

Communicating Effectively with Patients using Verbal and Non-Verbal Techniques

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Therapeutic communication is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication between two individuals that creates a positive environment. This helps establish a relationship and build rapport with patients, family members, and friends within the healthcare setting. Some factors that make up an ideal environment for effective communication includes good lighting and no distractions, such as loud music or the television playing. Zero distractions are always an ideal environment for using effective techniques. Utilizing communication ensures client safety and provides messages that are clear to the patient.

Analysis of Therapeutic Techniques

A verbal communication technique that is effective in the healthcare setting is asking open-ended questions. Asking open-ended questions allows the nurse to extract information from the patient while the patient is speaking in their own words. This helps strengthen the nurse-client relationship and allows the patient to freely speak without interruptions. Examples of using open-ended questions in the hospital would be a nurse asking a patient “what are concerns about your diagnosis?”, “What are you most worried about today?”, and “What allergies do you have?”. A barrier to effective communication would be language, such as an individual speaking Spanish. A patient speaking Spanish would be a barrier due to the primary language that most people speak in the United States being English. This could affect nursing care because the patient would not be able to understand what the healthcare workers are saying. Having the patient understand their diagnosis and care they are receiving is crucial for client safety. To overcome this communication barrier the nurse would contact an interpreter to translate.

Another verbal therapeutic communication technique would be clarifying. Clarifying is when the client can describe the problem or situation in more depth to allow the nurse to better understand. A nurse will need clarification on an issue to help provide a plan of care that is

individualized. If the nurse does not understand their problem, it is hard to help resolve the issue. Clarity can also be used to ensure that the client does not have anymore question or concerns about their diagnosis or medications. Examples of this would include “What do you mean by saying that phrase?”, “Could you explain that in greater detail for me?” or “What is your end goal?”. All these examples are ways that the patient could give more information or details to why they are in the hospital. One barrier to clarifying information would be if the patient had a hearing impairment. Having a hearing impairment can be barrier if the patient cannot hear what the nurse or provider is saying, leading to confusion. To help with this barrier the nurse should talk in a clear and simple way without the use of shouting, covering their mouth, or chewing gum. It is also the nurse’s job to identify if hearing aids are being used.

Non-verbal communication techniques count for majority of communicating across the world. A non-verbal technique would include silence. Silence allows patients to absorb information that they have received and gives them time to think about what they need to do next. Giving the patient silence also allows them to reflect on situations, such as when the patient is crying. It is important to remember that sometimes the patient may only need your presence during a difficult time. This enhances verbal communication by allowing them to collect their thoughts on what they should say next, giving them the opportunity to express their feelings when they are ready. Another non-verbal communication technique is active listening. Active listening is when the nurse has their full attention on the patient without any distractions. This technique does not involve planning what should be done for the patient or what is happening next. Active listening is when you hear, observe, and understand the client is saying, this is a crucial part of conveying to the patient that they are important. This enhances verbal communication by letting the patient know that you are interested in what they are saying. The

client is more likely to elicit more information if you are actively listening to them with no distractions.

Reflection

There are many strengths and weaknesses that people encounter due to communication everyday while being a nurse. Some strengths of verbal communication that I have include asking direct questions and giving information. Both types of communication techniques help build a strong relationship between the nurse and client. For nonverbal communication, some strengths that I have are accepting who the client is and silence. Many people are scared to be judged, so being nonjudgmental and accepting who they are is a big part of building rapport. Silence is a good characteristic to have due to allowing people to have time to process what is going on around them. While these are good characteristics there are many weaknesses that I have as well. Maintaining an open posture and stereotyping people are my biggest weaknesses for nonverbal communication. These weaknesses interfere with my ability to gather information, such as categorizing them before they have said anything about themselves. To overcome this weakness, I could be aware of my body language and never make assumptions of people before I have the information that pertains to them. For verbal communication, my downfall is summarizing. This weakness is hard for me to overcome due to the complexity of the cases and information that I receive. I could overcome this weakness by starting with open ended questions to give them more time to explain their reasoning. Two ways that I could improve my interpersonal skills are keeping eye contact and not using medical jargon while interacting with the patient. Using these skills more effectively would increase patient safety and understanding. Challenges that I anticipate seeing while implementing effective communication techniques would be culture, cognitive and developmental impairments, and visually impaired patients. I

would work around cultural differences by having the client explain to me their differences and listening to them without distractions. Cognitive and developmental impairments could be overcome by providing written information or making sure that their caregiver also receives the information about their care. Another barrier that I expect to see in the hospital setting would be visually impaired clients. I would overcome this barrier by identifying myself when walking into the room, explaining everything I am doing before I start, and using a clock while explaining where items are located. These are only some of the barriers that I expect to encounter and there are many solutions that I can use with every patient. What I learned can help make a difference due to all the new knowledge of communication skills that I can apply in the healthcare setting, such as writing down information and maintaining an open posture while in the room. Many of the techniques we talked about I was not aware that I was doing or did not know that I should be doing. The review of the verbal and nonverbal types opened my eyes to new perspectives that not everyone notices.

Conclusion

Using effective communication is essential for every healthcare worker. Knowing the difference between therapeutic and non-therapeutic techniques helps increase the safety of clients and ensures that the messages being conveyed are understood clearly. This irreversible process occurs through verbal connections, body language, emotions, and technology. Communication is used daily by everyone, and majority of communication is non-verbal, such as body language. This complex process includes sending, receiving, and processing information. Having this process ensures that errors do not occur due lack of communication.