

## **THE MULTISENSORY APPROACH IN HEALTHCARE/NURSING EDUCATION**

### **GOALS:**

1. To introduce the definition, purpose, benefits, and successful outcome of Multisensory Learning.
2. To present a few educational classroom instruction methods and activities known to enhance and show evidence of Multisensory Learning.

### **THE DEFINITION & PURPOSE OF MULTISENSORY LEARNING:**

Multisensory Learning is the teaching and supervision of active Multisensory Learning processes or activities for students. Instructors consider and incorporate, as appropriate, the well-known five senses and the sixth sense of Proprioception in teaching, classroom activities, and homework. The well-known five senses are: listening/hearing, sight/vision, taste, touch, and smell. The sixth sense is called Proprioception--known as a feedback loop within the human peripheral and central nervous system that tells the person what position they are in and what forces are acting on their body, such as velocity, load on a body limb, and body limb limits.

Whereas some instructors knowingly teach courses actively involving (in some way) all known five senses and Proprioception to help students meet the course objectives, other instructors have an emphasis on only selected senses due to the required specificity of course content. Regardless, an astute instructor's responsibility is to knowingly be creative and selective in the course syllabus written/documented content that results in instructor and student performance that will enhance student course understanding. That enhancement results in student participation in Multisensory Learning opportunities and experiences.

The purpose of multiple sensory stimulation is to help healthcare/nursing students participate in a variety of meaningful and related ways to meet and more thoroughly understand the course objectives. Such participation by students increases learning opportunities, as some students learn faster, better, and more thoroughly through using and experiencing their different senses. The instructor teaching and student learning through the use of multiple sensory behaviors are intended to *enhance a student's thorough understanding of course content*. Therefore, it behooves instructors to become aware of the need and ways of incorporating appropriate Multisensory Learning by the instructor and student activities.

### **BENEFITS OF APPLYING MULTISENSORY TEACHING**

The Multisensory Teaching & Learning concepts are especially useful in the teaching of healthcare students--especially student nurses. Such teaching awareness and application by an educator regarding Multisensory Teaching within the educational process of healthcare/nursing education increases the necessary and thorough student understanding of the intellectual, complicated, and diversified healthcare/nursing principles.

Expectations of an educator are not only to know the material to teach in a classroom of healthcare/nursing students, but to intellectually know the multiple teaching *processes* that enhance the experience of learning. Such teaching knowledge and expertise is not just an instructor happen-stance. The instructor's presentation and maneuvering of course information, classroom and practice lab activities to ensure the application of cognitive understanding, the ability to apply and identify application-related psychomotor performance skills, and (at the same time) exemplifying a sense of professional caring toward other people/patients is most often the student outcome of successful Multisensory Learning.

Ideally, Multisensory Learning is to be known by name and technique by both the instructor and student. The shared knowledge and purpose of this teaching concept/process between instructor and student gives a mutually shared purpose to educational processes. Each student shall be expected to participate in these documented processes and be knowledgeable and conversive as to the significant contribution to their more thorough understanding of healthcare/nursing practice related to the course content and objectives.

If a student's healthcare/nursing performance perfectly meets the Multisensory standards of the course objectives, hopefully, it is the outcome of the instructor's ability to teach and engage the student's five senses and proprioception. This diversified educational effort by the educator is known to *activate different areas of the student's brain, simultaneously*. If this educational process is successfully and intentionally accomplished, the student's comprehension and learning are enhanced regarding required cognitive theory, practicing psychomotor skills, and how to project an attitude appropriate for the healthcare/nursing situation. A further educational effort by educators that encourages and emphasizes student learning expectations is to place in writing as a part of each objective on the student's course syllabus the Multisensory experiences and Proprioception the student will be expected to successfully experience as a part of class participation and passing the course of study.

### **THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME:**

The outcome of a healthcare/nursing instructor consciously and successfully incorporating Multisensory Education experiences with students (as outlined in the course syllabus) most likely increases the successful passing of any required testing (i.e. a nursing state board exam). Even more important is the outcome of professional healthcare/nursing expertise that helps improve and maintain the quality of life for patients and families. A healthcare/nursing student easily passing a state board healthcare/nursing examination often helps confirm Multisensory Education as a successful educational process for the preparedness of healthcare/nursing providers.

## **SIMPLE EXAMPLES OF MULTISENSORY EDUCATION:**

Listening: Instructor Lectures, Group Discussions, Music.

Seeing: Student Observing Procedures, Viewing Overhead Projections, Reading Blackboard Writings, Observing Emotional Responses, Observing Demonstrations, Watching Relevant Situations.

Touching: Student Feeling, Touching, Palpating, Providing a Comforting Touch, Stroking

Speaking: Student Presentations, Explaining Processes and Reasons, Asking Relevant Questions.

Smelling: Student Differentiating Smells.

Proprioception: Student activities can be done to produce a calming effect and/or to increase body awareness and increase attention—like classroom/lesson attention. The activity, as an unplanned activity, should be easily performed, and the name and purpose (Proprioception) should be used in connection with the activity, as the sixth sense is not usually known by most students.

Students do Jumping jacks, balance on one leg and then the other leg.

Students do an activity to use larger muscles, which helps the brain work better on fine motor skills like reading and writing.

Students do weight-bearing activities like crawling, push-ups, carrying heavy objects, running, or jumping.

Students do oral activities like chewing or blowing bubbles.

## **IN CLOSING:**

Multisensory Learning can be/should be used by numerous types of healthcare/nursing educational programs/courses to enhance learning. The expected, documented, and distributed course syllabus content that includes an intentional and actual happening of students performing Multisensory Learning activities increases student educational success.

The extent of an educator's thinking, preparation, presentation, and required student performance of Multisensory Learning as part of the educational/teaching endeavor, easily identifies the novice teacher from the *professionally astute educator*.

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