



## Culturally Sensitive Care MODULE 07

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# Elements of Providing Culturally Sensitive Care: Non-Verbal Communication Strategies

**The goal of this learning module is to identify elements of providing culturally sensitive care.**

### **What Will I Learn?**

By completing this learning module on Non-verbal Communication Strategies you will learn to:

- Identify the importance of non-verbal communication and how it may be interpreted in a culturally diverse situation
- Understand the importance of non-verbal communication as it relates to the therapeutic nurse-client relationship
- Develop an understanding of the importance of non-verbal communication in situations, clients' perspectives and what the relevance of non-verbal communication is to them
- Identify non-verbal communication strategies that will improve communication between the nurse and the client

### **How Will I Learn?**

- By reviewing the content provided relating to non-verbal communication strategies and how a nurse will utilize this as part of the therapeutic nurse-client relationship
- By reviewing the case study
- By analyzing the case study and reflecting on the content and how it relates to your values and beliefs
- By utilizing your nursing knowledge, experience and expertise to determine if there are other alternatives or approaches
- By applying what you have learned in this module to your nursing practice

## Non-Verbal Communication Strategies

Non-verbal communication is useful in conveying and receiving information. Techniques such as the following examples are useful in communicating with the client:

- Demonstrations
- Gestures
- Use of pictures or diagrams
- Written translation of information

It is important to observe non-verbal reactions, like facial expressions, body posturing and tone of voice, as these are helpful in assessing the client. It is equally important to explore the meaning behind all client responses and ask for clarification when necessary.

It is also imperative for nurses to confirm their impressions with the client to ensure accurate interpretation of non-verbal cues. For example; in some cultures nodding the head means no and shaking the head means yes.

By clearly understanding how the client may perceive the nurse or the situation, the nurse is able to correct misperceptions and achieve a common understanding. Nurses want to appear open, receptive and interested at all times with a client. Restrictive body language, such as crossing of the arms, using a gruff voice, rolling the eyes and looking at a watch while talking to a client, gives a silent message that the nurse is not interested in the client.

Each situation requires its own strategy. Nurses must think and act critically to always determine the best approach to communication and be committed to seeking the most effective and therapeutic means to communicate with clients. This effort will undoubtedly enhance the relationship and patient outcomes.

## Case Study

*Keep a notebook to write down your ideas and answers to the questions in the following case studies*

**The Situation:** A young couple presents at Urgent Care at the local community hospital with their toddler who is crying uncontrollably and tugging at his ears.

The couple has recently moved to Canada from Yugoslavia and it appears that the father understands English well enough and it appears language is not an issue. The mother is deaf so he uses sign language to communicate with his wife.

Upon examination, it is evident that the child has an ear infection in both ears. They are given a prescription for an antibiotic and Tylenol for fever and pain.

The clinical presentation was fairly routine and the nurse determined an interpreter was not needed, given the father was communicating well with his wife as she was nodding in response to his sign language.

The next day, the couple presents again to Urgent Care and their child is worse. The child has discharge in both ears and an elevated temperature. The family is quite visibly upset. The nurse arranges for an interpreter.

The interpreter tells the nurse that they gave the medicine every four hours but administered the Tylenol in the child's ears as that's what they did the last time.

## Reflection

Based on the information presented in this case study:

1. What are some strategies the nurse should consider to resolve this situation?
2. Does this nurse have a culturally sensitive practice issue or the potential for a problem?
3. In your analysis, identify the Professional Standards that are not being met in this situation.
4. Review this case with a colleague and discuss your results. Consider the following when determining if a culturally sensitive situation is a problem.

## Discussion

This is an excellent example of how important it is to ensure the clients clearly understand what is being communicated. The nurse needs to confirm that accurate information has been provided.

The nurse could have demonstrated how to measure then administer both medications. Culturally appropriate client information and education materials would also have been helpful.

### **Consider the following when determining if a culturally sensitive situation is a problem.**

*The following worksheet allows you to capture your ideas!*

1. What are the potential or actual risks to the patient if this situation does not get resolved?

2. How does this issue conflict with CNO's Standard of Practice? Which Standards?

3. What practice setting or unit policies/procedures are you unable to meet?

4. Who else is affected by this issue/problem?

5. How could you resolve this issue or problem? If you are not able to, who would you go to?

6. What resources might give direction to resolve the issue/problem?

7. What ideas or suggestions can you offer to resolve the problem?