Developing Thinking Skills for Nursing

Memory

Know what to memorize. How do you identify important content? Ask “Do I really need to memorize this?”

Memory techniques that help you recall:

- Acronyms (ex., MADD)
- Acrostics (Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally)
- ABC’s
  To recall the facts about emphysema:
  - Apprehension
  - Barrel chest
  - Cyanosis
  - Dyspnea
  - Engorged neck veins
  - Frown on forehead
- Link words to an image
  For example, picture a patient with a specific chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder. Use the word images of “pink puffer” and “blue bloater.”

Comprehension Techniques

- Small group work. Verbalize your thought processes and critique others’ thinking.
- Creative use of questions. Generate questions that start with a statement and work backwards.
  - Statement: The patient is dyspneic.
  - Questions: Why is he dyspneic? What triggered this episode? What could happen next? Can I explain the relationship between dyspnea and the pathophysiology of emphysema? What would be the signs of improvement?
Application

Form a logical rationale based on principle to support your choice of action. For example, Mrs. Miller was admitted to the hospital with a recent history of depression. She has eaten very little since her admission. Which response to Mrs. Miller, during breakfast, would be the most appropriate initially?

1. Please start eating Mrs. Miller; I’ll be back in 10 minutes to see how you’re doing.
2. If you don’t eat, Mrs. Miller, we’ll have to start IVs on you or give you injections.
3. You’ll be hungry in a few hours, Mrs. Miller, if you don’t eat.
4. Let’s eat just a little of everything, Mrs. Miller. I’ll help you fix your tray.

Thinking Process During Selection

1. is incorrect because I cannot assume that a depressed patient will initiate appropriate behavior upon request. (Principle: Depressed patients are not self-directed and require a guided, assertive approach.)
2. is incorrect because it can be perceived as threatening and may increase anxiety. (Principle: Nursing actions should convey respect for the dignity of the patient; nursing actions should reduce anxiety.)
3. is incorrect because it appeals to rational thinking. (Principle: Nursing actions for depressed patients should be concrete, direct, and should not seek responses that rely on sound thinking processes.)
4. is correct. (Principle: Depressed patients need guidance and direction for basic activities. Depressed patients consume food more effectively when served in small portions.)

Analysis

Can you trace the relationships you must perceive to accurately answer a question? The distinction may not be between right and wrong but may be a matter of the best response.