

## The Reflective Project: Addressing the Human Side of Patient Care



Topic: Human, personal, aesthetic side of patient care and artistic expression of one's feelings  
Original Format Taught: Person-to-person, group presentation format. Virtual format applicable  
Academic Level: Undergraduate  
Discipline: Nursing, however applicable for any healthcare student involved in patient services

### Background

This is an assignment of which students report is truly enlightening and makes them grow. Students frequently shield their emotions by hiding behind the physical and technical aspects of patient care rather than address the more humanistic, personal side. The fear of opening a Pandora's Box of emotions both within themselves and within their patients often cause healthcare students to shy away from the sensitive side of care. Currently with the tremendous stress practitioners caring for COVID patients are experiencing, preparing students with expressive outlets and equipping them with some form of mental hygiene would be a proactive undertaking. Finding a way to challenge students to really see their patients and themselves by looking deeper than obvious physical and procedural care is a key initiative. To help students better grasp the psychosocial needs of patients the author believes students must first gain an

appreciation of their own feelings and adopt some means of self-expressing their own mental responses to patient care scenarios.

Providing students with different meaningful, intellectual and aesthetic experiences to improve their provider-patient interactions flows from John Dewey's learning and educational theory. Dewey proposed learning and experiences are deeply connected. He held that experiences have means-ends relationships and the action and consequences of experiences must be joined in perception for experiences to be meaningful and intellectually beneficial. When these come together students gain an understanding of experiences which allow them to act intelligently in current situations and future experiences.

Although some researchers believe individuals who are creative have an innate nature for creativity and innovation, there are others who deem creativity can be learned and improves when one challenges him/herself to be creative. To provide students with a common reference point and to challenge them to tap into their creative side, faculties asked students to utilize principles and talents learned in fine art courses to develop the "reflective" component of this project. While sharing their reflective expressions faculties hoped students would find avenues to laugh, to release inner turmoil, to realize they do not stand alone, to share intimate feelings with one another, and to understand how principles and concepts learned in other courses (e.g., liberal arts/humanities) can help them process patient care experiences.

Ultimately, faculties hoped students would continue to utilize this medium of self-expression throughout their careers as a form of mental mindfulness. The assumption is over time students who adopt some personal method of self-reflection will become more conscious of their own, and the emotional-psychosocial needs of others.

Often times, student providers do not realize their peers experience similar emotions when caring for patients. The knowledge they are not alone in their feelings is one of the biggest gifts this project provides students. Knowing this, the author hopes as future clinicians, students learn the value of sharing their feelings and come to appreciate one of their strongest support systems are their peers. Students not only learn from each other in this activity but also have opportunities to evaluate their own quality of work against their peers. As part of the project students present their work to their peers in a presentation format. During the presentation component students have opportunities to critique, discuss and grade the creative works of one another.

Typically, the presentation component of the activity is held at the end of the academic semester. Because this activity has a culminating nature, and is one for all to learn from, the presentation day is open to all faculties and students in the major. The presentations allow students to step back from their situations and view their patient care through the eyes of their peers. Such opportunities can offer students new insights and different perspectives they may not have seen in their own interpretations.

Following each student's presentation, a photograph with the student displaying a visual representation of his/her creative piece is taken. Permission is obtained to incorporate the photograph into a power-point presentation to be posted on the course's homepage. Other snapshots taken throughout the day's presentation events are included in the power-point along with comments extracted from student evaluation forms.

The main aim of developing and posting the power-point show is to provide students positive feedback and keepsake memories. Within 24 hours, the power-point presentation is uploaded on

the course's electronic homepage. Students commonly download the slides and typically share their work with friends and family.

A final gesture for students to share their work beyond just the presentation day is to exhibit their humanistic art forms on campus. The art work is displayed for a few months before graduation. At graduation, students have the opportunity to show their creative pieces to relatives and friends. Also, on this day students are allowed to retrieve their work or donate their work to the health science department.

#### Purpose of Activity

- To provide a forum whereby students gain an appreciation that their peers share similar emotional reactions to clinical situations.
- For students to realize one can express his/her feelings through some creative, humanistic form of self-expression.
- To challenge students to look at all aspects of patient care: physical, psychosocial, emotional, spiritual...etc.
- For students to embrace some element within the fine arts which provides them a medium for self-expression.
- That students realize they can learn from peers, and their peers can be valuable support systems.

#### Current and Future Considerations

1. The assignment was mainly conducted on the undergraduate level; however, graduate and doctoral level students also may benefit by gaining insight into how they deal with clinical stress, as well as, identify a form of self-expression that helps them release emotional strain. For higher level students, reframe the Reflective Project expectations to increase the level of

intellectual challenge. Incorporate higher level educational learning objectives per Bloom's taxonomy.

2. This project can be done in any size group, either online or in an in-person format. For students who participate in semester long, small clinical groups (usually 8 to 10 students/group) assigning this project and having them present in their groups has been a positive experience for both students and faculties. An online format of teaching should not deter the inclusion of this project. For example:

The student's completed plan of care paper component can be posted within the electronic course page for the course faculty member. The course faculty then can open up the paper to an identified peer for reading and critiquing. The two related evaluation rubrics can be completed and returned to faculty electronically. Students can complete the presentation component via digital video postings.

3. Consider incorporating a similar project with students in other healthcare disciplines.
4. Have students share their work with healthcare professionals working on clinical units (e.g., staff in-service) where those patients described in the scenarios received care.
5. Recognize due to the tremendous stress practitioners caring for COVID patients are experiencing, PTSD is predicted to be a likely aftermath. By preparing students with expressive avenues as emotional outlets and equipping them with some form of mental hygiene would be proactive.
6. This activity can be viewed as timeless, because mankind is an emotional and feeling being. Consequently, maintaining a sense of mental well-being will always be an integral part of human care, especially in those who have mentally challenging jobs, such as healthcare providers. Therefore, being timeless, this project or a similar project, addressing the emotional state of caregivers should find a permanent place in the curricula of all healthcare majors.

## The Reflective Project Assignment Sheet

**Directions:** This assignment consists of two sections: Paper and Presentation. Below is a detailed discussion of expectations for each section. Grading rubrics are included for each segment. Use the two grading rubrics: *Reflective Project Paper Grading Rubric* and the *Reflective Project Presentation Grading Rubric*, as guides when developing each portion of the Reflective Project.

Paper due date: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation date: \_\_\_\_\_

The grade for the reflective project assignment will be based on 100 points. Each section (two) is allocated a percent of the hundred points.

Section 1: Paper = \_\_\_\_ points

Section 2: Presentation = \_\_\_\_ points

\*\* On the presentation day, immediately following the last student's presentation, earned points for each of the two sections will be shared with each student.

### **Section One: Paper**

To select the client on which to complete the Reflective Project think of an individual you cared for this semester in the clinical area who left a lasting impression on you. Once you have selected this individual, use the guidelines below to describe this person, highlight the individual's needs, and share your plan of care. Address each of the areas outlined below. Potential points for each component of the paper are listed.

Chief Complaints and Primary Diagnosis/es \_\_\_\_\_ Points

Outline why the client states he/she sought healthcare. What is his/her main complaint/s? What is the medical diagnosis/es recorded by the client's primary physician?

Pathophysiology \_\_\_\_\_ Points

Discuss the pathophysiology of the primary medical diagnosis/es. If other secondary diagnoses are identified, describe any relationships or correlations between the primary and secondary diagnoses. Discuss any signs and symptoms and/or manifestations exhibited by the client that are typical findings of their stated disease or illness. Discuss related diagnostic findings and compare findings with any similar studies done on the identified client. Outline potential complications, recommended medical treatments, and specified medical, nursing and other discipline (e.g., physical therapy) interventions for managing the underlying problem/s.

Theoretical framework \_\_\_\_\_ Points

Which nursing or other interdisciplinary theoretical model best reflects the needs of your identified client and how this illness impacts their life. Explain how the theorist's conceptual model can be used to frame the care needs of the client.

Nursing Diagnosis/es

\_\_\_\_ Points

List and prioritize nursing diagnoses that relate to your selected client. Prioritize nursing diagnoses. Your Reflective Project must be based on one of your cited priority nursing diagnoses.

Plan of Care

\_\_\_\_ Points

Develop a plan of care for your stated primary nursing diagnosis. The care plan should reflect how you plan to assist the client to achieve his/her highest level of wellness. Explain the impact this illness has upon your client both personally and within the context of family. Include a holistic view of the client by addressing physical needs, as well as, other human dimensions such as spiritual, psychosocial, emotional, and intellectual well-being. Support each care intervention selected with cited scientific rationale. Identify anticipated short and long-term goals plus expected outcomes.

Reflective Project Description

\_\_\_\_ Points

Incorporating principles and concepts you have learned in fine arts and/or humanities courses compose a creative expression (e.g., painting, poem, song, collage, quilt, sculpture, photography, literary piece/ reading, dance...) depicting the impact you believe the client's illness has on the client, on his/her family relationships, and on you as a nurse. The theme of the creative expression must relate to one of the priority nursing diagnoses outlined in the client's plan of care.

Explain how the creative expression you plan to develop depicts your client and conveys his/her care needs. Also, explain how you plan to integrate principles from the humanities and/or fine arts into your creative piece. In a short narrative describe your creative expression. Your description must state exactly what your project will be. A statement such as "I will draw a picture" or "write a poem" is too vague. Note: Though a power point presentation may be part of one's presentation, the reflective component cannot consist solely of power point slides outlining pathophysiology and client information. Rather the reflective piece must be some artistic medium (e.g., an original song, poem, collage, sculpture, photography, literary piece, dance, theatrical, instrumental piece...) developed to convey your thoughts related to the client, the client's care needs, and your practice as a nurse. The reflective piece or creative expression must be an original piece that exemplifies the care needs of the client. Describe your creative expression in the paper section of the project. You do not have to share your creative expression with your peers until the assigned presentation day.

Do not duplicate or copy another's artistic work. To do so would infringe on copyright laws and plagiarism. If you are unsure about originality of work, consult with faculties.

References

\_\_\_\_ Points

No less than five references must be cited to support the information in the paper. Three references must come from either research journal articles and/or professional interdisciplinary journals. All references must be no older than five years unless related to theoretical work. References must be cited appropriately within the context of the paper.

APA, Syntax, and Spelling

\_\_\_\_ Points

Includes but not limited to: correct formatting of title page, abstract 100-word maximum, correct in-text citation of authors, correct citation of quotes, use of all references cited on reference page, correct grammatical structure of sentences, correct citation and formatting of reference page, and follows current APA manual.

Paper Submission

Two copies of your paper should be submitted. Do not put your name on your papers, or on the title page. Instead of your name, record the same four-digit number on the title page of each paper. Provide your selected number to the course faculty member. Each paper will be read and graded by a faculty member and by a class peer. Total points received for the paper will be a composite score derived from student and faculty paper critiques. The course faculty member will assign the final number of points earned for the paper.

Peer Paper Review

\_\_\_\_ Points

Each student in the course will be assigned a peer's paper to read, critique, and grade. The name of the paper's author will not appear on the paper. Critiquing and grading must be completed by the prescribed date. Failure to complete the critiquing and grading process will result in no allocation of points for the peer paper review piece. The grading rubric, *Reflective Project Paper Grading Rubric*, will be distributed with each paper. Use this rubric to score the paper and provide positive feedback. Be sure and include recommendations for growth. You may also record comments and suggestions on the peer's paper (hardcopy). Submit peer's paper and completed grading rubric to course faculty before the assigned due date (\_\_\_\_\_).

**Section Two: Presentation****Total Points \_\_\_\_**

Portraying the same client outlined in your plan of care and described in the paper section of the project, share with your peers, faculties and others the creative expression (e.g., collage, photograph, song, poetry...) you developed to convey how the client's illness impacted the client, his/her family, and you as a nurse. Refer to the sheet called *Grading Guidelines for the Reflective Project Presentation* to assist you in developing your presentation and as a guide for how points for the presentation section will be awarded. Grading criteria relate to: description of the client and overview explanation of his/her needs, related nursing diagnosis/es, description of supporting theoretical premises, presentation and explanation of medium used to express the impact of client's illness on the client and family, summarization of how the project integrates with principles of humanities and/or fine arts, description of how the client impacted you as a nurse, quality of the creative expression, and over-all deliver of presentation (e.g., oration characteristics, professionalism).

(Example) **Reflective Project Paper Grading Rubric**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Total possible points: \_\_\_\_\_ **points****Topic****Points**

A. Patient complaint/s & Medical Diagnosis/s	Stated/Not Stated
B. Pathophysiology	____ / ____ <b>points</b>
C. Related Theoretical Model	____ / ____ <b>points</b>
D. Nursing (or Discipline) stated Diagnoses	____ / ____ <b>points</b>
E. Plan of Care	____ / ____ <b>points</b>
F. Reflective Project Description	____ / ____ <b>points</b>
G. References (at least five & three from research/professional journals, not greater than five years old, unless related to theory component)	____ / ____ <b>points</b>
H. APA, Syntax, and Spelling (Includes abstract of $\leq$ 100 words, work reflects use of current APA manual)	____ / ____ <b>points</b>
Subtotal:	____ / ____ <b>points</b>

**Comments:**


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**Total Reflective Project Paper Points**\_\_\_\_ / 100/ **points**

Faculty Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

(Example) **Reflective Project Presentation Grading Rubric**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Total possible points: \_\_\_\_ **points**

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Provided description of the client on which the project is based.   | ____ / ____ <b>points</b> |
| 2. Included diagnosis/s on which the presentation is based.  | ____ / ____ <b>points</b> |
| 3. Explained the media chosen to creatively express the impact of the client's illness on him/herself and family life. | ____ / ____ <b>points</b> |
| 4. Linked project with humanities and/or fine arts principles  | ____ / ____ <b>points</b> |
| 5. Included brief summary of how client impacted him/her as a practitioner   | ____ / ____ <b>points</b> |
| 6. Utilized presentation format/s besides reading from written material.   | ____ / ____ <b>points</b> |
| 7. Presentation had depth, originality, and reflected effort put into design and development.                          | ____ / ____ <b>points</b> |

Total Points \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ **points**

Faculty Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Feedback/ Participant Responses/Evaluation

The following comments, all made by students, truly reflect an over-the-top experience which inspires, enlightens, and allows students to meet course outcomes. This project has been taught many times over the years. Initially there are fears related to such concerns as public speaking, worries of lacking a creative side, and not being able to figure out the “right” medium to convey their stories. Typically, there are also a few students who initially are annoyed they are being asked to address the “softer” side of nursing, and not the clinical high-tech components.

However, despite such initial trepidations, students come to value the experience.

Student Comments: When asked what they learned from the experience...

- *I would like to be more creative again. I miss my self. I feel like I sometimes lose my identity while I am so caught up in school. This was a wonderful opportunity to share experiences and hear interesting patients and care giving opinions. I enjoyed hearing from my peers very much.*
- *I am a great nurse and I like children more than I thought I did. They (peers) taught me that nursing is more than just medicine and vital signs. It is about a relationship.*

- *I am much more creative, thoughtful, in depth and a critical thinker than I give myself credit for.*
- *I learned about my views of the dying process. My peers truly depicted empathy and how to advocate and put themselves in their clients' shoes.*
- *Everyone has different perceptions; some people had the same client but portrayed them in different ways.*
- *Today was a great display of the heart of nursing.*
- *The most memorable thing I learned was that I, as well as my peers in nursing school are so blessed! I learned that I was not the only student who was emotionally touched by patients.*
- *How I want to base my care when I become a practicing nurse: caring, thoughtful, creative, accommodating...*
- *This project was a great way to express experiences, thoughts, and feelings that aren't easily projected through words.*
- *I've learned that certain experiences, even daily things, have an influence on my life and life can be deep and should be very meaningful, rather than just doing something. The most memorable thing from today was to really reflect on my life and know even the little things can make a difference.*
- *I found working on this project therapeutic. It was great to enjoy working on a project to relieve some stress.*
- *I am more aware of holistic nursing care than I previously thought.*
- *It turned out to be a fun, interesting, impactful experience that actually brought our class & professors together!*
- *I didn't realize my class was so artistic. I thought if individuals used more of the scientific side of the brain, they wouldn't be creative.*
- *We got to see a side of our peers that we have never seen before. The presentation day was relaxed and not stressful. We all have similar experiences even though we are in different clinical groups.*
- *Most of my peers had very good ideas and were able to use neat ways to express their patients, i.e., gingerbread house, making a video, sculpture, playing guitar...*
- *The importance of developing the arts into life experiences.*
- *Deep down I have a tiny bit of creativity. Lots of talent, and that people have different perception of the same situation.*
- *Getting to see my classmates' creative side. Being with each other in a more relaxed environment while still learning from each other.*

Seeing other fellow faculty members incorporating similar projects in their courses is another form of feedback attesting to the valuable of this assignment. Also, hearing alumnus are sharing with their professional colleagues how positively this student project impacted them is another

example of indirect positive feedback. Once while presenting the Reflective Project concept at a national conference a fellow attendee, and director of a distinguished nursing program, shared she had met a number of alumni from our program who boosted how memorable the Reflective Project experience was and how much they felt they gained from the experience. Lastly, over the years the author has received a number of positive accolades from other academic colleagues (in and out of the nursing discipline) acknowledging the genuine value of the assignment and how pleased they are the arts are not being lost to the technical side of healthcare.