

Communication Paper

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Therapeutic communication is essential in the nursing community as it is a technique that combines multiple approaches to result in successful communication between humans. In addition, therapeutic communication provides purposeful and empathetic exchanges between a nurse and client, which in turn helps to build and maintain a relationship and establish rapport. Therapeutic communication includes trust, empathy, acceptance, and active listening throughout the interaction. An ideal environment for this type of communication is calm and private. There should be minimal distractions, and confidentiality should be endorsed. With this environment, it will enable the client to feel comfortable enough to express their concerns. Therapeutic communication is an essential tool in the nursing profession when used effectively.

Analysis of Therapeutic Techniques

There are many techniques that can be utilized in therapeutic communication. One of the most effective techniques is by using open ended questions. This encourages the client to answer with more than a simple 'yes' or 'no'. This mode promotes the strengthening of the nurse-client relationship, as well as showing the client that you are interested in their feelings and thoughts. The clients are more inclined to give more information and feel comfortable doing so. An example of an open-ended question to ask a client is "What brought you into the hospital today?" The client can respond with their concerns, and not 'yes' or 'no'. This encourages the client to go into more detail about their health needs and questions.

Another technique that balances nicely with asking open ended questions is restating and summarizing. Restating what the client said to you in your own words, helps to clarify and ensure that the client's concerns are properly heard and addressed. Once restating and summarizing what a client has spoken to you, it shows them that you are actively listening. This gives a client assurance that you are hearing as well as validating their feelings. An example of

restating and summarizing is a client may say “I am no longer taking my medication because I don’t like swallowing pills.” A therapeutic communicating nurse may respond by saying “I understand you do not enjoy swallowing pills; I will ask the provider if there are any other alternatives that may make taking your medication easier for you.” This shows the client that you are listening to their concerns and trying to proactively resolve the issue by summarizing what they have just told you.

Despite all the effective tools therapeutic communication offers, there will always be a few barriers to communication. This is not rare to come by in today’s healthcare setting. A common barrier is language and culture. Living in a diverse community, all clientele must be included in their healthcare decisions. To accomplish this, a client must be able to communicate with their provider regardless of their spoken language. There are many means of communication to go around a language barrier, such as an in person certified medical interpreter, a telephone interpreter, video interpreters, and usings means of translation. The best form of communicating with a client who experiences a language barrier is using an in-person method. This is face to face, so all means of communication may be present. Some clientele may request to have family present and interpret for them, which is acceptable if it is their request, but as a patient advocate, we should encourage the use of certified medical interpreters as they are effective.

Therapeutic communication can also be nonverbal communication. There are several forms of nonverbal therapeutic communication techniques such as eye contact. Eye contact is an important factor that enhances verbal communication by showing the client that you are interested and actively listening. Making appropriate eye contact with the client has many

benefits such as showing empathy, improving communication, and enhancing conversation. Eye contact strengthens the nurse-client relationship which promotes trust and rapport.

Another nonverbal technique that enhances therapeutic communication is the appropriate use of distance. This should be a consideration with all communication. Allowing a patient to know that you are coming within close contact of them is important when performing certain tasks. During an interview with a patient a nurse should recognize an appropriate distance of eighteen inches to four feet. This allows for communication between the persons to remain professional and private. Distance is a consideration to ensure the nurse is absorbing what the client says, and for the client to feel a sense of comfort knowing the nurse is giving their undivided attention to the client.

Reflection

Although recognizing the importance of therapeutic communication within the nursing profession, it is important to also self-reflect on your own communication styles and how you can improve to be an effective therapeutic communicator. I believe a strength that I possess in the field of communication is I ask many open – ended questions. I do this to try to engage a client and make better conversation. If having a conversation is only ‘yes’ and ‘no’ questions, both the interviewer and receiver will become uninterested and bored. I try to make my communication engaging by asking a multitude of questions and reflecting to what the client says. One weakness I have encountered in the healthcare setting over the years is that I am very inexperienced with diverse languages. I have tried to implement taking Spanish classes over my schooling. This is because in the community we live in there are many Spanish speaking clients. Unfortunately, with taking classes I still am not able to speak fluently with my Spanish speaking clientele.

I believe a nonverbal therapeutic communication technique I am successful with is maintaining appropriate eye contact. This allows the client to understand that I am actively listening and acknowledging their concerns. One area I need to improve on when speaking with others I tend to fidget with my fingers or shake my legs. This is a weakness I must improve as it may relay a message that I am nervous, bored, or uninterested in the conversation. This body language could be interpreted as indifference or lack of focus to the client.

There are communication skills I would like to improve so that I am an effective therapeutic communicator. With interpersonal communication, you must be self-aware of your body language. I would like to improve my nonverbal communication such as body language as this plays a major factor in how successful or unsuccessful interpersonal communication may be. The demeanor given during a conversation between two people may be beneficial or harmful to the overall outcome of a conversation.

Additionally, being understanding of different cultures and languages improves interpersonal communication, as it includes all parties in a conversation. If a person does not feel included or feels discriminated against due to their culture or language, there will not be positive outcomes from communication.

Nurses today face many challenges when it comes to communicating effectively. One challenge I anticipate facing in my future career is communicating efficiently with all future clients regardless of language barriers. Making clients feel comfortable and confident in my nursing care. An implementation I would like to use in my future practice as a nurse is using the certified medical interpreter for patients who speak Spanish. This will allow them to feel included and cater to their cultural needs. Healthcare should be personalized for every patient,

and with a language barrier this will be hard to achieve. If an in-person interpreter is not readily available, make sure I am knowledgeable in the services available to me at my institution.

What I have learned about communication will make a major impact on my future career as a nurse. Learning skills of therapeutic communication has made me realize that everyone should feel included in their healthcare decisions, not as if they are on the sideline watching. At a time in need clients may feel vulnerable, and feeling as if they have a nurse who listens, includes them, and simply cares about them may play a major role in their recovery.

Conclusion

The nursing profession relies on therapeutic communication to enhance more positive outcomes for their clients. Using multiple approaches to therapeutic communication allows for both the client and nurse to come to a mutual understanding of a desired outcome and plan of care. Communication is a major part of a client's care and is the foundation to executing a plan and goals. Without effective means of therapeutic communication, there will be a hinder to care and unsuccessful outcomes for all parties involved.