

**Communication Paper**

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One of the biggest tasks we will constantly be developing in our future nursing careers is our ability to effectively communicate with our clients. Clients need to feel as though they can trust their nurses to listen, care, and advocate for them. The way nurses establish this trust is by using therapeutic communication, which is the technique of using purposeful body and verbal language to form a connection with clients and their families. A big part of therapeutic communication is to “set the scene”. This is a technique used to provide a comfortable area for the client to communicate in. This can be done by creating a quiet talking space and providing soft lighting. It is a lot harder for someone to let their guard down when they feel as though others are listening to or even judging them. Also, providing less harsh light that is a warmer shade can create a soft and inviting atmosphere where clients feel comfortable. By setting up a comfortable environment, the nurse can now use therapeutic communication techniques to form a true connection based on trust that will assist in providing the best possible care for the client.

### **Analysis of Therapeutic Techniques**

One of the most beneficial and effective therapeutic communication techniques is the use of open-ended questions. I am choosing to speak on this because it takes barely any effort to change a question’s format, but it can truly change the quality of care given to the client. If you are only asking yes or no questions, the client may feel as though you are not interested in what they have to say. Whereas asking them open-ended questions give them space to fully explain how they are feeling about the situation. For example, asking a client if they are nervous about an upcoming procedure and getting an answer of “yes” gives a lot less information than asking a client how they are feeling about their upcoming procedure and getting the response “I am worried about the pain I will feel after”. Open-ended questions give the client space to freely express concerns, which then provides the nurse an opportunity to ease some of these concerns.

Another very important therapeutic communication technique is the proper use of silence, which I feel is important to talk about because it is commonly overlooked. Many people see leaving open spaces of silence during a conversation as awkward, yet it can be extremely beneficial for the client. If the client sees you are leaving open time for them, they are less likely to feel rushed which can increase trust in the nurse-client relationship. For example, after telling a client they are going to be in the hospital for some time, leaving silence allows the client time to digest this news. This shows you understand they are going through something and that you want to give them this time to digest.

Language is probably the biggest barrier facing effective communication. A lot of the demographic at Beebe speaks Spanish as their first language and while they may have a basic understanding of English, it may be hard to understand all the medical information we are providing them. This induces anxiety in non-English speaking clients because they are in an unfamiliar area without a full understanding of what is going on. Luckily, many hospitals now have resources available to combat this barrier. For example, there are in-person and online interpreters to help provide medical information in hundreds of other languages. This ensures that everyone can do their best at providing information to the client in a way they can understand.

A very common form of nonverbal communication is the use of facial expressions, which give insight into what the client is not verbalizing. For example, facial expressions can be used to show pain, anxiety, discomfort, excitement, and so much more. These can be very helpful when trying to gauge how a client is feeling because they may say they are in no pain, but if they are grimacing and furrowing their brow, you can infer that they are just not verbalizing their pain. Using facial expressions alongside verbal communication can give the nurse a bigger picture of

what the client is truly feeling without them having to verbalize every single detail. Another useful form of nonverbal communication is eye contact, which is commonly used by the nurse during a conversation with the client. When used properly, it can show that the nurse is interested in what the client has to say, and that the client has their undivided attention. This makes the client feel that what they say is valued by the nurse and that the nurse is actively listening to them. This used with verbal communication strengthens the trusting bond between the client and nurse, which leads to more efficient client care.

### **Reflection**

One thing I have always been very good at when it comes to communicating is reading a person and identifying body language. I have always been very skilled at catching small facial expression changes on a person's face when they are upset during a conversation. I can usually catch even just a small change in the way a person has shifted their weight when standing and what it might mean. This has always been very helpful when communicating because it has helped me many times before in identifying when someone was upset before they felt comfortable enough to verbalize it. This is extremely helpful when it comes to my friends and family who don't like to verbalize their feelings, because I can usually catch any tension or feelings without them even having to say a word to me. On the other hand, one thing I strongly struggle with is that I am an extremely expressive person with my face. When I think or feel something, it is usually immediately shown on my face without me even realizing it. This is something that will leave me tons of room for improvement when it comes to being a nurse. My clients need to feel as though they can trust me enough to tell me anything even if it is embarrassing or hard to talk about, and by no means can I show negative emotions on my face. I

constantly need to have an approachable expression on my face so that clients will feel safe to communicate their story with me.

I plan to improve my interpersonal communication by working on my public speaking anxiety and my attitude towards constructive criticism and feedback. While I am usually very strong at starting conversations, I find that I struggle with it depending on the person/people I am speaking to. If I have known the person for a while and feel comfortable around them then I am completely fine, but if they are a group of strangers I struggle deeply. This is something I need to work on because, in the hospital I will be part of an interdisciplinary team where I need to be able to speak confidently about my client's care with other members of the team. If I am too nervous to speak to other members of the team then I am not working my hardest to provide proper care for my client. To combat this, I need to work on speaking to people outside my usual group of friends and peers. To do this I can volunteer more in class to share out my ideas, I can speak to more team members on the floor, or I can try to work with other peers I have not spent time with yet on projects and classwork. Another thing I need to work on to better my interpersonal communication is my mindset on constructive criticism and feedback. When I am part of an interdisciplinary team, I need to be able to provide my best care ideas to other members of the team like the physician, nutritionist, CNA, pharmacist, and more. They will not always agree with what I have to say though, they might have a better idea, or they might have found something that I missed. I need to be able to take their feedback without thinking it means they dislike me, don't believe in me, or think I am incapable. To change my mind set on feedback, I need to allow myself to get feedback more frequently and work on accepting it. To help this I can ask peers for feedback on my work and skills in the lab. I can then work on accepting their feedback without thinking it comes with any negative connotations. The goal of

feedback is to provide the best client care possible, not to make anyone feel less than and working on this new mindset will be extremely beneficial to my future as a nurse.

One challenge I might face with effective communication could be information overload. When speaking with a client we give them tons of information all at once. If we are giving them information on medications, wound care, upcoming procedures, referrals, things to avoid, and more, they are likely to become confused because this is a lot to digest all at once. So, while you may be using every effective communication technique if the client is overloaded, they are still not fully grasping what is being taught to them. A good way to prevent this is by providing detailed printed handouts and resources for the client to use. That way once they are more levelheaded, they can refer to the resources and get the details they missed. Knowing what I know now about effective communication will greatly better my communication skills during my nursing career. I now have a better understanding of how to use body language and silence to create a welcoming environment for my client to communicate in. I can use my new knowledge to prevent any ineffective conversations with clients that could cause uncomfortable or anxious feelings.

### **Conclusion**

Nurses are at the forefront of almost every client's care, not only medically but emotionally. They are there for the client when no one else can be and provide them with what they need to heal mentally and physically. Effective communication is one of the most important skills needed by a nurse to provide the best possible care they can. It opens the door to a trusting and collaborative relationship between the nurse and client, where the main goal is effective care. It is highly important that nurses are constantly trying to better their proficiency of skills for effective communication to better their ability to care for every need the client has.