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Are We Asking the Right Questions?

A Critical Thinking Teaching Tool for Nursing Instructors



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Critical Thinking Teaching Tool: Socratic Questioning

Setting: Clinical Facility (hospital unit, clinic, community setting) in which students are assigned patient care

Learners: Undergraduate nursing students

Theory: Constructive Humanism
Philosophy and Adult Learning Theory

Purpose: To enable the nursing student to build on prior knowledge and experiences, construct meaning to new situations, learn to think critically, and develop a basis for clinical decision- making.

Teaching Method

The clinical instructor may use prompts to guide the student through elements of critical thinking. The prompts are leveled according to Bloom's Taxonomy to assist the instructor in cultivating the student's higher- level cognitive functions. When a student hesitates, the instructor should revert to a lower cognitive level question that builds on what is already stated or known. The clinical instructor must recognize that sometimes the student needs direction to search out answers or consult other resources before questioning may continue.

Socratic Questioning Tool

CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

What is the definition of ____?
Describe the physiology of _____.
What is the normal lab value for this diagnostic test?
Tell me about your patient.
How do you assess ____?
What are you trying to say? Please rephrase/ clarify/ elaborate.
What does this mean?
Can you be more specific or give me more details?
What do we already know about ____ (diagnosis, medication, diagnostic test)?
What do you know about the (anatomy and pathophysiology, etiology, precipitating factors, aggravating factors, alleviating factors, typical treatment)?
How would you modify this nursing intervention to accommodate your patient's (preference, culture, and situation)?
How does this relate to what we are discussing?
What makes this problem complex or difficult?
What is the primary problem?
What are you trying to achieve?
What is the goal?
What information do you need?
What do you think is the main issue here?

RATIONALE, REASONS, EVIDENCE

Given the lab results, what interventions are needed?
What would happen if ____?
Do you agree or disagree with ____?
Why is that happening?
How do you know this?
Why do you think this is true?
What do you think causes ____?
What evidence is there to support what you are saying?
On what authority are you basing your argument?
What reasons may this intervention NOT be indicated in this case?
What data support the diagnosis?
Differentiate between the relevant and irrelevant data concerning this case.
What is your plan?
How will you proceed?
What are the most important problems that should be addressed? Why did you in this way?
Is there reason to doubt the evidence?
What resources did you use to gather data and make decisions?
Defend your decision. Why did you choose this option?

PROBING ASSUMPTIONS

How would you apply _____ theory to this case?
What are you assuming?
How did you choose those assumptions?
What else could we assume?
Is this always the case?

IMPLICATIONS /CONSEQUENCES

Why does the IV tubing need to be primed?
What is the difference between sterile and clean technique?
Why is it important to check blood glucose levels?
Explain the risks involved with the nursing interventions.
What are some of the anticipated outcomes?
What are consequences of that assumption?
What are you implying?
How does ____ affect ____?
How does ____ fit with what we already know?
Why is ____ important?
What is the best option?
What is the result/ effect/ implication/ consequence of ____?
What are the alternatives?
What additional care could be offered?
What are some important teaching needs?
What are the benefits of the intervention or decision?

VEIWPOINTS AND PERSPECTIVES

What does you patient think about his prognosis?
What would be of value to the patient?
Why is ____ necessary?
Who benefits from this?
Is there another way of looking at this?
Talk about the points of view from all participants. How are they different?
What are the differences between the patient's and the doctor's (or the family's) viewpoints?
How are the viewpoints similar?
Are you assuming that your viewpoint is correct?
Is your judgment prejudiced?

REFLECTION

Does your reasoning/plan/ thinking make sense?
What else should you consider?
Talk about your assumptions and biases.
Have they swayed your decisions?
How do you feel about the plan of care and the course of actions?
Were the patient's goals being met?