**GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF MENTAL HEALTH NURSING**

* These principles are based on the concept that each individual has an intrinsic worth & dignity & has potentialities to grow.
* The following principles are general in nature & from guidelines for emotional care of a patients.

1. **Patient is accepted exactly as he is**

* **Acceptance is expressed in following ways:**

1. *Being non-judgmental & non punitive*:

* The patient behavior is not judged as right or wrong or bad.
* The patient is not punished for his undesirable behavior.
* All direct & indirect methods of punishment must be avoided.
* A nurse who shows acceptance does not reject the patient even when he behaves contrary to her expectations.

1. *Being sincerely interested in the patient*: This can be demonstrated by :

* Studying patient’s behavior
* Allowing him to make his own choices
* decision as far as possible.
* Being aware of his likes & dislikes
* Being honest with him
* Taking time & energy to listen what he is saying
* Avoiding sensitive subjects & issues.

1. *Recognizing & reflecting on feeling which patient may express*:

* When the patient talks it is not the content is important to note, but the feeling behind the conversation which has to be recognized & reflected.

1. *Talking with a purpose*:

* The nurse’s conversation with a patient must resolves around his needs, wants and interests.

1. *Listening*:

* The nurse should take time & energy to listen to what the patient is saying. she must be a sympathetic listener & show genuine interest

1. *Permitting patient to express strongly held feelings*:

* Strong emotions bottled up are potentially explosive & dangerous.
* It is better to permit the patient to express his strong feelings without disapproval or punishment.

2. **Use self-understanding as a therapeutic tool**

* A psychiatric nurses should have a realistic self-concept & should be able to recognize one’s own feelings.
* Her ability to aware & to accept her own strengths & limitations should help her to see the strengths & limitations in other people.

3. **Consistency is used to contribute to Patient’s security**

* There should be a consistency in the attitude of staff, ward routine & in defining the limitation placed on the patient.

4.**Reassurance should be given in a subtle & acceptable manner**

* To give reassurance the nurse needs to understand & analyze the situation as to how it appears to the patients.

5. **Patient behavior is changed through emotional experience & not by rational interpretation**

* Major focus in psychiatry is on feelings & not on the intellectual aspects.
* Advising or rationalizing with patients is not effective in changing behavior.

**6. Unnecessary increase in patient’s anxiety should be avoided:**

* Showing nurse’s own anxiety
* Showing attention’s to the patients deficits
* Making the patient to face repeated failures.
* Placing demands on patient which he cannot meet.
* Direct contradiction on psychotic ideas.

7. **Objective observation of patient to understand his behavior**

* It is the ability to evaluate exactly what the patient want to say & not mix up one’s own feelings, opinion or judgment.

8. **Maintain realistic NPR**

* This focuses the personal emotional need of the patients & not on the patient needs.

9. **Avoid physical & verbal force as much as possible**

* All methods of punishment must be avoided.

10. **Nursing care is centered on the patient as a person & not on the control of symptoms**

* Analysis and study of the symptoms is necessary to reveal their meaning & their significance to the patient.
* Two patient showing the same symptoms may be expressing two different needs.

11. **All explanation of the procedure & other routines are given according to the patient’s levels of understanding**

* The extent of explanation that given to a patient depends on his attention span, level of anxiety, & level of ability to decide. • It should never be withheld

12. **Many procedures are modified but basic principles remain unaltered.**

* In psychiatry many procedures are modified but the underlying nursing principles remain the same.