

The Importance of Therapeutic Communication in Nursing

Ayanna Williams

Margaret H. Rollins School of Nursing

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Mrs. Hesel, MSN, RN

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Therapeutic communication is the use of distinctive methods and techniques to develop an open and honest relationship between clients and their support system. It is essential to the nursing practice because it provides a safe space for the client to express their personal thoughts, feelings, concerns, or needs at the time. It also prioritizes the desire to issue holistic care to ensure the client's safety and comfort. Privacy and the lack of additional noise are two key factors that create an environment best suited for effective communication. Privacy verifies that the client is in a confidential area where they can openly share personal information while feeling comfortable. Additional noise has a negative impact because it can cause distractions for the client in effectively communicating their concerns or comprehending the information provided by the nurse. So, having discussions in a quiet setting is crucial. To develop a successful nurse-client therapeutic relationship, it is important to understand and demonstrate therapeutic techniques during the nurse's time of care.

Analysis of Therapeutic Techniques

One critical verbal therapeutic communication technique is active listening. Active listening requires full attention on the client and shows that what they are expressing is important. It is a way for the client to feel heard, accepted, and appreciated, especially during vulnerable moments. One of the biggest inhibitors of effective therapeutic communication is the absence of active listening. Without listening and interpreting, the nurse is not able to understand the clients' statements and could be translated as if the nurse were uninterested. So, being present in the moment, utterly understanding, and responding appropriately is valuable to provide and encourage an open space to express concerns. Active listening could be used when a client is distressed and anxious about their recent cancer prognosis. A proper response could be, "It

sounds like this is causing you a lot of distress, would you like to tell me how you feel?” Not only does this show that you are paying attention to what they are claiming, but it also shows a sense of empathy and allows the client to confide and trust in the nurse.

Another verbal therapeutic communication technique that is vital to enhancing the nurse-client relationship is open-ended questioning. Again, this technique allows the client to have a safe and secure space to share their experiences, concerns, feelings, or even personal values. Asking closed-ending questions, with a simple yes or no answer, only provides so much detail. Open-ended questions give a chance for the client to elaborate on their statements or can provide clarity for the nurse to understand the extent of the situation. For example, pain assessment is a necessity during a head-to-toe assessment. Simply asking, “Are you feeling any pain” will just provide little to no detail and the nurse will have to seek additional information. Instead, the question of “Can you describe the pain that you are feeling to me?” will continue the conversation for the client to communicate where the pain is, the extent, when it started, etc.

Although there are specific techniques to improve the quality of care and communication, there are also barriers that can interfere with efforts. For example, hearing impairments, specifically in the geriatric population, could inhibit the effectiveness of communication. When a client is unable to hear, information can be easily altered or misinterpreted. This could significantly affect treatment plans, client wishes, client consent for surgeries, or even medication administration. Thus, the nurse should position themselves in a way that the client can read lips, speak with clear and short sentences, avoid chewing gum or shouting, and initiate nonverbal cues. If the client has a present hearing aid, the nurse should verify that it is placed properly to ensure that the necessary care is provided and expressed appropriately.

While verbal communication techniques are valuable to have successful client interactions, nonverbal techniques are used to enhance verbal communication. Nonverbal communication can have a more significant impact than the message itself and stands for 80% of communication. It can add emotional color, compliment, strengthen, and reinforce verbal communication. One effective nonverbal technique is body language. Body language can include eye contact, facial gestures, posture, and overall appearance. Positive body language such as an open posture, eye contact, or a smile can reassure the client that the nurse is interested in the conversation and there to provide excellent and individualized care. For instance, if a client is expressing their fears about an upcoming surgery, leaning forward and having a caring facial expression can enhance the fact that the nurse is interested and will work toward the best interest of the client.

In addition, silence is a constructive nonverbal technique to use. Silence gives the client an ample amount of time to process and share what is on their mind without interruptions. It also allows the nurse to offer themselves and be present towards the client at a needed time. Similar to active listening, it allows the client to feel comfortable and open to sharing their feelings or concerns. Instead of avoiding the situation, silence is a way for the client to develop meaningful reflections about their own experiences and think about what is said next during the conversation.

Reflection

One of my personal strengths in effective communication is showing empathy toward clients. I find being aware and understanding their feelings are essential because it proves that they are not alone in their circumstances. I am able to form valuable connections with clients to build trust, effectively listen to their concerns, and appreciate who they are as a person, rather than seeing

them as a diagnosis. A go-to phrase that typically works when I work with clients is “I’m here for you and here to listen”. This shows that I am working outside of myself and open to hearing any hesitations that the client may have. One of my weaknesses that can inhibit my efforts is body language gestures. When I try to concentrate on my surroundings, I tend to tap my foot or swing my body back and forth. These gestures could be interpreted as uninterest or that I am rushing clients and have other priorities. I am also a very hopeful person and immediately want to reassure someone that everything will be okay. Initially, I saw it as a comforting measure for the client to feel less anxious, but instead, it can do more harm than good.

In order to improve my interpersonal communication skills, I must be mindful of my presence during interactions with clients. I must continue to be aware that the constant swinging could be deemed as impatient or unwilling to listen to the conversation. I have to maintain an open posture, maintain eye contact, and use effective nonverbal cues to show that I am actively listening and willing to understand. I will also avoid using false reassurance statements towards the client. Instead, I could reflect and elaborate on what their feelings are toward the situation. I could ask open-ended questions to emphasize their thoughts and possible coping strategies that could be used.

In healthcare, there is a diverse population that needs to be taken care of. A diverse population comes with different languages, beliefs, religions, or impairments. There could be difficulties with interpretations or understandings based on these differences and effective communication techniques are needed. For example, visually impaired clients will be successful based on a nurse who speaks while entering the room, providing explanations of actions before touch, orienting the client to the surrounding sounds, ensuring that the client has their glasses if applicable, and

the clock face method could be used for eating. For my future clients, it is essential to implement care specific to the client rather than initiating the “expected care plan” for the condition.

Based on what I learned about effective therapeutic communication, I am now able to identify the correct verbal and nonverbal techniques to use during my nursing practice. The goal of nursing is to provide patient-centered care, and it is only possible through productive communication. Using techniques such as active listening, an open posture, open-ended questioning, and silence allows me to create a welcoming, empowering, and comforting environment for clients to know that it is acceptable to be vulnerable and accepted.

Conclusion

Therapeutic communication is key to fostering a safe and comforting environment, with privacy and a lack of noise, for the client to express their true intentions. Although verbal techniques, such as active listening and open-ended questions, are important to make sure that the client feels accepted, nonverbal techniques strengthen and enhance the communication process. Nonverbal communication, such as silence and body language, are used 80% of the time and show how the client truly feels through their message. Being aware of different barriers including language, beliefs, religion, or physical impairments is critical to creating a holistic plan of care. Through personal reflection, I was able to grasp the concept of being aware of my own actions as they can be portrayed in an unintended way. Overall, therapeutic communication enhances the open and honest nurse-client relationship and promotes effective care.