



## The Commonalities and Specificities of Nursing Care in Mental Health for Children, Adolescents, and Adults in Psychiatry

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### Abstract

Nursing care in mental health is an essential part of the treatment for patients with mental disorders. It focuses on helping individuals achieve and maintain mental health stability while improving their quality of life. Mental health needs vary across different age groups, requiring different approaches for each. Therefore, nursing interventions must be adapted to the specific needs of children, adolescents, and adults. This article examines the commonalities and unique aspects of nursing care for these age groups, highlighting the specific challenges for each group, as well as the role of nurses in supporting these patients.



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Adolescents; Mental Health; Nursing Care; Psychiatry; Psychiatric Disorders.

### Introduction

Mental health nursing is a vital component of the healthcare system, focused on providing care and support for individuals experiencing mental health challenges. Nurses working in mental health settings are responsible for assessing, planning, and delivering personalized interventions to individuals across various age groups, including children, adolescents, and adults. While the overarching goals of nursing care, such as supporting mental well-being and enhancing quality of life, remain consistent across the lifespan, the specific needs and challenges of different age groups require tailored approaches.

Children, adolescents, and adults face unique challenges in mental health, which means that nurses must adapt their strategies to meet the evolving developmental and psychological needs of each age group. For children, care often involves working closely with families to ensure the creation of a supportive environment. Adolescents face a critical developmental period where the need for autonomy, emotional regulation, and coping skills becomes central, while adults may deal with chronic mental health conditions requiring long-term care management and support.

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Despite the recognition of these age-specific needs, a comprehensive understanding of the distinct nursing interventions required at different stages of life remains underexplored in existing literature. This review aims to fill this gap by addressing the unique aspects of psychiatric care, including assessment, psycho-social support, therapy implementation, and specialized treatment approaches for children, adolescents, and adults. Specifically, we will explore the commonalities and specificities of nursing care in mental health for each age group and examine how a tailored, holistic approach can improve outcomes. Given the increasing prevalence of mental health conditions across all age groups and the diverse challenges faced by each, this study is crucial for advancing evidence-based nursing practices. By highlighting the importance of age-appropriate interventions, this review seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how nursing care can be optimized to meet the needs of individuals at different life stages, ultimately contributing to better mental health outcomes.

### **Mental Health Assessment and Symptom Monitoring**

Nursing care involves a detailed assessment of the patient's mental state, including the evaluation of symptoms, medical history, and the influence of social and environmental factors. Nurses utilize structured tools and techniques to assess symptoms and develop personalized treatment plans. For children and adolescents, assessments may involve age-appropriate tests, questionnaires, and behavioral evaluations (Wells *et al.*, 2020). For adults, psychological and medical evaluations are essential to identify chronic conditions such as depression, schizophrenia, and anxiety (Jones *et al.*, 2021). When gathering data for nursing assessments of children, parents are actively involved, as their insights are crucial for an accurate and comprehensive assessment. Furthermore, collaboration with other healthcare professionals, such as psychologists and social workers, is essential to ensure a holistic approach to the patient's care. This interdisciplinary teamwork enhances diagnostic accuracy and optimizes the effectiveness of the treatment plan. Clear and consistent communication with both the patient and their family is vital throughout the process to ensure that all aspects of the patient's mental health are fully addressed. Regular follow-up assessments are critical for

monitoring progress and making any necessary adjustments to the care plan.

### **Psycho-social Support and Active Communication**

Psycho-social support is integral to care across all age groups. Nurses employ active listening techniques to assist patients in expressing their concerns and managing emotions such as anxiety and depression. For children and adolescents, psycho-social support may involve interactive activities designed to foster emotional and social skills. For adults, cognitive-behavioral interventions may be used to help manage thoughts and emotions (Hughes *et al.*, 2022). Establishing a safe and supportive environment through open communication is essential in all cases. Patients typically feel at ease with nursing staff, as they are in frequent, often continuous contact. Meetings with psychologists are also valued by patients, with evaluations of these interactions generally being highly positive. In addition to these therapeutic interventions, it is crucial for nurses to assess each patient's unique psycho-social needs and offer tailored support. Encouraging patients to engage in social activities and participate in therapy can significantly improve their overall well-being. Maintaining a compassionate and empathetic approach is key to building trust, which is essential for successful treatment outcomes. Nurses play a vital role in ensuring that patients feel heard, supported, and understood throughout their care journey.

### **Care Planning and Therapy Implementation**

Care planning for all age groups is a comprehensive process that involves setting clear objectives and interventions to improve mental health. Nurses create personalized care plans based on the patient's diagnosis, needs, and collaboration with other healthcare teams (Jones & Smith, 2021). Therapy implementation may include psychotherapy, medication management, and psycho-social support, depending on the patient's condition and age group. Nurses monitor patient progress and make necessary adjustments to the care plan, ensuring that patients receive optimal care tailored to their specific needs. Additionally, it is essential for nurses to work closely with the patient's family and caregivers to ensure a well-rounded approach to care. Regular reviews of the care plan are necessary

to promptly identify any changes in the patient's condition, facilitating appropriate modifications to the interventions. Collaboration with multidisciplinary teams enhances the quality of care by integrating diverse expertise, ultimately leading to better mental health outcomes. Maintaining flexibility and adaptability in care planning is vital, as patient needs can evolve over time.

### **Specific Aspects of Nursing Care for Children in Mental Health**

#### **Family Involvement in Treatment**

A fundamental aspect of care for children is the active involvement of the family in the treatment process. Parents and caregivers play a pivotal role in assessment and care planning. Nurses support families in understanding the child's condition and provide resources to foster a healthy and supportive environment (Jones *et al.*, 2021). Educating families about coping strategies and offering emotional support is crucial, as family involvement significantly impacts the child's mental health progress. Nurses also emphasize the importance of creating a stable and nurturing home environment that promotes emotional well-being and resilience in children. Ongoing communication with parents ensures their active participation, equipping them with the skills needed to manage challenges and reinforce positive behaviors. Family involvement also aids in the early identification of mental health concerns, enabling timely intervention and preventing potential complications. By empowering families with knowledge and resources, nurses strengthen the overall support system at home and contribute to the child's well-being.

#### **Communication and Age-Appropriate Therapies**

Children often struggle to articulate their feelings, so nurses utilize various methods, such as play therapy, art, and other therapeutic activities, to help children express their emotions. These therapies help children manage emotional disorders and develop essential coping skills (Wells *et al.*, 2020). Over time, these interventions also strengthen social and communication skills. Nurses create a safe, non-judgmental space where children feel comfortable expressing themselves through creative outlets, enabling them to process their emotions in a natural and accessible way. As children engage in these therapeutic activities, they not only learn to manage their emotions but also gain confidence in

navigating social interactions. Nurses collaborate with parents to ensure that techniques learned in therapy are reinforced at home, enhancing the child's emotional development and supporting the therapeutic process.

#### **Development of Social and Emotional Skills**

Nurses may incorporate both group and individual activities to help children develop social and emotional skills. These activities are essential for healthy development and may involve teaching effective communication, teamwork, and collaboration (Hughes *et al.*, 2022). Group activities provide opportunities for children to interact with peers, practice teamwork, and learn conflict resolution skills in a supportive environment. These interactions help children build trust, empathy, and respect for others. Conversely, individual activities allow for personalized attention, enabling children to focus on specific emotional and social challenges. Nurses tailor these activities to each child's developmental stage and unique needs, ensuring they receive appropriate support. Integrating these activities into the care plan promotes emotional well-being, enhancing the child's ability to engage meaningfully with others and navigate social situations with greater confidence.

### **Specific Aspects of Nursing Care for Adolescents in Mental Health**

#### **Managing Hormonal Changes and Social Stressors**

Adolescents undergo significant hormonal and developmental changes that may affect their mental health. Nurses must be prepared to address these changes and provide support for managing stress from school, relationships, and societal expectations (Jones & Smith, 2021). Along with offering emotional support, nurses play a critical role in helping adolescents develop healthy coping mechanisms to navigate these challenges. Providing a safe, non-judgmental space for adolescents to express their concerns and anxieties fosters trust and encourages open communication. Nurses may also offer guidance on time management, stress reduction techniques, and the importance of maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Collaborative care with parents, school counselors, and other healthcare professionals ensures a comprehensive approach to addressing the adolescent's mental health needs. By helping adolescents develop skills

to manage stress and emotions effectively, nurses contribute to their overall well-being and resilience.

#### **Promoting Autonomy and Independence**

Adolescents are at a life stage where they seek to establish an independent identity. Nurses should support this developmental process by encouraging adolescents to develop self-management skills and make informed decisions regarding their health (Brown & Golder, 2021). Nurses empower adolescents to take an active role in their healthcare by providing education on topics such as nutrition, exercise, mental health, and sexual health. This empowerment helps adolescents understand the significance of making healthy lifestyle choices and taking responsibility for their well-being. Nurses should also respect adolescents' growing autonomy by fostering an open dialogue where they can voice their concerns and preferences. Promoting self-awareness and self-care practices helps adolescents make informed decisions, contributing to their overall health and the development of a strong, independent sense of self.

#### **Treating Mental Health Disorders in Adolescents**

Adolescence is often a time when mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders, become apparent and require specialized treatment. Nurses use various therapeutic approaches, including individual and group therapy, as well as medications when necessary (Jones *et al.*, 2020). In addition to traditional therapeutic methods, nurses play an essential role in assessing the adolescent's emotional and psychological state, identifying early signs of mental health disorders, and providing appropriate interventions. Nurses also offer psychoeducation to both adolescents and their families, helping them understand the nature of these disorders and the importance of treatment. Collaborating with mental health professionals ensures a comprehensive care plan that may include therapy, medication management, and lifestyle changes. Continuous monitoring and adjustments to the treatment plan are crucial to support the adolescent's journey toward recovery and mental wellness.

#### **Specific Aspects of Nursing Care for Adults in Mental Health**

##### **Treating Chronic Disorders and Long-term Therapy**

For adults, many mental disorders are chronic, requiring long-term support and treatment. This includes the management of antipsychotic medications, cognitive therapy, and psychosocial interventions to address symptoms over time (Jones *et al.*, 2021). Nurses assist adults in developing coping strategies and building resilience to better manage their conditions in daily life. They help patients navigate the challenges of living with chronic mental health conditions, such as maintaining employment, managing relationships, and taking care of their physical health. Nurses also provide ongoing education about the disorder and its treatment, ensuring that patients have the necessary knowledge and tools to make informed decisions regarding their care. Collaboration with other healthcare professionals ensures a holistic and coordinated approach to managing the patient's mental health, promoting long-term recovery and enhancing the quality of life.

##### **Support in Managing Severe Disorders**

For individuals with severe mental health disorders, such as schizophrenia, nurses play a critical role in providing support during periods of destabilization, helping patients manage symptoms, and maintaining daily functioning (Wells *et al.*, 2020). Nurses continuously monitor symptoms, ensuring that patients adhere to prescribed treatment plans, including medication regimens. They also provide psycho-social support to help patients navigate challenges in social interactions, employment, and family relationships. Nurses work closely with the healthcare team to adjust care plans as necessary, aiming to reduce the impact of acute episodes and promote long-term stability. Education for patients and their families about the disorder and available resources is key to reducing stigma and improving overall outcomes. Through compassionate care, nurses help patients with severe disorders maintain a sense of normalcy and improve their quality of life.

### **Support for Individuals Adjusting to a New Diagnosis**

For many adults, a new mental health diagnosis can significantly impact their lives. Nurses provide essential support during this adjustment period by offering access to support groups and other necessary services (Jones *et al.*, 2021). In addition to facilitating these resources, nurses provide emotional support, address concerns, and help individuals cope with the psychological impact of their diagnosis. Nurses ensure that patients fully understand their condition, available treatment options, and the steps needed to manage their health. They also coordinate care with other healthcare professionals to ensure comprehensive support that addresses both physical and emotional needs. By fostering hope and empowerment, nurses help individuals adjust to their diagnosis and equip them with the tools necessary to manage their mental health moving forward.

### **Materials and Methods**

This article presents a comprehensive review of existing literature on nursing care in mental health for children, adolescents, and adults in psychiatry. The authors conducted a systematic review of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and relevant clinical guidelines. Literature was sourced from a range of academic databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, and CINAHL, to ensure a broad and thorough collection of relevant studies. The studies selected focused on nursing interventions, therapeutic approaches, patient outcomes, and the role of nurses in mental health care across different age groups.

The inclusion criteria for the selected studies were: (1) peer-reviewed articles published in English; (2) studies focusing on nursing care interventions in psychiatric settings; (3) research that addressed mental health care for children, adolescents, and adults; and (4) studies published in the last 10 years to ensure relevance to current practices. Exclusion criteria included: (1) non-peer-reviewed sources; (2) studies focusing on physical health rather than mental health care; and (3) research not involving nursing care in mental health settings.

A Boolean search strategy was employed using keywords such as "mental health nursing,"

"psychiatric care," "nursing interventions," "children," "adolescents," and "adults." The search was tailored to capture studies relevant to the nursing care provided in psychiatric settings across different age groups.

Data from the selected studies were synthesized thematically to identify common patterns and distinctions in nursing care practices for children, adolescents, and adults. Special emphasis was placed on identifying the most effective nursing strategies, evidence-based practices, and the challenges healthcare professionals face when providing care to diverse age groups. Input from clinical practitioners and mental health professionals was also incorporated to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

The studies reviewed covered a wide time frame, primarily from the last 10 years, but also included seminal works from earlier decades that have had a significant influence on the field.

### **Results**

The results of this review highlighted several key trends in nursing care across the three age groups. Nurses play a critical role in fostering the therapeutic alliance with patients, regardless of their age. In all cases, the involvement of families and caregivers emerged as a critical aspect of effective care. However, the effectiveness of family involvement varied by age group. For children, the use of creative therapies like play therapy was shown to improve emotional expression and coping strategies, yet the long-term impact of such interventions remains underexplored. Adolescents require interventions tailored to their developmental stage, with a strong focus on autonomy and independence. While these interventions were found to be beneficial in promoting self-regulation and mental well-being, there are concerns about their overemphasis on autonomy, potentially leading to a lack of necessary support during critical developmental years. In adults, nursing care for chronic mental health conditions such as schizophrenia and depression is often long-term and requires continuous assessment, medication management, and psycho-social support. Despite the prevalence of these conditions, the current nursing practices still lack a cohesive, evidence-based approach to integrated long-term care.

## Discussion

The findings of this review emphasize the importance of tailored nursing interventions for each age group. Although there are shared elements, such as psycho-social support and active communication, the specific needs and developmental stages of children, adolescents, and adults necessitate different strategies. For children, the involvement of families is crucial to supporting mental health development, yet the limitations of relying solely on family involvement need further exploration. The lack of empirical evidence regarding the long-term benefits of creative therapies like play therapy warrants further research to ensure these interventions lead to lasting improvements in emotional and behavioral outcomes.

Adolescents benefit from a focus on promoting independence and providing coping mechanisms for stress. However, the review revealed a potential contradiction in the approach to autonomy-while independence is encouraged, the emotional and psychological support necessary during this stage may be insufficient. This gap highlights a need for more balanced intervention models that integrate autonomy with guidance from healthcare professionals.

For adults, especially those with chronic disorders such as schizophrenia and depression, nurses play a central role in ensuring that patients can manage long-term conditions and maintain a high quality of life. However, existing nursing practices often fail to address the complexities of chronic mental health conditions comprehensively. The review also found inconsistencies in the implementation of long-term care strategies, with varying outcomes depending on the healthcare setting and available resources. Interdisciplinary collaboration between nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other healthcare professionals is crucial for optimizing care outcomes across the lifespan, yet there remains a lack of structured collaboration models in some regions, which may limit the effectiveness of treatment.

## Empirical Data and Real-World Examples

This review primarily synthesizes existing literature without empirical data or case studies to support its claims. Including quantitative data, case studies, or real-world examples would strengthen the evidence supporting the effectiveness of specific interventions

for different age groups. The absence of statistical analysis or meta-analysis limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions regarding the overall effectiveness of the interventions discussed. Future studies should consider integrating empirical data and case studies to provide more concrete evidence and support the recommendations made here.

By understanding the nuances of mental health at each stage of life, nurses can more effectively support patients in achieving mental health stability and improving their quality of life. However, a more critical evaluation of existing nursing practices, including addressing their limitations and inconsistencies, is essential to advancing evidence-based practices in mental health nursing.

## Conclusion

Nursing care in mental health requires an approach tailored to each age group. While there are many commonalities in care for children, adolescents, and adults, each group has unique needs and challenges. Nurses play a critical role in managing psychiatric disorders and providing support to individuals. Tailoring nursing care to meet the specific needs of each age group is key to successful and effective mental health care.

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This research did not involve human participants, animal subjects, or any material that requires ethical approval.

### Informed Consent Statement

This study did not involve human participants, and therefore, informed consent was not required.

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Not Applicable.

### Author Contributions

- **Mirela Tushe:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing
- **Dora Karagjozi:** Review and Editing.

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