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## The Lived Experience of Integrating Emotional Intelligence (EI) in an Advanced Practice Nursing Program

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Advanced practice psychiatric nurses are facing increased stress levels and burnout due to the shortage of psychiatrists in the United States. Nursing faculty are charged with preparing students for the reality of clinical practice. Psychiatric nurses are particularly vulnerable to emotionally charged encounters, as they work with individuals experiencing chronic mental health disorders. In order to meet the needs of their patients, it is expected that psychiatric nurses will maintain their own wellbeing. One way to meet this need is to integrate emotional intelligence (EI) in the nursing curriculum. EI facilitates the ability to accurately identify emotions in oneself and others, use emotions to facilitate reasoning, understand emotions and manage emotions in oneself and in stressful situations. Experts have questioned whether EI can be taught or developed. Research suggests that training programs focusing on EI increase feelings of control and competence. High EI is also associated with lower stress and burn out. Teaching concepts related to EI offers many benefits to psychiatric nurses. Not only can they enhance their own understanding of their emotional triggers and responses, they can use the information in clinical practice, helping patients to enhance their own self-awareness. As a result, patients can seek timely mental health treatment when their symptoms become more pronounced.

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