

Therapeutic Communication
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Therapeutic communication is a method of purposeful interaction that aids in building trust and relationships. Especially in the healthcare setting, this method of communication is essential for allowing nurses to maintain reliable relationships with clients and their families. When caring for a client, engaging via therapeutic communication helps elicit truthful information regarding their feelings and concerns. In addition to therapeutic techniques, the environment should be manipulated to provide the best space for effective communication and listening. Noise should be limited to minimize the distraction of the nurse or client from one another. The use of active listening itself is essential to the nurse-client dynamic, therefore, by reducing external noises, the ability to do so is simplified. Accompanying limiting noise, the client should also be provided adequate privacy. A client provided with privacy will be more willing to share truthful information with their healthcare provider, therefore, making it another essential piece of therapeutic communication. Along with these environmental factors, other verbal communication techniques such as asking open-ended questions and reflecting help to maintain a therapeutic environment.

Analysis of Therapeutic Techniques

Verbal communication is the transferring of information via spoken or written words in order to convey a specific message. One verbal communication technique used to promote a therapeutic nurse-client interaction is the asking of open-ended questions. These questions cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" and require thoughtful responses from the client. This is one of the most important techniques, for it allows the client to express themselves in a way that provides more information to the healthcare provider. For example, if a nurse were to be conducting an interview with their client, they would use an open-ended question such as "Can you tell me what the pain feels like?" as opposed to asking "Are you in pain?" to elicit

information. This simple adjustment of phrasing helps to provide the nurse with more information to individualize the client's care. Another important verbal communication technique is reflecting. This skill involves revealing the client's feelings behind their messages. If a client were to state, "I am feeling very frustrated about my diagnosis," the nurse could demonstrate reflection by stating, "Could you tell me more about why you feel this way?" to learn more about the client's thoughts.

As mentioned, a critical factor of therapeutic communication is active listening. By doing so, the nurse gives the client their undivided attention to fully comprehend what they are sharing. Due to its importance, the absence of listening is consequently the biggest barrier to patient-client communication. If the patient feels the provider is not engaged with them, the conversation will shut down and the relationship will be damaged. This will, in turn, complicate future care, and the nurse will have to work harder to build back their trust.

Along with verbal communication techniques, there are also non-verbal skills that can be used to promote a therapeutic relationship. Non-verbal communication occurs 80% of the time and should be utilized to enhance verbal communication. A very simple and effective non-verbal technique is offering silence. Allowing the client time to reflect and gather their thoughts gives them the ability to communicate more efficiently with their provider. Whether receiving important education, a difficult diagnosis, or just having a stressful conversation, offering silence is a powerful tool to enhance the interaction altogether. Another technique would be the nurse's position. By facing the client with an open posture and sitting at their level, it shows that the client is the priority. Promoting an engaging conversation with the nurse's body language builds upon verbal communication techniques to create a safe and welcoming environment for the exchange of client information.

Reflection

In my experience, I have found to be very successful with active listening. Recognizing the significance of listening has instilled in me the commitment to ensure that clients feel heard. In addition, maintaining eye contact is another strength of mine. By physically showing your client that you are engaged in what they are saying, it can make your conversation much more meaningful and successful. While these skills have developed over time, I am still working on many others to improve my communication technique even further.

Specifically, I have found that when talking to clients, I tend to overcompensate to show how well I am listening by excessively nodding my head. I am working to improve this skill because I do not want to provide false reassurance to my clients which could later upset or disappoint them. Instead of nodding to everything they are saying, I can instead remember to maintain appropriate eye contact and just focus on the words that the client is sharing with me. I have also felt as though I could improve my communication by re-focusing my client's conversations. Although I love listening to the stories they want to share, I want to work on re-focusing the conversation back to the intended topic. I am going to improve on this by allowing the client to share some information, but instead of promoting even more sharing, I will acknowledge what they said and re-address the topic I want to speak about further.

As I enter the field of nursing as a student, I anticipate that I will face some challenges while implementing effective and therapeutic communication techniques. I expect it will take some practice to be successful in focusing the conversation and ensuring I do not provide any false reassurance. Specifically in regards to avoiding false reassurance, I am going to instead use reflection to help the client find their own answers to remain hopeful. Hope is a very powerful

tool, and by working with the client to develop it, you can guide them to create realistic goals that they can accomplish and be proud of.

Learning about all of the ways in which I can promote a therapeutic relationship with my clients will significantly impact my future nursing care. By acknowledging both how beneficial and harmful certain communication techniques can be to clients, I have realized what an impact you can have as a healthcare provider. From now on, I will always think about how to maximize client interactions by not only thinking about what I am going to say but also how I am going to say it.

Conclusion

Overall, effective use of therapeutic communication is essential to optimize every client interaction. It will promote the exchange of quality information between the healthcare provider and the client, and provide the foundation of a trusting healthcare relationship. These techniques are essential to create an environment in which clients feel heard and supported in their journey toward optimal health.