Preparation
Management of Stress
& Test Taking Skills

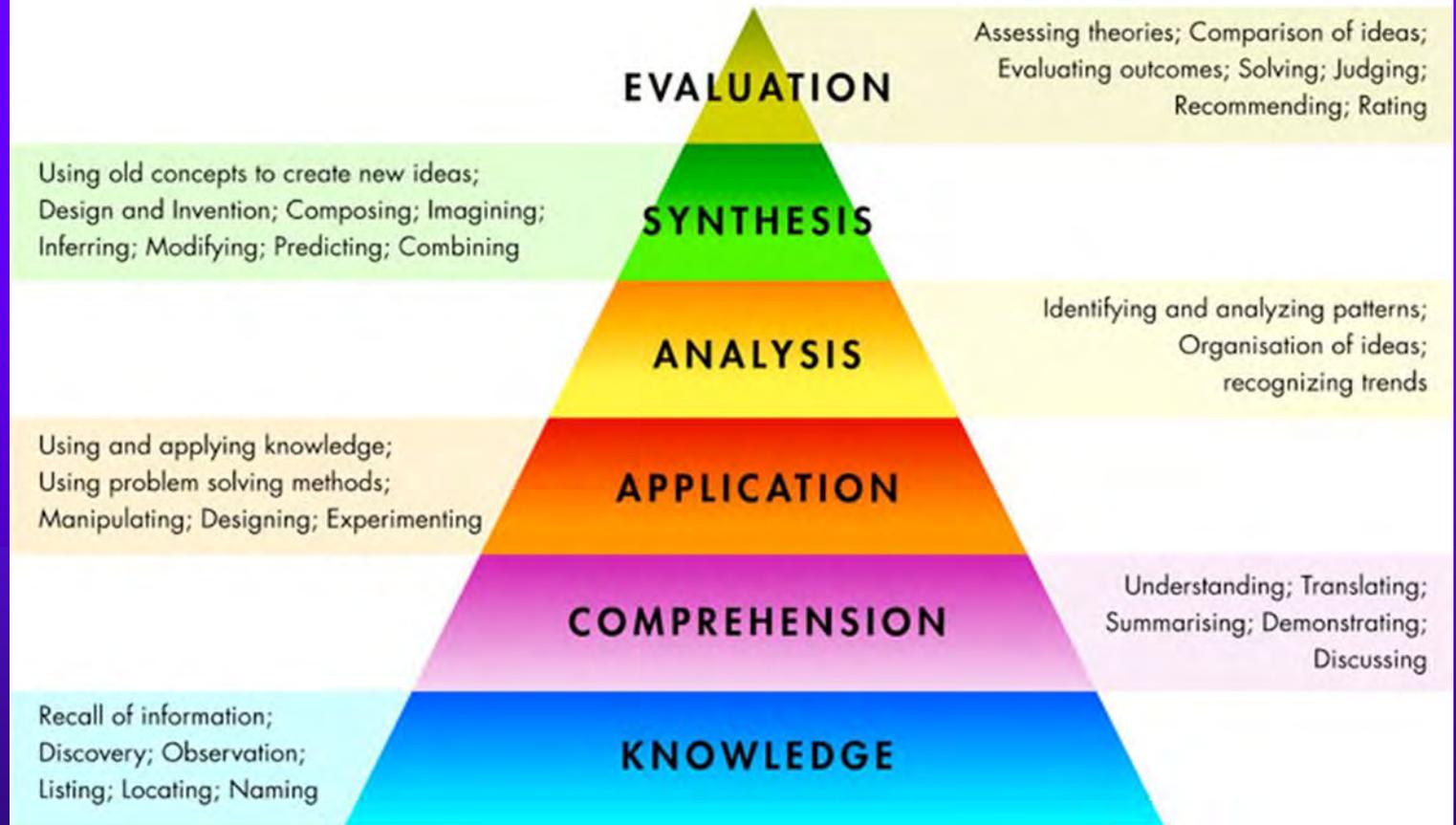Dr. Christine Boev PhD, RN, CCRN, CNE & Dr. Lori Dambaugh DNP, CNS, RN

Senior year expectations:

- You MUST read
- Cannot continue to be a "concrete thinker"
- Nursing is not black and white
- Blooms taxonomy
  - Major differences between J1, J2 and senior year

BLOOMS TAXONOMY

EVALUATION

Assessing theories; Comparison of ideas;
Evaluating outcomes; Solving; Judging;
Recommending; Rating

SYNTHESIS

Using old concepts to create new ideas;
Design and Invention; Composing; Imagining;
Inferring; Modifying; Predicting; Combining

ANALYSIS

Identifying and analyzing patterns;
Organisation of ideas;
recognizing trends

APPLICATION

Using and applying knowledge;
Using problem solving methods;
Manipulating; Designing; Experimenting

COMPREHENSION

Understanding; Translating;
Summarising; Demonstrating;
Discussing

KNOWLEDGE

Recall of information;
Discovery; Observation;
Listing; Locating; Naming

Attributes to Support Success

- **Balance**
- **Attitude**
- **Self Esteem**
- **Self Awareness**
- **Courage**
- **Perseverance**
- **Motivation**

Balance

♦ Need some time for relaxation & fun but you will need to sacrifice some things to help you reach your goal

- Reduce work hours
- Use support network to make time for studies
- PRIORITY is on STUDY

Attitude

- ◆ "Attitude is an inner quality that can keep us free, even happy during difficult times"
  Davis (1986)

- ◆ View the each exam as an *opportunity* not an obstacle

- ◆ Outcome related directly to self-image & self expectancy

- ◆ Concentrate on the *positive*

- ◆ *Guided Imagery*

Self Esteem

- ◆ You must
  - – like yourself
  - – have self respect
  - – accept yourself
- ◆ Do you think you will pass this exam?
- ◆ Maybe…I think so… I deserve to…
- ◆ …YES!!!

Self Awareness

♦ How well do you really know your *strengths & weaknesses*?

♦ "The day you stop making excuses is the day you start to the top"

Courage

♦ You gain strength, courage and confidence with every error you make -- *if* you confront it honestly & sensibly.

♦ If you don't err -- you don't grow!

Perseverance

- A powerful attribute underlying success is *endurance*

- You *do* have energy in reserve

- Establish self-discipline & perseverance in a consistent & determined way

- Don't give up on the 1-yard line!

Goal: Action Plan

- To have a feeling of control over the immediate future

- To provide organization, discipline & a sense of direction

- Reduce stress, anxiety, frustration & wasting time & energy

Action Plan

- ◆ Review work to date
  - – Courses & Clinicals
  - – ATI
  - – Practice tests
- ◆ Make a plan for review
  - – Work on your own, study group
- ◆ Set goals for
  - – Content
  - – Knowledge
  - – Behavior
  - – Test taking strategies

What Kind of Test Taker are You?

♦ Rusher

♦ Turtle

♦ Personalizer

♦ Procrastinator

♦ Philosopher

♦ Second Guesser

Rusher

- ♦ You try to get through the exam before you forget what you studied
  - – Cram outside the room
  - – Death grip on the pencil
  - – Flies through the exam—done first
- ♦ Problem: unable to read carefully & completely
- ♦ Challenge: ACCEPT taking the exam
  - – Progressive relaxation
  - – Plan study to reduce cramming
 - – Slow pace of reading & answering

Turtle

- You move through each question slowly,…deliberatively,…methodically…
  - Often last to finish
  - Score poorly on last part
- **Most tests = 1 min/question**
- For course exams$\rightarrow$problem: Don't have enough time to finish
- Challenge: Reduce time to read & understand
  - Do practice questions with clock
  - Indicate ½ way point
  - Put watch on desk in front of you

Personalizer

- Older, more mature students with life experience can *err* by basing answers on *experience* and *not standards of care*

- Problem: Deductive reasoning based on life experience & personal clinical experience

- Challenge: Focus on principles & standards of care for nursing practice

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
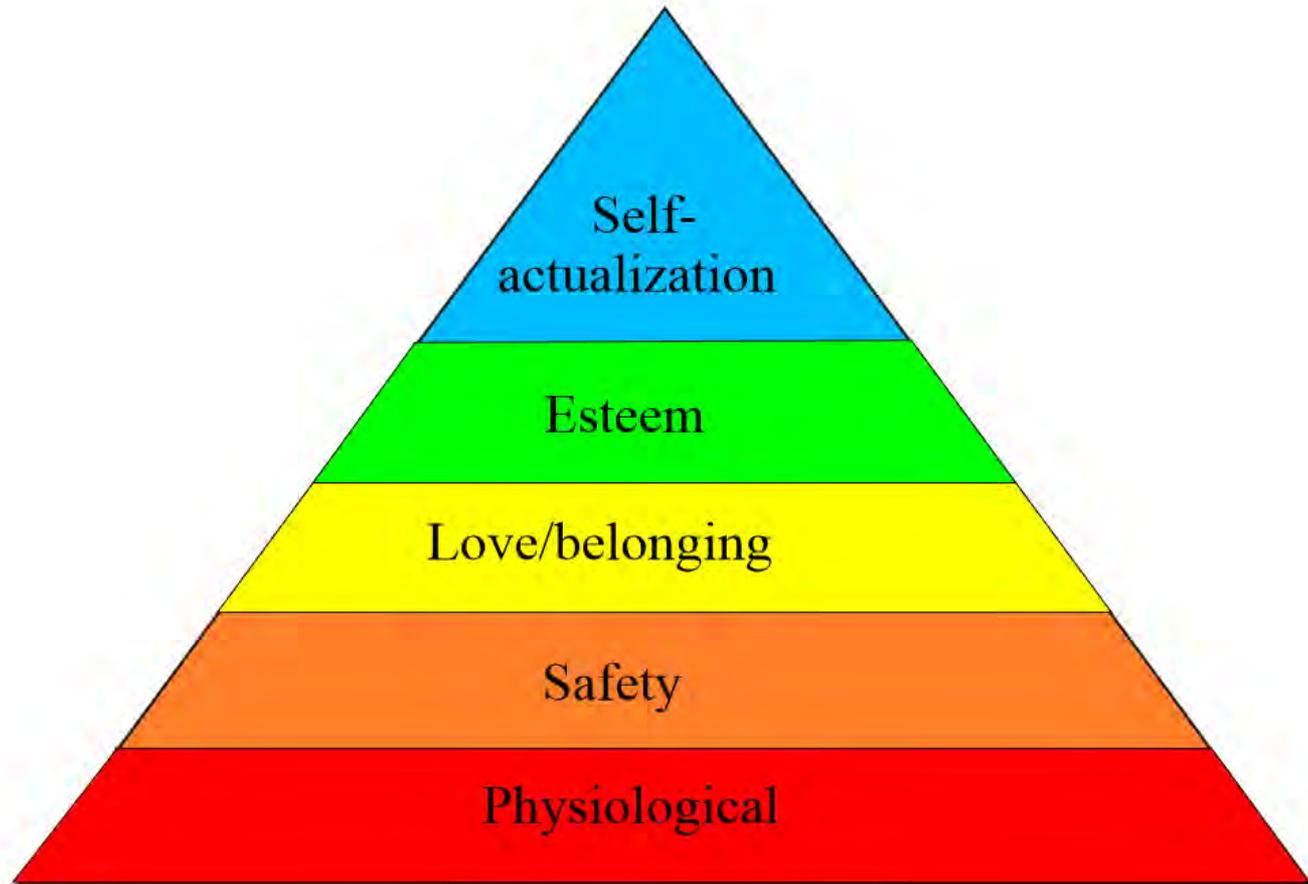
Philosopher

- Talented, thoughtful, intelligent student places high value on recognizing complexities in a situation
  - Often picks right answer & then changes it
  - Suspicious of the *obvious*

- Problem: Tries to "read into" questions
- Challenge: Focus on the items AS WRITTEN
  - Do not reread endlessly

Second Guesser

- Plays both student & teacher
  - Anxiety increases
  - Worries about patterns

- Problem: returns when done to "grade" her responses…second guessing & changing answers
- Challenge: Reread ONLY answers unsure of & CHANGE answers only with specific rationale

Review

- Positive Attitude: **NO NEGATIVE SELF TALK**
- Study, read, take notes
- Sleep and eat before exam
- Not too much caffeine
- Have protein for breakfast!
- Arrive in plenty of time
- Avoid anxious people

Test Taking Skills

- Pace yourself

- READ the stem carefully

- Understand WHAT the question is asking you

- ***Emphasize*** important words in your mind when reading

- 75% of the time you are changing from the correct answer to the incorrect answer

- Trust your gut

- Dr. Boev and Dr. Dambaugh verbalize test questions……pay attention in class!!!

Anatomy of a Question

♦ Scenario: The first few sentences giving information about the patient situation i.e. case study
  – *ID who the patient is

♦ Stem: The question
  – An incomplete statement: "The assessment data the nurse should gather include…"
  – A question: "Which of the following assessment data should the nurse obtain?"

Anatomy of a Question

♦ Options: Should match grammatically
- One BEST answer
- Three DISTRACTORS -- one of which may be right but not best

Strategies

♦ Read the entire question
  – Answer before looking at distracters
  – Read all distracters before selecting
  – More than one right answer
  – Pick the BEST answer
  – Read the stem (the actual question) first to improve reading comprehension of the scenario i.e. know what you are looking for

Strategies

♦ Best Answer

– Pick the most complete, most inclusive option

– Answers the question in the stem

– If <u>ANY part</u> of the option is wrong—the whole option is wrong

– All things being equal…select the option you understand the best

– All questions are at the entry level of practice

Strategies

- Don't challenge the options
  - Don't get *emotional!*
- Take every question at face value
- Avoid over analysis and adding irrelevant information
- READ the question—don't SCAN…you may miss relevant information
- "All of the above/None of the above" = give away…60% this is the right answer

Strategies

♦ Who is the patient or the subject of the question?

Strategies

- What is the issue, problem or subject of the question?
  - Physical care
  - Assessment
  - Intervention
  - Evaluation
  - Procedures
  - Psychosocial

Strategies

♦ Some distracters answer questions that are *not asked*

♦ Make sure the answer relates to the patient

♦ Options should be in the realm of nursing practice

♦ Options should follow accepted principles of care i.e. nursing process…***assess first***

 – Physiologic stability

 – ABCs

Strategies

- – Safety
- – Support the patient
- – Listen
- – Acknowledge feelings

♦ Look for opposites and identify if *either* is correct
  - – e.g. temp 97 degrees or temp 102 degrees

Strategies

♦ Do not be enticed by options that are very different…usually it is too obvious and not correct

  – e.g. 3 of the answers are in mg. and 1 is in Gm.

  – 3 answers are assessment and 1 is evaluation

♦ Note the item length..usually not the shortest

Strategies

♦ Avoid absolutes
  – Always/never
  – All/None
  – Only/Forever/Entirely/Totally
♦ Watch for words in the stem indicating prioritizing questions
  – FIRST, LAST, BEST, EARLY, INITIAL, PRIORITY

Strategies

♦ Note false response stems…. i.e. you are looking for the WRONG answer
  – Except/inappropriate/contraindicated
  – Least priority
  – Least essential
  – No/not/never/rarely

Strategies

- Do not change an answer without a good rationale

- 75% of the time answers that are changed--- are changed from the correct answer to the incorrect

- Trust yourself—don't talk yourself out of an answer

- Trust your intuition !

Examples

Michael, age 3 yr. was admitted to the emergency room after being rescued from a fire in his home. He is having difficulty breathing.

An early sign of respiratory distress that you might observe in Michael is

- a. Increased pulse rate
- b. Cyanosis
- c. Decreased pulse rate
- d. Clammy skin

Michael, age 3 yr. was admitted to the emergency room after being rescued from a fire in his home. He is having difficulty breathing.

An early sign of respiratory distress that you might observe in Michael is

- a. Increased pulse rate
- b. Cyanosis
- c. Decreased pulse rate
- d. Clammy skin

- ♦ a. is the best of the options.
- ♦ The **best answer** would be *anxiety* --but don't argue with the question

♦ All of the following behaviors are typical of a 3 yr.old except

a. Putting on makeup and playing grown up

b. Reciting address and phone number

c. Throwing a ball about 5 feet

d. Identifying animals from a picture book

♦ All of the following behaviors are typical of a 3 yr.old **except**

a. Putting on makeup and playing grown up

b. Reciting address and phone number

c. Throwing a ball about 5 feet

d. Identifying animals from a picture book

- Note: no case scenario was given
- You are looking for the **wrong** answer "except"

◆ Mrs. Brown's husband was admitted to the ER in delirium tremens (DTs). This admission is his 3rd visit in 2 weeks. While waiting to see her husband, Mrs. Brown said to the nurse, "what in the world can I do to help Joe get over this drinking problem?"

The best initial response for the nurse is

a. Don't feel guilty, Mrs. Brown; I know this must be difficult for you
b. Lets go into the lounge so we can talk more about your concern, Mrs. Brown
c. You need to convince Joe to seek professional help, Mrs. Brown
d. How long has your husband been drinking Mrs. Brown?

a.	Don't feel guilty, Mrs. Brown; I know this must be difficult for you

b.	Lets go into the lounge so we can talk more about your concern, Mrs. Brown

c.	You need to convince Joe to seek professional help, Mrs. Brown

d.	How long has your husband been drinking Mrs. Brown?

- a. Is reading into the question→doesn't tell you how Mrs. Brown is feeling --guilty or otherwise

- c. You should be assessing→ don't have enough info to offer this advice

- d. Doesn't deal with the client's needs i.e. *what can she do*

♦ Mr.Epstein. 58 yr. Old is recovering from a suprapubic prostatectomy. His urinary output in the past two days has been satisfactory; however, the nurse now notices that it is becoming increasingly bloody.

The initial action of the nurse should be to

♦ a. Irrigate the Foley catheter

♦ b. Notify the physician

♦ c. Take the vital signs

♦ d. Empty the drainage bag

- a. Irrigate the Foley catheter
- b. Notify the physician
- c. Take the vital signs
- d. Empty the drainage bag

♦ c. Need to determine if the increase in bleeding is threatening patient's physiologic stability…Taking the VS is the only action that will give this info.

♦ b. Do not notify the physician until the *assessment is done*

♦ *a & d* do not address the priority problem

♦ Mr. Parker is receiving Dilantin to stabilize his seizure condition. One morning when Mr. Parker is taking a walk in the corridor, you note that his gait is extremely ataxic and he c/o dizziness.

Which of the following nursing notes indicates that the appropriate nursing action was taken?

- a. Very unsteady gait probably due to Dilantin toxicity. Physician notified.
- b. c/o of dizziness while walking. Gait unsteady. Returned to bed, BP 110/70, P 112, R 32. Physician notified.
- c. gait very unsteady. Returned to bed. Physician notified
- d. Gait unsteady. AM dose Dilantin withheld. BP 110/70, P 112, R 32

- a. Very unsteady gait probably due to Dilantin toxicity. Physician notified.
- b. c/o of dizziness while walking. Gait unsteady. Returned to bed, BP 110/70, P 112, R 32. Physician notified.
- c. gait very unsteady. Returned to bed. Physician notified
- d. Gait unsteady. AM dose Dilantin withheld. BP 110/70, P 112, R 32

- a. & d. not with in the realm of nursing judgment. You don't know that the gait instability is from the Dilantin and you should not hold the med without proper assessment

- c. appropriate but not sufficient
- b. appropriate assessment done which provides data base for physician analysis

♦ Mrs. Durham is recovering from a colon resection for removal of a malignant mass in the large bowel. Following breakfast one morning she says " I'm tired of waiting. I want my bath now. You are never here when I need you"

Which of the following responses by the nurse is the most appropriate?

- a. What do you mean I am never here? I spent 3 hours with you yesterday, Mrs. Durham.
- b. I'm doing my best Mrs. Durham. You know I have 5 other patients to take care of today besides you.
- c. I must see Mrs. Jones right now Mrs.. Durham. She is really sick today . I'll be back as soon as I can.
- d. I'm sorry you have been waiting Mrs. Durham. Let's get you comfortable now and I'll be back in 20 minutes to give you a bath.

- a. What do you mean I am never here? I spent 3 hours with you yesterday, Mrs. Durham.
- b. I'm doing my best Mrs. Durham. You know I have 5 other patients to take care of today besides you.
- c. I must see Mrs. Jones right now Mrs.. Durham. She is really sick today . I'll be back as soon as I can.
- d. I'm sorry you have been waiting Mrs. Durham. Let's get you comfortable now and I'll be back in 20 minutes to give you a bath.

- a. Never challenge the patient's statements and *don't be defensive*
- b. & c. Do not reprimand the patient or share other patient information with patients
- d. This is the only appropriate response which acknowledges the patient's feelings and gives a clear factual response to her concerns
- NOTE: you don't need to know much about colon resections..but you do need skill in basic communication and human interaction

Types of questions we struggle with

- Prioritization: who should I see first?
- Delegation: You can't delegate what you can EAT
- What is the priority intervention?