Anxiety

- Most common response to stress/universal experience
- Feeling of apprehension, uneasiness, uncertainly
- Dread resulting from a perceived threat
- Source may be unknown

- Normal anxiety
- Acute/state anxiety
- Chronic/trait
- Dysfunctional behavior is a response to anxiety
- Stress = anxiety = relief behaviors
  - Defense mechanisms
  - Coping behaviors
Etiology of anxiety

- Primary anxiety - psych causes
  - psychodynamic theories
    - Freud, Sullivan

- Behavioral theories
  - a learned response to stimuli

- Secondary anxiety
  - biological causes
  - secondary to a pervasive psych disorder
Nursing Process

- Assessment
  - physical
    - autonomic nervous system activity
    - Affects VS/other organ systems
  - behavioral
    - Alert and active to terror/paralysis

- psychological
  - Heightened awareness to dissociation

- Levels of Anxiety
  - Mild
  - Moderate
  - Severe
  - Panic
Nursing Diagnosis

- Anxiety: moderate related to lack of trust and paranoid thoughts as evidenced by sweating, headache, repetitive questions, inability to participate in group therapy
Planning

• Planning
  • short term: reduce level of anxiety; prevent further escalation; facilitate problem solving
  • mild to moderate: prevent further escalation

• severe to panic: goals may center on safety which is crucial to lower level of anxiety

• Long term goals
  • prevention and coping measures
Interventions

Mild to moderate anxiety
- verbalize feelings
- support problem solving
- provide outlets
- nurse may feel anxiety
  - avoidance
  - annoyance

Severe to panic anxiety
- offer calming statements
- remove to less stimulating env.
- stay with patient
- provide safety measures
- “take charge” for patient
Interventions

- Relaxation techniques
- Biofeedback
- Psychotherapy
- Cognitive restructuring
- Progressive muscular relaxation
- Activities

Implementation
- Treatment team approach

Evaluation
- Improved coping skills
Across the life span

- **Children**
  - behavioral cues to anxiety
  - developmental tasks/separation issues

- **adolescents**
  - normal anxiety is “acute” for adolescents
  - acting out behaviors, drug use

- **Older adults**
  - anxiety and depression
  - decreased ability to function