

A SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED NURSING THEORY

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To the memory of my father
Benjamin D. Braelow

Preface

This text provides a summary of nursing theory and major health problems in the United States. The book does not provide all the information a student needs to study an area in depth but is intended to initiate an understanding of interrelationships between areas. It is designed to help eliminate the separateness and fragmentation created by the artificial collection of content into specialty areas, e.g., pediatrics, obstetrics, psychiatry. It is hoped that this text will assist the student in identifying similarities and differences in the care of people of all ages. From this point, the student will begin to develop nursing diagnoses and plans of care.

Section 1 of this text describes the human life cycle, the developmental tasks required of a person during each stage of his life, and how the successful completion of these tasks prepares him for coping with future demands.

Section 2 deals with stress, that is, with situations that upset the psychological and physiological equilibrium of the individual, and with how the successful or unsuccessful completion of past developmental tasks determines how the person deals with stress.

Section 3 discusses in detail some of the major health problems in the United States. Emphasis is placed on the relationship of these disease states to the external environment and on the interrelationships of the body organs during sickness.

It is hoped that this brief book will be read first in its entirety, then by specific section; and that it will introduce the reader to the beauty of the interrelationship of mind, body, and environment.

Sandra B. Fielo

Introduction

Man and His Environment: A Reciprocal Concept

The traditional approach to the study of the body is to look at each of the organ systems separately. For instance, first the system of bones is studied, then the system of muscles, and so on. Unfortunately, such an approach is artificial and implies the autonomy of separate units. In reality, all parts of the body are interrelated. A human being is more than the sum of separately functioning parts. An isolated system of the body is no more representative of the whole person than separate parts of a television set represent the identity of the operating unit. And not only is each body part related to every other part, but the human organism functions interdependently with the social and physical environment as well. Man and environment are exquisitely balanced. Each affects and is affected by the other; change is mutual. No one is exempt from the impact of environmental conditions. "The rhythms of life are inextricably woven into the rhythms of the universe."¹

In order to function in the roles of manager, teacher, technician, counselor, surrogate parent, and socializing agent, the nurse needs to understand the interactions of the human organism with its social and physical environment, how these interactions produce so-called normal functioning of the organism, and how they cause pathological responses in it. The nurse also needs to know how a malfunction of part of the organism causes malfunction of other parts. The sections that follow are intended to give the nursing student this understanding.

¹M. E. Rogers, *An Introduction to the Theoretical Basis of Nursing*. F. A. Davis Company, Philadelphia, 1970, p. 100.

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Toward Mental Health

BASIC NEEDS

Human beings share with other animals the biologic needs for food, water, oxygen, sleep, excretion, and temperature regulation. They have psychologic needs for safety, protection, security; for belonging, achievement, affection, respect, status, and self-fulfillment; and for sexual expression. They need to be free from fear and intense feelings of guilt. These are the basic needs. Less studied, but apparently important, are the so-called higher needs for esthetic and cognitive expression. The higher needs appear later in evolution; satisfaction of them appears to be less urgent but nonetheless produces strong feelings of self-worth and pleasure.

If the basic needs are met, fulfillment of the higher ones becomes possible. But if the basic needs are not gratified, the drive to satisfy them becomes so dominant that the individual cannot devote himself to fulfillment of the higher ones. For example, if the needs for food or for a close friendship devoid of excessive anxiety are unmet, the person's energy will be directed toward satis-

faction of these basic requirements rather than toward the higher needs such as intellectual achievement. And if deprivation of food or of an interpersonal relationship is extreme, the person may even lose the ability to think rationally. Fortunately, when a need customarily has been satisfied, deprivation is more easily tolerated. In addition, gratification of one need sometimes partially satisfies another need. For example, food may satisfy hunger as well as the desire for comfort and love.

Most people are partially satisfied and partially unsatisfied all of the time. The individual who is living at a higher needs level is squandering less energy trying to satisfy basic needs; his body is therefore functioning more efficiently and he is less disease-prone. Excessive anxiety interferes with meeting needs, and frustration of basic psychologic needs tends to show itself in four types of behavior: aggression, submission, withdrawal, and psychosomatic symptoms.

Personality results from the quality of an individual's relationships with people from the time he is born until the day he dies. In other words, how a person behaves is determined by the sum of all his past experiences. A personality is never totally "set"; it continues to change throughout life.

If basic needs are satisfied by parents who are relatively free of persistent anxiety and who can give lovingly to the infant, he begins to perceive the world as being a comfortable place. He also begins to think of himself as a person of worth. However, the infant is dependent on his parents for food, shelter, and tenderness. He cannot survive without their care. He perceives that, if he pleases his parents, they will continue to take care of him, but if he displeases them, they might stop caring and his very survival will be threatened. Inevitably, though, some of his behavior causes his parents to become intensely anxious or angry. If a parent repeatedly disapproves of or becomes anxious about a particular kind of behavior, the infant may push the unpleasant memory and the need to behave in the disapproved way out of awareness. This is repression. The repressed behavior represents unsatisfied needs which are repudiated in return for feelings of security and status. Consider the following example: Some parents find it inconceivable that their child should express anger toward them. Whenever the child becomes angry at them, they punish him or refuse him love, food, or tenderness. The child becomes anxious because his needs for physical care, tenderness, and approval are not being met. He learns to "forget" his need to be angry in order to have his other needs fulfilled. Later on in life, whenever a situation provokes his anger, he will reexperience all his old anxieties that he will in some way be abandoned or hurt if he shows anger.

On the other hand, a child will learn to express his anger in socially acceptable ways if his mother allows him to express himself with words but

disciplines him if he angrily takes toys away from a playmate or bites him. The anger is not repressed in this case, but is controlled.

Personality results from experiences with parents and with other important people in the child's life. At each stage of development more people are added to the child's backlog of important "others" who can reaffirm his worth as an individual, such as friends with whom he can share confidences or teachers.

The *self-system* is an elaborate structure designed to protect the individual from intense anxiety by maintaining security and status needs. The self-system accomplishes this by allowing the person to be aware of the needs to behave in ways that have received at least some approval from people who were important to him during childhood. It pushes out of awareness the need to behave in ways that have received either no affirmation or downright disapproval.

The self-system originates in the child's relationships with his parents during his early years. He learns to behave in accordance with their conceptions of him and in accordance with behaviors which are acceptable to them. As the child grows, the self-system continues to weed out some behaviors and to allow others to flourish according to experiences which become significant to him and to his parents. These experiences differ among people. The self-system provides a constant reminder to the child that he cannot explore those areas which were inconceivable to his parents. If these repressed experiences break through to awareness in adult life, all of the old anxiety is remembered and the adult experiences terror. Each person's self-system determines his unique behavior; his way of interacting with people and coping with situations.

Personality is also influenced by the satisfactory achievement of developmental tasks that arise throughout life. These are discussed on pages 9-36.

ANXIETY

Anxiety is an all-pervasive energy that causes a vague sense of uneasiness. In its severe forms it can cause personality disintegration. Fear is aroused by a concrete, immediate danger, such as when a car goes out of control. Anxiety is a response to unknown danger, and it expresses itself as a gnawing feeling that something is going to go wrong. Anxiety results from threats to the biologic integrity of the individual or from threats to the person's self-system. For example, a person who has just suffered a heart attack will be anxious about what is going to happen to him: Will he die, be permanently disabled, lose his job? This person feels that his biologic well-being is threatened. Another person will feel anxiety over the possibility of a blow to the needs for prestige of his self-system: "If I make a mistake in the hospital, that teacher,

doctor, nurse, peer will think I'm stupid." Anxiety causes the adrenal medulla (the inner part of the glands that lie above the kidneys) to pour out their hormone to enable the individual to adapt to the stress. When this happens, breathing becomes rapid and more shallow, the pulse accelerates, the blood pressure rises, and flushing or pallor occurs. Tremor, nausea, vomiting, and high blood sugar may develop. The individual may run to the bathroom with diarrhea, or he may have to urinate frequently. His hands become cold and clammy. Mild anxiety sharpens perception. However, moderate or severe anxiety causes the perceptual field to be narrowed and distorted; focus is limited to the anxiety-causing area, and all other areas are out of awareness. This is called *selective inattention*. If severe anxiety progresses to the panic level, the detail selected to focus upon is blown up disproportionately. The person may repress the material to maintain the integrity of his self-system; or the anxiety may become so overwhelming that there is personality disintegration.

Relief from anxiety is gained through overt or covert acting-out behavior, for example, crying, shouting, fighting, resentment, or hostility. Relief from anxiety also may be gained through somatizing, for example, by internalizing the anxiety and developing a psychosomatic disorder such as high blood pressure. Or relief may be attained by using the anxiety in the service of learning until a goal is reached, for example, by directing the energy released by the anxiety toward cramming for an examination.

Anxiety is communicated interpersonally. It is "contagious." If one person is anxious, he will spread it to others. Anxiety is best relieved interpersonally. All the punching bags in a gym are not significant in relieving anxiety as one empathic human being pulling up a chair and saying, "I'm with you."

Conflict

When a person is both attracted toward and repelled by a goal, he is said to be in conflict. He does and he does not want to reach the goal. This is called an *approach-avoidance* scheme. As a result, the person can neither move toward the goal nor give it up entirely. For example, a person may wish to have sexual intercourse, but he may also feel that intercourse is dirty and wish to avoid it. Thus, the approach-avoidance sequence appears. The approach gradient seems to be stronger when the person is at a distance from the goal; as he gets closer to it, the avoidance gradient gets stronger. Other examples of conflict-causing situations include the desire to achieve versus the fear of failure; the desire for independence versus the need for dependence; the desire to express hostility versus the need for social approval. In a conflict situation the barrier to the goal becomes the source of frustration, and the frustration causes anxiety. Conflict is, thus, an experience that increases tension.