

Teaching Strategies

The Unfolding Case Study

In an unfolding case study, learners apply new knowledge to a situation that is presented in small parts. Each part of the story is followed by a few questions or a task. This can also be done as a simulation, where client actors role play each scenario and learners have to respond in the moment. In this way a lot of learning can be elicited from a single case, without requiring students to read and refer back to a long story.

The unfolding case study is a formative tool i.e. the teacher and learners can evaluate their knowledge as they go along, and address gaps in knowledge. It is also used to develop critical thinking. It is an application exercise, and so it addresses higher-order learning objectives.

Keys to making this work include:

- It is most effective when used in conjunction with traditional lecture that presents base knowledge which can be expanded on in the case study.
- Have a minimum of 3 paragraphs (sections of the story). Keep these short.
- Be clear about your objectives – what you want them to learn or do. Write your story and questions to address these objectives.
- Create focused questions that use data from the story to apply key concepts or skills. Questions should require learners to analyze or synthesize data.
- Provide handouts or readings that include the information that will help learners answer the questions or do the tasks
- Have just a few questions for each part of the story.
- Tasks should not be too complex, but involve some thought e.g. draw a genogram with attachment lines.
- Ensure that each section of the story builds on what came before.

Structure of the case study (from the Virginia League for Nursing – see reference below):

- Paragraph 1: background info. Introduce characters and setting.
- Paragraph 2: builds on paragraph 1. Reflects a change in time or condition. May change focus of intervention.
- Paragraph 3: follows structure of paragraph 2

Most of the literature on unfolding case studies comes from nursing, but it is a tool that could be used in any classroom. For more information, see

http://www.virginialeaguefornursing.com/Unfolding_Case_Studies_in_Nursing_Education.pdf

See the example on the next pages. This was developed for undergraduate nursing students in the Childbearing Families (formerly called Maternity) course at Red River College. It is my personal adaptation of the unfolding case study method, in that I present related information AFTER each paragraph rather than before.

Unfolding Case Study: Family Violence [Childbearing Families]

Learning Outcomes: After processing the case, each student will be able to:

- Apply knowledge of family violence to the assessment of a couple with intimate partner violence
- Identify risk factors and clues to abuse in dating, pregnancy, & labour.
- Plan interventions for intimate partner violence
- Analyze contextual issues affecting recognition and interventions for IPV
- Identify resources in Manitoba for families at risk or experiencing violence

Materials:

- Handouts:
 - circular pattern diagram of an abusive couple relationship
 - case study with questions
 - optional: cycle of violence & protection planning (students can access these online or you may wish them to have hard copies)
- Ask students to bring laptops to access web resources:
 - Healthy Relationships <https://safe.unc.edu/learn-more/healthy-relationships-2/>
 - Manitoba Family Violence Prevention Program <http://www.gov.mb.ca/msw/fvpp/toolkit/what.html>
 - Should You Marry Him? <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-dance-connection/201307/should-you-marry-him-ten-steps-clarity>
 - RNAO Best Practice Guidelines <https://rnao.ca/bpg/guidelines/woman-abuse-screening-identification-and-initial-response>

Procedure:

- Introduce activity with film “Domestic Violence: Best Practices in Health Care”, followed by class discussion of key points from film
- Have students get into small groups (4-6) to do first paragraph.
- Circulate in room to assist students – don’t give them the answers but point them to the resources and help them think it through.
- After students have answered the questions from the first paragraph, have a large group discussion of the answers.
- Present additional information related to the first paragraph.
- Continue with each paragraph in this same way
- Conclude with debriefing questions and discussion with whole class.

Paragraph #1:

Jack & Jill have been dating for 3 months and plan to marry. They met at church and Jack pursued Jill passionately, sending flowers to her at work and giving her many gifts. Jill says, “he wouldn’t take no for an answer”. She felt this was very romantic and was flattered that he wanted to spend all his time with her. In fact, Jack was eager to get engaged, saying “why wait?”

Focused Questions

1. What are the characteristics of a healthy relationship?
2. What early clues are there in this case example, to Jack’s desire for control?

Discussion/Lecture content:

- Healthy relationships
- Control as a central issue in intimate partner violence, forms of control (psychological, social, financial, etc.)

Paragraph #2:

Despite the concerns of family and friends, Jack and Jill get married. They rarely go out together anymore, and the only place anyone sees them now is at church. Jill barely speaks to any of her former friends. One day, in the bathroom at church, Jill confides to a friend that she is pregnant. The friend notices that Jill does not look as happy as would be expected. She also notices that Jill has several bruises.

Focused Questions:

1. Why, do you think, would it be difficult for a person to discuss abuse?
2. What could Jill’s friend say or do to help her at this time?
3. How do people leave abusive relationships?
4. What factors in Jack & Jill’s relationship may contribute to the presence of violence?

Discussion/Lecture content:

- Abuse and secrecy, relationship dynamics (attachment, boundaries, etc.)
- Reasons for staying, statistics on how many attempts to leave before successful
- Safety issues – risk of death increases dramatically when leaving

Paragraph #3:

Jill goes to the clinic for a prenatal visit, and Jack comes along. Jack insists on being present throughout the clinic visit, saying “we’re a family”. However, his manner is more aggressive than supportive, and the nurse is concerned that Jill may be a victim of intimate partner violence.

Focused Questions:

1. When would it be appropriate to ask a patient about possible abuse? How should this question be asked?
2. What steps should a nurse take if he/she suspects abuse?
3. If Jill insists on going home with Jack, what should the nurse do?
4. What resources are available for Jill in Manitoba?

Discussion/Lecture Content

- How to ask the questions (e.g. A-B-C-D-E-F method)
- Protection/safety planning
- Legal issues & reporting requirements
- Dealing with our own anxiety/ desire to save or rescue, etc.

Large Group Debriefing: Critical Thinking Questions

1. Did you notice that the Manitoba Government information is on the Status of Women page? What implications are there in that?
 - a. discuss bias towards focusing exclusively on male-to female abuse
 - b. statistics and information on the hidden victims of abuse (men, LGBT)
2. How would you re-word the assessment questions to be more inclusive?
3. How would your approach change if Jack and Jill had small children at home?