

Personality and self care of nurses nursing essay



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It seems that quite often in life, especially in the last few years, people have noted a tendency I have to take on roles involving the motivation of others to grow and learn. This seems to be supported by the personality classification determined by my taking of the Myers-Briggs personality test. In other words, I have an ENFJ personality type, also known as “ The Teacher”. In reviewing my personality type, it is clear that it has profound impact on the way I view and interact with the world, practice as a nurse, handle stress and take care of myself.

The Dimensions of Personality and the Practice of Nursing

The letters ENFJ refer to preferences within four different dimensions of personality. Specifically the “ E”, which stands for extroversion, describes my outward direction of energy flow. This means that in general I am focused on the environment and people around me rather than reflecting upon the world within me. This is manifested by a general excitement when I am involved in activities with others. Such experiences give me energy.

As a nurse in training, this quality gives me the motivation and courage to meet new people and boldly discover ways to involve myself in their lives in a positive manner. For example, one day while doing a clinical in the oncology unit at UCLA I learned of a 21 year old patient who brought in his guitars and amplifiers. With the permission of my clinical instructor and the nursing staff, I eagerly visited his room to talk about guitars. We ended up “jamming” together with his mom and some fellow student nurses in attendance. This gave us an opportunity to speak of his music as well as health and hope for the future. He, his mom and, as I learned later, the nursing staff, were very appreciative.

The next dimension in the Myers-Briggs sequence pertains to my preference in the method I use to acquire new information. “N” represents an intuitive preference, which means I have an affinity for finding insights beyond just the “facts”. I have a tendency to look for abstract meanings and consider possibilities for the future based upon trends I see today.

In the nursing role, this quality can help me to see the big picture beyond the raw data about a patient. For example, in the Emergency Room at a recent clinical, a disturbed mental health patient kept complaining of a “squeezing” feeling in her calves and asking for medication. I sensed there was more to the situation and I asked her if anything stressful happened prior to these symptoms. She then expounded on a specific verbal conflict the previous day and unleashed a slew of emotional comments about her life. Soon her legs were no longer an issue and she requested transfer to the mental health unit.

How I make decisions is indicated by the third dimension with my preference being an “ F” for feeling. This means that I prefer to consider people and special circumstances as a priority above how general principles can be consistently and logically applied. In this regard I am inclined to consider the greatest good for all people involved in the situation over and against a strict cost-benefit analysis that does not incorporate the value of harmonious relationships. An affinity to rely on feelings also leads me to search for inspiration and motivation in meanings that are not readily quantifiable but are nevertheless very real.

My focus on feelings leads me to make sure everyone is happy with a decision that involves them. This can benefit me as a team member on a nursing staff. Last quarter a nurse requested I do something with a patient that was technically outside the hospital protocol and different than the way we learned it in school. Though I knew her approach was common and accepted, I was not willing to perform it below the standard I had learned. However, the pressing concern on my mind was not declaring the “ rules”, but maintaining our relationship. With this in mind I refrained from bluntly asserted the protocol, though this would have been quicker and easier in the moment. Instead I found ways to gently ask her about the protocol and the reasons for it. Then, rather than stating what I would do, I asked her how she would feel if I did it according to protocol. This made her feel as if she were a partner in the decision. At this point she heartily agreed and supported me. In this way I managed to proceed according to the strict hospital rules without hindering my relationship with the nurse.

The last dimension describes how I prefer to relate to the outside world. The “J” stands for judging, which means I place a high value on the accomplishment of tasks in order to create a sense of order and control. In this regard I may prefer to forgo flexibility and spontaneity in order to bring stability and predictability to life.

This trait drives me to organize and track tasks in a concrete manner which can be very important as a nurse. During a clinical day last quarter I soon realized that many things could impact when and if meds were given (e. g. a med is out of stock, the patient refused, vitals or labs not within range,....) It is important for the nurse to track this as it will impact future decisions. In view of this I developed a unique chart, utilizing special symbols and notations, that I used to keep record the status of the giving of meds. This chart freed my mind to consider new tasks without forgetting why and when the situation with a previous medication needed to be revisited. The chart also served as a useful tool my clinical instructor and precepting nurse could view as well.

Personality Under Fire

When under stress my desire to avoid conflict sometimes leads me to forego what may be fair for myself. Recently in a clinical situation I was working with patients that required a large amount of unexpected care I naively agreed to take on. As the stress took its toll, rather than seeking help and take a much needed break, I opted to solve the problems myself by drawing upon every ounce of energy my extrovert attitude could supply. While it would have been reasonable to rely on others, the stress caused me to imagine doing so would create disharmony.

As an ENFJ I do tend to focus on the opinions of others about me to gauge my value. Recently I was performing a sterile procedure under the supervision of a nurse who I felt was rushing me. In my effort to gain her approval, I went quicker than I was ready, rather than assert to her that I was already going as fast as I could. This resulted in making a mistake that required me to start over with a new set of supplies.

Personality & People

Various aspects of the ENFJ type help me relate to people. My desire to support others helps make me sensitive to the needs of colleagues. Recently when working with an ER nurse, as she explained and showed me different procedures, I was always asking her for ways I could assist in an ancillary way, which she appreciated. I seemed to relieve some of her stress.

With patients I am very comfortable walking into situations that I am unfamiliar with as I am confident my extrovert attitude will carry me. At a recent therapeutic activity group in the Geriatric Psychiatric Unit I was able to quickly interact with most patients and involve them in conversations. One woman felt comfortable sharing some great memories with me about a song she loved. Also my desire to bring out the best in people causes me to look for ways to inspire hope. With a cancer patient who was despondent over his prognosis, I encouraged him with all the good things he had in his life such as his family and community activities. This brightened his outlook and seemed to give him courage for the future.

The value I place on clarity, order and the approval of others leads me to be very inquisitive with supervisors. I generally desire confirmation that I am

headed in the right direction. In this way I make sure that what I am doing is appropriate. This is evidenced by the numerous questions posed to my Mental Health instructor and an overseeing hospital staff person about an upcoming therapeutic activity group.

I carry this attitude into my interactions with physicians as well, which I find to be constructive. Recently I was able to interact with a surgeon in OR. He could see my desire to get involved as much as possible and began to engage me in conversation about the patient's condition. My general outgoing and inquisitive attitude encouraged him to involve me more, even allowing me to palpate various organs exposed by the incision. This turned out to be a very education experience for me.

With groups, I think people view me as someone who will help smooth the edges of relationships. In addition, while in group gatherings I tend to avoid attracting negative attention to anyone, even if it takes the form of good-natured ribbing, as I am sensitive to the effect of having an "audience". In the previous semester, a member of my student clinical group called me to discuss some "issues" she had with the comments of another student in the group. After talking a bit I was able to help her see these comments in a less antagonistic way and offer her some suggestions on how to respond in the future to avoid friction.

Personality and Self-Care

Knowing my personality type helps me understand how I need to take care of myself. As an ENFJ I am excited about supporting others and bringing out their potential. However, this can lead me to sacrifice my own needs.

Because I greatly value interaction with others, I may tend to dismiss the value solitary time that would help me gather my thoughts. Therefore, in the future I need to consciously allow myself time to be alone and reflect on life without feeling as if I am missing out on something. This is important to preserve balance in my life. Because of my disdain for conflict, I often fail to maintain proper personal boundaries, which unscrupulous people sometimes take advantage of. In view of this, if I conclude that someone has overstepped their bounds, I need to assert myself to prevent this and understand that doing so is important for a healthy relationship. It is really in the best interest of all concerned. Because I greatly desire affirmation from others, I tend to be overly hard on myself if I make a mistake or fall short. Therefore, just as I understand how important it is to forgive others and ask them to forgive me, I need to be able to forgive myself. To do any less would be to compromise my emotional and mental well-being and effectiveness.

Conclusion

As I read the general descriptions of each of the dimensions of the ENFJ personality type it is uncanny how realistically they described me in ways that were not explicitly asked about on the test. When we put all of these preference dimensions together we see the portrait of a "Teacher": someone who is outgoing, looks for abstract ways to connect ideas and inspire people, understands the value of relationships, and finds satisfaction in setting goals and accomplishing a task. Knowing the basics of my personality type, along with the strengths and weaknesses, will help me understand my past and prepare for the future.

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