Chapter 1

Reflective Ruminations: Journal Activity

At the conclusion of the chapter exercises, begin a journal about yourself during this time. Journal entries are most useful in learning about yourself if they relate what you learned from the experience. Most of us confuse the concept of a journal with a diary. A diary is designed to record significant events in one’s life. A journal is a letter to yourself that is designed to stimulate reflection about an experience, rather than just record the experience.

One way to keep from simply recording the event is to begin each entry with the following phrases:

- What I felt during the exercise.
- What I learned about myself.
- So what? Significance or meanings of my learning.

Your journal should be kept in a book with a cover and pages that do not easily become dislodged, or you may wish to keep an electronic journal. Ideally, entries are to be written following each chapter. Many find it useful to journal as a way of privately discussing the chapter and its personal significance as well. Your journal is what you make it. Most university students are unaccustomed to this sort of activity and some abhor writing. Make a commitment to this activity; it is the beginning of becoming a reflective health care professional, which we will discuss more in Chapter 9. Use the Feeling Wheel (Figure 1-2). Remember, this journal is by you for your personal use. Set aside the time on your calendar, and, once you get into it, the journal will become rewarding. Your course instructor may wish to see your entries now and again to be sure that you are keeping up. In that case, confidentiality may become more limited. You will not be graded on your journal. Because it is a collection of your feelings and reflections, a grade would be wholly inappropriate. However, the value of the activity is such that your instructor may collect it to check your discipline with the activity and may comment on how well you reflected on the experience rather than simply describing what happened.

Figure 1-2. The Feeling Wheel. (Reprinted with permission from Willcox G. The Feeling Wheel: a tool for expanding awareness of emotions and increasing spontaneity and intimacy. Transactional Analysis Journal. 1982;12[4]:274-276.)