

Appendix D: Extensive Nursing Assessment/Mental Status Questions

The Nurse-Client Interview: Sample General Questions

Presenting Problem

- Tell me the reason you are here (in treatment).

Present Illness

- When did you first notice the problem?
- What changes have you noticed in yourself?
- What do you think is causing the problem?
- Have you had any troubling feelings or thoughts?

Family History

- How would you describe your relationship with your parents?
- Did either of your parents have emotional or mental problems?
- Were either of your parents treated by a psychiatrist or therapist?
- Did their treatment include medication or electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)?
- Were they helped by their treatment?

Childhood/Pre-morbid History

- How did you get along with your family and friends?
- How would you describe yourself as a child?

Medical History

- Do you have any serious medical problems?
- How have they affected your current problem?

Psychosocial /Psychiatric History

- Have you ever been treated for an emotional or psychiatric problem? Have you been diagnosed with a mental illness?
- Have you ever been a patient in a psychiatric hospital?
- Have you ever taken prescribed medications for an emotional problem or mental illness? Did you ever have ECT?
- If so, did the medications or ECT help your symptoms/problem?
- How frequently do your symptoms occur? (About every 6 months? Once a year? Every 5 years? First episode?)
- How long are you generally able to function well in between onset of symptoms? (Weeks? Months? Years?)
- What do you feel, if anything, may have contributed to your symptoms? (Nothing? Stopped taking medications? Began using alcohol? Street drugs?)

Education

- How did you do in school?
- How did you feel about school?

Legal

- Have you ever been in trouble with the law?

Marital History

- How do you feel about your marriage? (If client is married.) How would you describe your relationship with your children? (If client has children.)
- What kinds of things do you do as a family?

Social History

- Tell me about your friends, your social activities.
- How would you describe your relationship with your friends?

Insight

- Do you consider yourself different now from the way you were before your problem began? In what way?
- Do you think you have an emotional problem or mental illness?
- Do you think you need help for your problem?
- What are your goals for yourself?

Value-Belief System (Including Spiritual)

- What kinds of things give you comfort and peace of mind?
- Will those things be helpful to you now?

Recent Stressors/Losses

- Have you had any recent stressors or losses in your life?
- What are your relationships like?
- How do you get along with people at work?

Adapted from:

Fortinash, K. M. & Holoday-Worret, P. A. (1999). *Psychiatric nursing care plans*. (3 ed.), St. Louis: Mosby.

Fortinash, K. M. (1990). Assessment of Mental States. In L. Malasanos, V. Bakauskas & K. Stoltenberg-Allen (Eds.), *Health Assessment* (4 ed.), St. Louis: Mosby.

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Mental Status Examination

Appearance

- Dress, grooming, hygiene, cosmetics, apparent age, posture, facial expression

Behaviour/Activity

- Hypoactivity or hyperactivity, rigid, relaxed, restless or agitated motor movements, gait and coordination, facial grimacing, gestures, mannerisms, passive, combative, bizarre

Attitude

- Interactions with the interviewer: cooperative, resistive, friendly, hostile, ingratiating

Speech

- Quantity: poverty of speech, poverty of content, voluminous
- Quality: articulate, congruent, monotonous, talkative, repetitious, spontaneous, circumlocutory, confabulations, tangential, pressured, stereotypic
- Rate: slowed, rapid

Mood and Affect

- Mood (intensity, depth, duration): sad, fearful, depressed, angry, anxious, ambivalent, happy, ecstatic, grandiose
- Affect (intensity, depth, duration): appropriate, apathetic, constricted, blunted, flat, labile, euphoric, bizarre

Perceptions

- Hallucinations, illusions, depersonalization, de-realization, distortions

Thoughts

- Form and content: logical versus illogical, loose associations, flight of ideas, autistic, blocking, broadcasting, neologisms, word salad, obsessions, ruminations, delusions, abstract versus concrete

Sensorium/Cognition

- Levels of consciousness, orientation, attention span, recent and remote memory, concentration, ability to comprehend and process information, intelligence

Judgment

- Ability to assess and evaluate situations, make rational decisions, understand consequences of behaviour, and take responsibility for actions

Insight

- Ability to perceive and understand the cause and nature of own and other's situations

Reliability

- Interviewer's impression that individual reported information accurately and completely

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