Unit 2: Psychiatric Nursing

Many factors contribute to good, healthy communication between a nurse and a patient. There are many components to nonverbal expression. Some of these components may include facial expressions, body movements, eye contact, and touch, to name a few. I think it will be very important to remember these factors while communicating with every patient, coworker, and family member that I encounter.

I have gotten comments from family members and friends that I always keep good eye contact while communicating with them. I like to keep good eye contact because it helps me listen better, as well as show the other person that I care. I know that when I am talking, I like the other person to make eye contact with me as well. I will use this self-awareness and continue to use this method of nonverbal expression to make patients and everyone else around me feel heard and cared about.

On the contrary, though, I have been told that my face does not appear very positive when resting. I think this comment is crucial to keep in mind when interacting with others in the medical field. I know that I should always try to keep my down-turned mouth smiling, my furrowed eyebrows raised, and my eyes bright so that I do not mis-convey any feelings. Most of the time I am in a decent mood and feeling good, it is never on purpose that I look mad or stern. Another thing I have been told about my facial expressions, is that my face is very easy to read. I will have to remember to try and hide inappropriate or unnecessary emotions when needed. For example, if a patient does something appropriate to try and make others laugh, I should not feed into the behavior. As well as that, if a patient says something mean or rude, I should not get a mean or rude look on my face, so that I can stay professional.

Considering the touch component of nonverbal communication, I have never been very fond of it from people that I do not know. As someone who was not often comforted by touch growing up, it has never come naturally to give or receive therapeutic touch. In fact, touch from strangers, or unexpected touch, makes me uncomfortable, and I often assume that it will for others. I will have to remember that this is usually not the case. A lot of people feel reassured and comforted with small touches, such as rubbing their back or grabbing their hand.

As for verbal communication, there are many ways to do so. Verbal communication can be therapeutic or nontherapeutic. Therapeutic communication can help a patient feel comfortable to vent or express their concerns about life and their situation. On the other hand, nontherapeutic communication can lead to miscommunication and offense. I have never been the best at therapeutic conversation because I do not usually talk about my own feelings with others, but with practice it can improve. I have been told that I am a very blunt, or straight-forward, communicator by family and friends. While this can be good, it does not always happen that way. I can keep this in mind when trying to communicate with people, and I can remember to speak softly and with comforting words.

I can use all this self-awareness to improve what I struggle with and continue what I may already be good at. I can do therapeutic actions, like holding my patient's hand while talking, sitting near them, nodding while listening, and asking them to "tell me more", when they seem hesitant. I can also refrain from nontherapeutic things like disapproving thoughts, giving false reassurance, or giving advice or personal opinions. Although I can share input if asked for, I will have to remember that the conversation is not about me, but about the patient.

Self-awareness and practice of communicating therapeutically will all contribute to me being an active listener with everyone that I talk to. According to an article, What is Active Listening, "Active listening is when you not only hear what someone is saying, but also attune to their thoughts and feelings" (Gallo). Active listening will show the client that I care and will help build the rapport that I need to find out the information that I need. When patients trust you, they are more likely to tell you their problems, and that is critical for diagnosing, planning, and

curing. Active listening will make me a better nurse overall and help me to provide both medical and mental care.

Work Cited

Gallo, Amy. “What Is Active Listening?” *Harvard Business Review*, 5 Apr. 2024, hbr.org/2024/01/what-is-active-listening.