal of illness, which may be unifying to them. Psychology helps us to understand their behaviour and the reason why they behave in that particular manner. For example a person with a chronic illness may become very irritable.

In the Irwin hospital we nursed an old man who had a supra-pubic cystotomy and was also suffering from thrombophlebitis. He was old and weak and used to get very irritable. In the mornings his whole dressing and draw sheet used to be wet. During the changing he used to grumble, saying that we took a long time. It used to be a great strain for him, in spite of our best efforts to finish quickly, he used to scream at us to stop, because it caused him discomfort.

This month I am introducing an article on an interesting subject written by a 3rd year student nurse from the College of Nursing, New Delhi. "Elements of Psychology" forms part of the general nursing syllabus and the actual application of this branch of knowledge in the field of nursing should not only make interesting reading but also help the students in preparing for their examination.

The article will appear in parts on this page.

S.N.A. Secretary

We never got angry with him because we knew that his illness made him scream in that manner. On the contrary we were able to give him our sympathy and loving concern.

2. Body-mind relationship.

Thus we find that there is a close relationship between the mental processes and the physical health of a sick person. Sick people are likely to be upset in their mental activities. A person who is happy and well-integrated during health, may become childish during illness. For example, a common symptom of the incipient stage of a cold is a growing feeling of impatience, discomfort and peevishness. Chronic ill-health predisposes an individual to pessimism whereas good health makes us optimistic.

It has long been realised that morbid
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