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What is the Value of Teaching Preceptees to Practice Self-Reflection?

- provides positive reinforcement
- is an opportunity to improve practice
- promotes critical thinking
- encourages insight and learning
- is a strategy to create meaning from experiences
- monitors progress in nursing care
- fosters insight of patient care events
- supports the evaluation of patient needs

What Pertinent Questions Could be Asked to Stimulate Self-Reflection?

- Did they understand the needs of the patient?
- Were they comfortable with the Preceptor's expectations?
- Did they feel they met these expectations?
- What could they have done differently?
- What did they do well?
- What insights did they discover when caring for a specific patient?
- What did they learn from a specific situation, or a particular patient, during that shift?
- How can they put this knowledge into practice when caring for future patients?

The Practice of Self Reflection

Many people believe that life events, both personal and professional, are opportunities for learning. These life experiences can teach us valuable lessons, if only we stop to think about them, reflect upon them and ask ourselves, "What did I do well?" and, "What could I have done differently?" Two simple, and yet difficult, questions. Teaching your preceptees to take the time and effort to self-reflect at the end of each day can be a very valuable tool for improving their practice AND to provide themselves with positive reinforcement. There is nothing wrong with giving praise to one's self!

As a preceptor, you can facilitate this practice of self-reflection by first introducing the concept to your preceptee and explaining the purpose. Self-reflection does not have to be a formal, written process...but on the other hand, it can be! Perhaps, start by taking a few minutes at the end of each day to share your reflective questions with your preceptee. Then, ask them to think about own thoughts, feelings and experiences of that shift. Ask what did they do well, what they would do differently or what could improve? Also discuss what specific information or knowledge they learned during that shift. How will they apply this knowledge to their patient care? In addition, you could also ask your preceptee to write down their reflections for each day and incorporate these into your weekly meeting. Keeping a log or journal can bring insight into specific challenges or situations. Encourage your preceptee to go back and reread their journals at intervals, and ask them to consider which events or situations were the most beneficial to their orientation experience.

Modeling reflective practice for your preceptee is beneficial to them and to yourself! Share your thoughts with your preceptee in relation to your responsibilities as a preceptor. Have you been patient with your preceptee? Do you need to improve your listening skills? Have you provided your preceptee with enough positive reinforcement? What did you learn from a specific situation? Were your expectations of the preceptee achievable at this point in their orientation?

Remember, preceptee or preceptor, we can ALWAYS improve our nursing practice. This is the ultimate goal of the practice of self-reflection.

"The Art of Teaching is the Art of Assisting Discovery" – Mark Van Doren

References:

- Creating the Best Year of Your Life. Retrieved from <http://www.howtoadvice.com/SelfReflection>
- Costa, A.L., & Kallick, B. Chapter 12. *Learning and leading with habits of mind.*