

Self-Reflective Essay

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Psychodrama is a universal strengths based approach to psychotherapy. It uses a person's past, present, and future situations to set the "stage" and explore each situation from a different point of view. These situations are based on specific events in the person's life such as relationships past and present, unresolved situations, trauma, inner thoughts, desires, dreams and any other conflicts that may be causing emotional upset that they want to explore. (Chimera & Baim, 2010, p. 1)

Throughout these last 9 weeks I feel like I've had a mini journey through self-discovery. I thought I had a good grasp on understanding myself, where I've come from, and where I'm headed but this course was definitely an eye opener. Over these last few weeks I've divulged more and more of myself into my journals and really worked hard at the different exercises. I have found them all to be very beneficial in my path to finding greater self-awareness. I think the only way we can help other people is to first help ourselves, and by doing this we need to have a strong self-awareness. These exercises have helped me see where I am, how far I have come and how much further I can go by discovering my strengths and weaknesses. By accepting these strengths and weaknesses I can continue to grow and evolve into a better form of myself.

The purpose of this paper is to reflect and explain on different areas of the course that made the biggest impact on me. The three areas that will help me through this program and into a new role as a psychiatric nurse are journaling, letter writing and the social atom.

Role Reversal Journaling

Role reversal and soliloquy journaling are forms of psychodramatic journaling that I found very interesting. Role reversal entails two different pathways of development. First you can role

reverse with yourself from any point in your life, past, present or future. Role reversal with yourself can also be in the form of emotions or “shadow self”. The other aspect of role reversal is switching roles with another person at any point in your life to see their point of view. (Dayton, 2005, p. 181) Allowing a person to put themselves in the others shoes helps them realize a different perspective and helps build empathy for not only the other person but also themselves.

Soliloquy journaling focuses on one character and one point of view. This allows the person writing to free-write from their opinion without interruptions or to reverse roles and free-write as only that other person. (Dayton, 2005, p. 182)

One of our journals incorporated journaling about a body part. I found it to be the most stimulating, as I had never stopped to think of a body part descriptively. Having done the exercise on my hands and focusing on what they do and what makes me aware of them, it got me thinking of other areas I could use it for to help with self-esteem issues such as my stomach. Using role reversal with a part of my body I’m having issues with could help me to have a better understanding of that body part, what it does, what it looks like and why I have such a negative attitude towards it.

As a psychiatric nurse role reversal journaling can help in a number of ways for not only the patient but for me as well. If I’m having trouble connecting with a patient or not understanding their behaviors and attitude, by journaling as them it can help me to see where they are coming from and why they are acting that way. Putting myself in their shoes, changing my point of view to theirs and having a better idea of where they come from, may help me to be more empathetic and accommodating to their situation.

Letter Writing

The concept of letter writing is to work with feelings of oneself or of another person without involving that person.(Dayton, 1994, p. 85) Letters can help a person feel closure or give forgiveness about an event, it can be a very effective therapeutic tool however they should not be mailed or given to the person it is addressing. The purpose of writing the letter is to let your emotions, thoughts and feelings about the person, incident, or situation flow freely onto paper. Letters can contain hurt, anger, forgiveness, sentiments, praise or whatever emotions that needs to be addressed. (Dayton, 1994, p. 85)

I found letter writing to be the most beneficial to me during this course as it helped me touch on some areas of my life I've tried to shut out and forget. Writing to 16 year old me had the biggest effect emotionally because it was one of the hardest times in my life and to see how far I have come and how much I have grown in the last 12 years felt very healing and empowering.

Letter writing is a tool that can help me in nursing by addressing any issues I have with patients, co-workers or myself. By writing it out on paper and addressing the issue it can help me move past the incident without confrontation or negative feelings towards that person. I find letter writing is a good way to let go of hurt, pain and anger. Once you've put the feelings down on the paper it should feel as if a huge weight has been lifted, and you can face the situation without carrying the hurt and negativity. This will also be a helpful tool to pass on to my patients as a way of addressing their individual situation.

The Social Atom

The social atom is a drawing of an individual's direct relationships and their affiliation to each other. (Anderson-Klontz, Anderson-Klontz, & Dayton, 1999, p. 116) It can be based on direct family members, past or present day family, social networks, friends, work, dreams, a moment from the past, work or school relationships, future life circumstances. It can also be used

as a comparison to ones world before and after a trauma, addiction or other serious problem in their life. (Dayton, 2005, p. 83) The social atom can be used as an assessment tool to focus on the main issues and monitor the progress throughout the therapy; it can then be turned into a psychodrama play or role reversal therapy. (Anderson-Klontz et al., 1999, p. 116)

I chose the social atom to reflect on and explain, as it was the hardest one for me to do during this course. For our journaling exercise I drew my family-of-origin social atom which included my parents, older sister and younger brother. I found I had drawn my sisters circle the biggest as I'm the closest with her and admire her work ethic and drive; however I'm also jealous of her and everything she has accomplished. I never thought about my family dynamics in the way the social atom exercise made us think, adding my daughter to the present day social atom made it feel more complete then the family of origin. The future projection social atom was hard for me to grasp. I know I want to pass this course, become a psychiatric nurse and continue to be a great mom but I'm not sure how it all falls into place or where to put what circle or square.

The social atom can be a useful tool in psychiatric nursing as it can help a person realize who provides them with support and who hinders their recovery and treatment process. According to Dayton (2005) the social atom can be done throughout treatment as a useful reference of change. Using it for a guide towards a positive change can help us reflect on where we are and how to get to where we want to be. Questions such as "what would I like to be different on my social atom?" can open up new lines of communication between therapist and patient to see the atom from different angles and make the necessary changes for a positive outcome. Another good question Dayton (2005) asks that I think is relevant to my social atom is "what are the parts of my social atom that I am bringing from my childhood into the present that might not be helpful

today?" I think the answer to that for my family atom is my competitiveness with my siblings and always trying to be the best.

Psychodrama requires extensive training however the tools and techniques we have learned in this course can easily be integrated into our psychiatric nursing practice. Talking about the different roles we play and identifying how we define and identify them help the patient become more resilient in day to day life. These skills are helpful in developing a patient's empathy and overall mental flexibility. (Blatner, 2007, p. 37)

From the activities listed above I have learned quite a great deal about myself. Participating in each of the exercises and being open and honest with myself and my feelings, I found I have more positive things going for me in my life then I had thought. Through these exercises I have managed to have a look at my past, journal out some of my issues, and move forward. Moving past these issues for me will have a great impact on my present as well as future, because I know have some more tools to help me stay on track with my goals, which include continuing to grow and self-evolve into the best mother, friend, person and psychiatric nurse I can be.

These tools have given me a new way to tackle problems without confrontation or negative self-talk and overall I believe my confidence has had a much needed boost. I will continue to integrate the different psychodrama tools I have learned throughout my schooling and into my future as a psychiatric nurse.

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