

Therapeutic Communication

Rachel Dietz

Margaret H. Rollins School of Nursing

Therapeutic communication refers to the process of interacting with patients or clients in a way that promotes their physical and emotional well-being. It is a fundamental skill in nursing and healthcare that goes beyond a regular conversation, as its primary purpose is to help people understand and cope with their health issues, express their feelings and concerns, and make informed decisions about their care. Therapeutic communication establishes trust, creates a supportive and empathetic environment, and facilitates effective information exchange.

Some factors that make up an ideal environment best suited for effective communication include Patients feeling secure that their health information will not be shared with unauthorized individuals. Providing a private and quiet discussion space, using closed doors or curtains, and maintaining strict adherence to patient confidentiality policies ensures this is carried out. In addition to privacy, functional communication tools are critical to establishing a good therapeutic environment. This might include access to medical records and charts, message boards, language interpretation services for non-native speakers, and assistive devices for hearing or speech-impaired patients. Having these tools readily available can enhance the clarity and effectiveness of communication. With that is an assortment of therapeutic techniques to strengthen that nurse-patient relationship.

Analysis of Therapeutic Technique

There are many forms of effective verbal therapeutic communication to build a strong relationship with a patient. Open-ended questioning is used to encourage the patient to respond to how they feel or thoughts they may have in their own words. It provides the nurse with more information to build a strong story background to the patient's health status. For example, ask, "Can you describe how you have been feeling lately?" rather than "Are you feeling okay?". A great combination of open-ended questioning is also using the clarification technique. With this

technique, the best use is to restate, reflect, or explore what information the patient has provided. It allows the patient to provide more detail and examine their thoughts and feelings. The patient has a sense of control when the nurse wishes to clarify details. The patient is reassured that the nurse actively listens and engages in the conversation, building a stronger trust bond. When patients use a vague or unclear language, ask for clarification to ensure you understand their concerns. Say something like, "I want to make sure I understand correctly. Can you explain that in more detail?"

I chose these verbal therapeutic communication techniques because they allow other avenues of techniques that are essential for fostering a trusting nurse-patient relationship and effectively addressing their physical and emotional needs. With the two I have provided, active listening and maintaining an open physical demeanor are also incorporated. Nurses must incorporate open-ended questioning and clarification into their interactions. The combination of these techniques collectively contributes to the delivery of the most patient-centered care possible.

A strong patient-nurse relationship can easily be hindered if the nurse places their biases and prejudices on the patient. Bias can affect the quality of care provided to patients from different backgrounds or beliefs and put up a barrier. Using judgment when speaking to patients results in them refraining from being open and honest about their health status. Nurses play a vital role in overcoming these barriers by employing active listening, cultural competence, empathy, and patient-centered communication techniques to ensure patients receive the best possible care.

Besides verbal communication, there are also nonverbal methods of communication to build upon the nurse-patient relationship. One of those methods is providing an open demeanor

when in the presence of your patient. Body language is 80% of how we communicate naturally. Hence, our actions speak louder than words. Some examples are leaning in when the patient speaks or making sure your arms are not crossed against your chest; this can look as if you are closed off and unwilling to let the patient in. Another form of nonverbal communication is to provide silence when it is needed. This can be used when the patient simply needs the presence of another human being. This allows meaningful time for reflection on the patient's behalf. An example would be if a patient received news that they have terminal cancer; that is heavy information and takes time to digest. That would not be the time for open-ended questioning or teaching; silence provides company and support during a difficult time. Nonverbal communication is a powerful tool that nurses can use to convey empathy, build trust, and create a supportive and therapeutic environment.

Reflection

My strengths for effective communication are my ability to express empathy and understanding of the patient's emotions and experiences. I can respond in a therapeutic way that guides the patient to understand how they feel. I do not feel uneasy in situations that require silence. I understand the importance of silence in a very personal and emotional moment, and I make myself available to be leaned on in any way needed for support. My weakness in effective communication would be using slang words that can be perceived as inappropriate or rude to the patient. For example, it is terms like saying "honey" or "dear". These are words I use in my everyday life, which would put up a barrier between me, and my clients that can make them uncomfortable.

To enhance my interpersonal communication skills, I should reflect on my cultural biases and beliefs to become more aware of how they might impact my interactions with patients from

different backgrounds. I will try to put myself in the patient's shoes and understand their perspective. Show empathy by acknowledging their feelings and emotions. When I interact with patients, I give them my undivided attention—minimizing distractions, maintaining eye contact, and avoiding interruptions. Nodding, summarizing, and using phrases like "I understand" or "Tell me more" can convey my engagement. These easy alterations can go a long way in building rapport with my patients.

Some challenges I see affecting my ability to communicate effectively with my patients would be language or cultural barriers. Patients from diverse backgrounds may have limited English proficiency or different cultural norms that affect communication. I intend to use professional interpreters or translation services to bridge language gaps. Another challenge is if a patient is unwilling to share personal information. Ways I can work around this would be to build trust gradually by demonstrating empathy, respect, and professionalism. Assure patients of the confidentiality of their information and provide resources supporting that. By applying all these acts to my nursing care, I am following the responsibility to give patient-centered care.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I recognize the critical role of therapeutic communication in providing patient-centered care. By applying the techniques and strategies outlined in this essay and being mindful of potential challenges, I am committed to delivering care that respects patient preferences, fosters trust, facilitates information exchange and contributes to better patient outcomes. This essay reels you into a deeper understanding of a nurse-patient relationship. The nurse is more than just someone who administers medications and diagnoses what is wrong with the patient. In many ways, the nurse is often the only advocate or supporter for that patient.

Knowing your patient's holistic needs is just as important, and most often, having the hope to carry on is what a patient needs to get better.