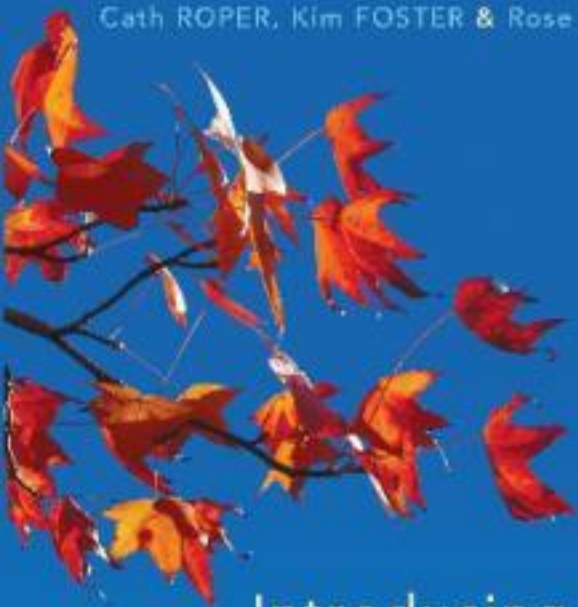


Brenda HAPPELL, Leanne COWIN,
Cath ROPER, Kim FOSTER & Rose McMASTER



Introducing
**mental health
nursing**

A CONSUMER-ORIENTED APPROACH

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INTRODUCING MENTAL HEALTH NURSING

A CONSUMER-ORIENTED APPROACH

**BRENDA HAPPELL, LEANNE COWIN, CATH ROPER,
KIM FOSTER AND ROSE MCMASTER**


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CONTENTS

<i>Figures and tables</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>ix</i>
Part I Background and context for mental health nursing	1
1 Introduction	3
2 Conceptual frameworks	28
3 Mental health practice settings	53
4 Legal, ethical and professional issues in mental health nursing	73
Part II Mental health nursing roles and practice	99
5 Mental health and illness assessment	101
6 Nursing care in mental health	127
7 A safe environment	158
Part III Defining, understanding and treating mental health problems	185
8 Diagnosing mental illness	187
9 Symptomatology in mental health	213
10 Physical treatments in mental health care	242
11 Treatments in mental health: other therapies	264
12 Social determinants and issues in mental health	292
Part IV Practice settings in mental health	319
13 Specialty areas of mental health nursing practice	321
14 Mental health issues in the general health care setting	342
Part V Mental health and mental health nursing research	363
15 Mental health nursing research	365
<i>Index</i>	<i>387</i>

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

2.1	Theories used in mental health nursing	31
2.2	Maslow's hierarchy of needs	35
2.3	Interlocking psychosocial influences	41
2.4	Biopsychosocial: from separate to fully integrated models	43
6.1	Overlap between nurse and person	130
7.1	The Seven Tasks Model Source: a clinical supervision model	177
8.1	Multiaxial assessment	199

Tables

2.1	Theories relating to the human condition that influence contemporary nursing theory	32
2.2	Why comparisons between diabetes and depression (or schizophrenia or manic depression) are untenable	38
2.3	A comparison of common health care models	44
2.4	Health promotion: shifting the focus	44
4.1	Individual and professional views of ethical principles in mental health	92
5.1	Mental state examination categories and descriptors	109
5.2	Severity of Psychosocial Stressors Scale: adults	113
5.3	Risk assessment levels and descriptors	120
6.1	Phases of therapeutic relationships and their definitions	135
6.2	Therapeutic techniques and examples	137
6.3	Examples of nursing intimacy	146
7.1	Interventions for sexual assault	163
7.2	Ten general tips for reducing stress and improving coping	173
7.3	Advantages and disadvantages of individual and group clinical supervision	179
7.4	Linking mentorship, preceptorship and clinical supervision	181
8.1	Overview of the defence mechanisms	192
9.1	Mental health problems with cognitive and perceptual symptoms as a major feature	217
9.2	Types of delusions	220
9.3	Types of affect	227
9.4	Mental health problems with mood symptoms as major features	231
9.5	Mental health problems with symptoms of anxiety as major features	233
9.6	Symptoms related to anxiety	234

9.7	Symptoms related to unusual, disturbed or inappropriate personal behaviour	235
9.8	Symptoms related to unusual physical movements	235
9.9	Symptoms related to social behaviour/skills	237
9.10	'Negative' symptoms	238
9.11	Mental health problems with personality symptoms as major features	239
10.1	Antidepressants: drug groups, generic and trade names	251
10.2	Conventional (typical) antipsychotics: drug groups, generic and trade names	254
10.3	Atypical antipsychotics: drug groups, generic and trade names	254
10.4	Antiparkinsonian drugs: generic and trade names	256
10.5	Minor tranquillising drugs: generic and trade names	256
11.1	Qualities and skills of group leaders	280
11.2	Some complementary and alternative therapies used for mental health issues	285
12.1	Social determinants in mental health	295
12.2	Social issues associated with mental health	295
12.3	Examples of mental health problems diagnosed more often in one gender than another	299
12.4	Commonly used/misused psychoactive substances	309
12.5	Risk factors for suicide	313
13.1	Types of childhood mental health problems that mental health nurses may work with	324
13.2	Comparison of characteristics of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa	331
13.3	Physical and medical effects of eating disorders	331
13.4	Contributing factors and indicators for post-natal depression	338

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PREFACE

This is a mental health nursing textbook unlike others you may have seen. We hope our somewhat different approach to discussing mental health nursing provides a fresh and exciting perspective from which to commence your study of this specialised field. Throughout the text, we have sought to address comprehensively the attitudes, knowledge and skills required by nurses to provide care for consumers experiencing mental health problems across all health care settings, with a particular emphasis on mental health services.

What is also different about the text is that it does not follow a traditional biomedical format where nursing care is discussed in terms of psychiatric diagnosis. Many texts state that mental health nursing involves an appreciation of, and response to, the uniqueness of each individual experiencing a mental health problem, yet they reflect a biomedical approach. These texts generally devote chapters or part thereof to psychiatric diagnoses and present nursing interventions as dependent on diagnoses rather than the specific and individual needs of the consumer. While a biomedical perspective reflects a prevailing approach to mental health care, it is not the only or indeed most appropriate approach to take in a text which is about the science and art of mental health nursing and which recognises the lived experience of mental health consumers. In this text therefore, while we have included the biomedical approach, we have also included a social model of health and emphasised consumers' individual experience of mental health problems. We have also placed particular focus on the nurse as a vital member of the mental health team with an active role in facilitating the recovery of individuals who have been diagnosed with a mental illness.

The five authors of this Australian based text are four mental health nurses (Brenda Happell, Leanne Cowin, Kim Foster and Rose McMaster) with considerable experience in both practice and academia, and a consumer of mental health services (Cath Roper). A number of other nursing and mental health texts include the

consumer voice; however, most have consumers writing specific sections or chapters only. In this text, Cath has had input into all chapters of the book. This reflects the desire to present a consumer perspective throughout the text, to enable you to more fully appreciate the potential impact (both positive and negative) of nursing care on the consumers of services, and a desire to demonstrate and recognise that a consumer perspective is an essential part of health education and practice.

Cath Roper, the consumer author, holds the position of consumer academic at the Centre for Psychiatric Nursing. She has substantial experience in mental health nursing education and is the only known mental health consumer to hold an academic position of this type in Australia.

A primary aim of this book is to encourage you to think critically about mental health nursing and the care and treatment provided in mental health settings. We have included a number of critical thinking exercises which are designed to assist you to reflect on various aspects of mental health care, and the impact of our practices on consumers. We have included a specific chapter on addressing mental health issues within the broader health care system. There is also a chapter on mental health nursing research, as this acknowledges the many roles of the nurse (including that of researcher) and the vital association between research, knowledge and practice.

You may find in your reading of the text there will be times where it seems that the consumer and clinical/health professional views or perspectives presented have clashed. It may be helpful to remember that one 'truth' or perspective does not cancel out the other. Instead, we invite you to engage with such dilemmas and understand there is space for many, and even competing, perspectives. We take the view that with an awareness of contradictory 'truths' there can be room for more honest, less fearful responses from both health professionals and consumers alike.

Another important difference is our use of language. Instead of the commonly used terms 'patient' or 'client', we use the term 'consumer' to describe a person who is using a health service. This is the 'language of the day' in health care and we provide a specific definition for our use of the term in the introductory chapter. We also use the term 'person diagnosed with a mental illness' in preference to pejorative language such as 'the mentally ill' or 'person suffering from a mental illness'. 'Person first' language is particularly important to mental health consumers in differentiating the person from any health condition they may have. The pronoun 'we' is sometimes used to refer to consumers and to express the vantage point of consumer perspective.

In most cases we use the terminology 'mental health problems' in preference to 'mental illness'. This decision acknowledges the fact that the understanding of one's mental health is highly subjective and therefore a person can experience a mental health problem without being diagnosed with a mental illness. Furthermore, nurses will find themselves caring for people who experience mental health related symptoms that do not meet the criteria for a specific diagnosis, but nevertheless trouble the

person. When we use the term 'mental illness' it is generally in relation to mental health legislation or psychiatric diagnosis, where it is important to make a distinction between mental illness and mental health problems.

We have intended that when you use this text as part of your formal mental health nursing studies (theory and clinical) that it will assist you to: appreciate the importance of mental health nursing skills for any clinical setting; understand that there are many approaches and perspectives on mental health and illness; appreciate the importance of consumer perspective in nursing in general and in mental health nursing in particular; overcome any fears you might have about working with people experiencing a mental illness; regard mental health nursing as a valuable and realistic area of nursing practice, even if it isn't where you want to work in the future; and learn a lot and enjoy yourself.

Brenda Happell

Leanne Cowin

Cath Roper

Kim Foster

Rose McMaster