Effective psychological care for physically ill patients in hospital

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Summary

This article introduces the concept of psychological care as part of a holistic approach to nursing practice. Its primary focus is on the psychological care needs of general medical and surgical patients in hospital, but the principles introduced and discussed are broadly relevant to a wide range of nursing and healthcare settings and contexts.

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Keywords

Holistic care, professional caring, psychological needs

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Aims and intended learning outcomes

The article aims to explain and promote the importance of caring for the psychological needs of people who have become physically ill and require healthcare services. It seeks to identify the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed to assess patients' psychological needs, and deliver appropriate and realistic psychological care with the resources available. While the article is targeted at newly qualified and less experienced narses, the broad principles continue to be relevant to experienced ward-based nurses. After reading this article and completing the time out activities you should be able to:

- Explain how psychological care fits in the broader context of holistic nursing care.
- Identify the factors that might activate psychological needs in hospital patients.
- Outline the core elements of effective psychological care delivery and summarise the benefits.
- Discuss the extent of psychological care and how it differs from counselling and therapy.
- Identify potential barriers to delivering effective psychological care and summarise possible ways to overcome them.

Introduction

Florence Nightingale suggested many possible reasons for symptoms of ill health experienced by patients that were not attributed to illness. These included poor hygiene and diet, lack of light and lack of punctuality in care delivery (Nightingale 1859). These factors suggest discomfort rather than disease, but need to be dealt with to promote patients' recovery from illness. Other factors include anxiety, information overload, sensory deprivation, disruption to normal activities of living and having to adjust to a communal care environment.

The nature of care

Watson (1998) suggested that care was 'the essence of nursing and the most central and unifying focus for nursing practice'. In the years since, there has been increasing interest in the nature of care, caring, and modes of care delivery in nursing. There are now many studies and theories about caring in different contexts.

Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients

SJ Ball

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Table of Contents Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients

- 1. Understanding the eBook Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
- 2. Identifying Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
- 3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - User-Friendly Interface

- 4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients User Reviews and Ratings
 - Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients and Bestseller Lists
- 5. Accessing Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients Free and Paid eBooks
 - Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients Public Domain eBooks
 - Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients eBook Subscription Services
 - Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients Budget-Friendly Options
- 6. Navigating Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients eBook Formats
 - ∘ ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients Compatibility with Devices
 - Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients Enhanced eBook Features
- 7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - Interactive Elements Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
- 8. Staying Engaged with Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - o Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
- 9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
- 10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
- 11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - $\circ\,$ Setting Reading Goals Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time

- 12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Emotional Disorders In Physically Ill Patients
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
- 13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
- 14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements
 - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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