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Distractions for dialogue

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In this presentation, I describe and demonstrate an activity that clinical nursing instructors can easily use during post conferences to encourage reflection, inspire, refresh and support nursing students. This activity is also comforting for students who are distressed and is congruent with the middle range theory of comfort. The activity builds on the role of the unconscious mind, the default network and the concept of distraction. Researchers have found that creative and unique thoughts or ideas occur more often to people who are engaged in a distracting activity than to people who are actively engaged in focused, deliberative and conscious efforts to generate original opinions or ideas. Additionally, those who are pressed to think in situ by someone else (for example by an instructor) will generate only the most readily accessible ideas and perform less creatively than those who are not as focused on the problem at hand. The goal of a distracting activity during post conference is to “occupy conscious attention” to allow more divergent and less accessible ideas to surface. These ideas are associated with the default network; regions in the brain that are most active when the brain is allowed to rest and wander. Distracting activities that are enjoyable, not too demanding and can be sustained for more than just a few minutes work better for idea generation and reflection than demanding, unpleasant distracting tasks that cannot be tolerated for more than a few minutes.

Biography

Elizabeth Andersen is an Assistant Professor in the School of Nursing, Faculty of Health and Social Development, University of British Columbia. Her program of research has two streams. The first is focused on exploring specific components of nursing home cultural change models and their effects on residents, families and paid caregivers. The second is education particularly undergraduate nursing education, student readiness and acculturation to practice. She is especially interested in the working conditions and expanding roles of more marginalized nursing home employees (care aides).

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