

Nursing

Mindful Minute as a Strategy for Self-Care

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In the fall of 2015, I was a member of the Ignatian Mentoring Program. Based on the philosophy of the program, I planned to integrate one of the tenets of the Ignatian Mission into a nursing course in spring 2016. NURS 498 Senior Seminar is a course taken by the senior BSN students in their final semester at Xavier University. The class meets weekly throughout the semester. A strong emphasis within the course is to facilitate and guide the students as they transition from student to professional nurse.

The syllabus states that “An inspection of personal transitions within the practice of nursing are examined. This capstone course allows the student to explore the educational transition of the program and to anticipate the professional transition into practice. Leadership, management and delegation principles will be analyzed. Professional responsibilities of the holistic nurse are reviewed. Concepts emphasized relate to the nurse as an instrument of healing engaged in a transpersonal caring process, self-care, care of the environment and the global community.”

Course objectives:

1. Evaluate nursing as a profession using professional attributes.
2. Develop a personal philosophy of nursing.
3. Debate legal and ethical issues that impact the profession and personal practice.
4. Demonstrate professional communication strategies within interdisciplinary teams.
5. Synthesize strategies in adopting a culture of safety in healthcare institutions.
6. Analyze effective leadership styles.

I chose to introduce a practice that consisted of ringing a chime at the beginning of each class. When the chime was struck, it signaled quiet time for the students to have 1 to 2 (timed) minutes to reflect on the present moment in which they found themselves. It gave each student the opportunity to quiet internally and to attend to what was occurring within them from a body- mind-spirit perspective at that moment. The Ignatian principle of Cura Personalis (care for the individual whole person) was the underlying influence of this practice. Cura Personalis and the holistic principle of self-care parallel each other and are emphasized throughout this course; this practice was aimed specifically at course objectives 1 and 2.

The purpose of the ringing of the chimes was to introduce and facilitate the senior nursing students to become more self-aware around the important concept of Cura Personalis. Review of the literature highlights that nurses tend to be good at taking care of others and often neglect self-care. Offering students' time for internal reflection was used to help them remember that in order to effectively care for another; they must care for themselves as well. This simple but powerful practice reinforces the importance of self-care and encourages the student to pause, breathe, and attend to what is occurring within their body-mind-spirit at that moment. A primary goal of consistently beginning class with a quiet mindful minute was to reinforce a reflective, self-care strategy.

Orem, a nursing theorist, describes self-care as the “practice of activities that individuals initiate and perform on their own behalf in maintaining life, health and well-being” (Core Curriculum for Holistic Nursing, p.373). Self-care includes self-reflection and attending to one’s body/mind/spirit. Regular practices that include reflection, self-awareness and self-care are recommended to student nurses.

One of the class assignments throughout the semester is journaling. Below are some comments made during the journaling process:

“I truly appreciate the mindful minute initiated at the beginning of class. It is a great tool to restore a healthy mind and to become present with my classmates.”

“At the beginning of class, Professor Bradley rings a bell in order to signal to us a minute of silence. This was the first time I have ever had a teacher do so. I find it very productive and helpful. I am able to stop thinking about my hectic life, and my to-do list and reorient to class. Therefore, I am able to take a minute to deep breathe, relax and be open to learning and participating in the class discussion.”

“I like having a mindful minute at the beginning of every class. I think it helps (me) relax and get in the correct mindset to be able to focus for class. I also think it’s helpful before exams because it helps you relax and control any anxiety/nervousness before the exam.”

“I really enjoy Mindful Moment. I think it gives each student ample time to focus in on the class ahead, while ending conversation with other students, collecting individual thoughts, and putting away outside distractions, such as cell phones.”

“I think the idea of the mindful minute has helped me improve my test taking abilities. When I get to a question that confuses me and I feel myself starting to panic, I remind myself to take a breath, pause, recenter myself, and then reread the question.”

“I like the mindful minute because it is a great way to bring the class together and helps me focus on being present and attentive in class. I have actually started to use it in other classes before tests/exams to focus.”

In conclusion, the opportunity to enhance the course by consistently offering a self-care strategy has been beneficial for both students and faculty. Cura Personalis (care of the whole person) is an important health care strategy for all students; it is essential for nursing students who will be caring for others in their professional roles. I will likely use this strategy in future courses as it was well-received by the students.

References:

Geller, S. & Greenberg, L. S. Therapeutic Presence: A Mindful Approach to Effective Therapy. American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C. (2012).

Helming, M., Barrere, C., Avino, K., Shields, D. Core Curriculum for Holistic Nursing. Jones and Bartlett Learning, Massachusetts, (2014).