1.1: Introduction

Learning Objectives

- Describe basic concepts related to mental health care
- Establish a safe environment for clients, nurses, and other staff
- Discuss psychiatric-mental health nursing and associated standards of care
- Apply principles of patient-centered care while considering client diversity across the life span

Mental health is an important part of everyone’s overall health and well-being. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood to adolescence and through adulthood.\(^1\) This chapter will provide an overview of mental health, mental illness, and mental health nursing. As with all areas of nursing, when caring for a person with a mental health diagnosis, it is important to focus on patient-centered care and evaluate the effectiveness of care in terms of the highest level of functioning that person is able to achieve.

Reflective Questions

As we begin this chapter, reflect on the following questions:

1. How do you define mental health?
2. How do you define mental illness?
3. How do you differentiate between the two with everyday functioning?
4. Consider how you communicate with clients. Which therapeutic techniques have you found work best? What
interferes with effective communication?

5. How does ineffective communication impact client care? How can it affect your nursing license or create legal implications?