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**IDS-402-11153-M01 Wellness**

**1-2 Activity: Lens Exploration**

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**Topic: Mental Health Awareness**

**Existing Knowledge About Mental Health Awareness in Wellness**

My current understanding of mental health awareness in wellness includes recognizing, understanding, and emphasizing the importance of mental health as a fundamental part of overall well-being. Mental health awareness focuses on identifying the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions, reducing stigma, and encouraging individuals to seek appropriate treatment and support. Over time, society's view of mental health has evolved, resulting in greater acceptance and more initiatives geared toward prevention and comprehensive care.

From personal experience, mental health awareness involves becoming more attuned to recognizing the early signs and warning signals of mental health challenges, both in oneself and in others. I understand that mental health is shaped by a complex interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors. Effectively addressing mental health requires a multifaceted approach that integrates medical intervention, therapeutic practices, and social support systems.

**Applying the History Lens to Mental Health Awareness in Wellness**

From a historical perspective, the late 20th and early 21st centuries marked a significant shift in the global recognition of mental health as a critical public health issue. The establishment of World Mental Health Day in 1992 by the World Federation for Mental Health was a pivotal event that brought mental health awareness into mainstream conversations and played a key role in reducing stigma.

With the advent of digital technology and the rise of social media, mental health awareness has become more integrated into public discourse, shedding light on the multifaceted challenges individuals face today. This increased visibility has transformed mental health from a niche topic to a central issue affecting all areas of society, including workplaces, educational institutions, and social policies.

However, the term "mental health" can be perceived as ambiguous or potentially misleading due to its broad range of interpretations. It encompasses everything from general well-being to severe mental health disorders, which can lead to confusion and varied understandings of what mental health truly means in different contexts.

**Applying the Humanities Lens to Mental Health Awareness**

Applying the humanities lens to mental health awareness allows us to delve into how this topic is perceived, represented, and experienced across cultural, artistic, and societal contexts. In certain cultures, mental health is closely tied to spiritual beliefs and communal practices, emphasizing collective well-being and holistic approaches. In Western cultures, mental health awareness has become a vital part of both individual and public health discussions, focusing on self-care, therapy, and mental health advocacy.

Mental health has been a recurring theme throughout history in literature and the arts. Visual artists such as Edvard Munch, with The Scream, and Vincent van Gogh, with his emotionally intense works, used their art to portray their inner struggles and psychological states, creating a powerful visual dialogue around mental health.

In contemporary culture, mental health and its awareness are represented through various forms of media, including films, television, and social media platforms. Social media, in particular, has amplified conversations about mental health, giving individuals a space to share their experiences and support one another. This increased visibility has helped normalize discussions around mental health, making it more mainstream and fostering an environment where people feel more comfortable acknowledging and expressing their struggles. While some use these platforms to genuinely share their stories and advocate for change, there is a risk that the normalization can sometimes blur lines, leading to superficial or performative representations that may not always contribute to meaningful awareness or advocacy.

**Applying the Natural and Applied Sciences Lens to Mental Health Awareness**

Applying the natural and applied sciences lens to mental health awareness allows for an in-depth examination of the biological, psychological, and environmental factors that contribute to mental health conditions. This lens focuses on how these factors can be studied and addressed using scientific methods to advance our understanding and treatment of mental health.

The scientific method plays a crucial role in researching mental health through hypothesis-driven studies, controlled experiments, and clinical trials. These methods help to uncover the underlying causes of mental health conditions, leading to the development of evidence-based treatments. Despite significant advancements in scientific research, studying mental health objectively presents notable challenges. One primary difficulty lies in the inherently subjective nature of mental health experiences, which vary greatly from person to person and are influenced by individual perceptions.

Furthermore, the interaction of mental health with social and environmental factors adds complexity to objective analysis. Mental health conditions are currently understood as chronic or recurrent for many individuals, underscoring the difficulty of finding definitive cures. While effective treatments are available that can greatly enhance quality of life and manage symptoms, achieving a complete and permanent cure for most mental health disorders remains out of reach.

The field continues to evolve, focusing on comprehensive management strategies that combine medication, therapy, and social support. Recognizing the chronic nature of many mental health conditions shifts the emphasis from seeking a cure to developing sustainable, long-term treatment approaches that promote resilience and well-being.

**Applying the Social Science Lens to Mental Health Awareness**

Applying the social science lens to mental health awareness enables an exploration of the broader societal impacts and implications of mental health on individuals and communities. This perspective reveals that while mental health issues can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, or cultural background, certain groups face disproportionate challenges due to systemic factors. Social science research highlights that marginalized populations, such as racial and ethnic minorities and LGBTQ+ individuals, often encounter heightened mental health struggles as a result of stigma, discrimination, and inequitable access to resources.

The social science lens also underscores how mental health awareness is intricately connected to social structures and systems, including education, healthcare, and employment. Educational institutions play a crucial role in promoting mental health awareness by incorporating mental health education and providing support services. Similarly, healthcare systems impact mental health outcomes, as access to affordable and effective mental health care remains uneven, often influenced by geographic and socioeconomic disparities.

Employment settings are another critical area where mental health awareness intersects with social systems. Workplaces that prioritize mental well-being through policies, resources, and supportive cultures can positively impact mental health, whereas stressful or toxic work environments can exacerbate mental health issues.

Addressing mental health requires a multi-layered approach that involves education, robust support systems, policy reforms, and advocacy. By examining mental health through the social science lens, it becomes evident that comprehensive strategies are needed to create a society where mental health is prioritized and supported across various social systems.

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