

Nursing Communication: What Matters Most

Theresa Jizba, DNP, AGACNP-BC, ACHPN
Mandy Kirkpatrick, PhD, RN, FAAN, FNAP

Creighton
UNIVERSITY
College of Nursing

NICHE + Nebraska Methodist Hospital Regional Geriatric
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Objectives

1. Describe the role of the nurse in difficult conversations.
2. Discuss communication tools and therapeutic communication skills.
3. Demonstrate therapeutic communication within a difficult conversation.



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Disclosures

No financial interests or conflicts to disclose.

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Communication in Nursing Education

NCP Guidelines:

- "Palliative care principles and practices can be delivered by any clinician caring for the seriously ill, and in any setting"
 - Primary vs. Specialty Palliative Care

AACN Essentials:

- "Communicate effectively with individuals"
 - Demonstrate honesty and integrity
 - Elicit values and goals
 - Keep patient and family informed
 - Communicate with the interprofessional team



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The Role of the **Nurse**



Nurses are key witnesses and the “constant” at the bedside.

- Support
- Advocate
- Collaborate

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Empathetic Communication Strategies



Listening

Naming

Exploring

Supporting

VitalTalk, 2019

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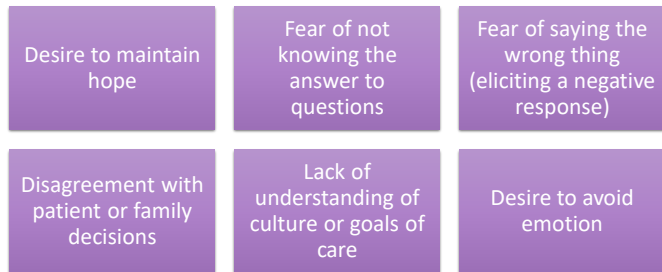
Attentive Listening

- Set the right atmosphere and mindset
- Does the patient need/want to talk?
- Be silent
- Encourage the patient to talk
- Describe what you're seeing or hearing rather than giving advice

ELNEC Core Curriculum, 2023

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Barriers to Communication



ELNEC Core Curriculum, 2023

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Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication



ELNEC Core Curriculum, 2023

80% of communication is nonverbal

- Body language
- Eye contact
- Gestures
- Tone of voice

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Exemplar: “Don’t Try to Fix It, Just Listen”



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Empathetic Communication Strategies



VisualTAK, 2019

Listening

Naming

Exploring

Supporting

Quick Communication Guide

Responding to Emotion: Respecting

Responding to Emotion: Articulating empathy using NURSE statements

NURSE statements for articulating empathy

	Example	Notes
Naming	"It sounds like you are frustrated"	In general, turn down the intensity a notch when you name the emotion
	"This helps me understand	Think of this as another kind of acknowledgement but stop short of

VisualTAK, 2019



Scenario #1:

An oncologist just told the patient that she has cancer and offered the option of treating the cancer or hospice care. The oncologist told the nurse that the patient would need additional support today after this difficult news. The nurse walks into the room...

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Naming

It sounds like you may be feeling...

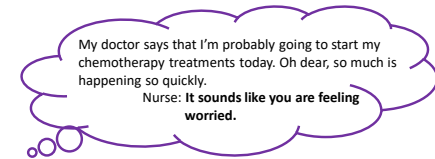
- Sad
- Scared
- Frustrated
- Overwhelmed
- Anxious
- Nervous
- Angry

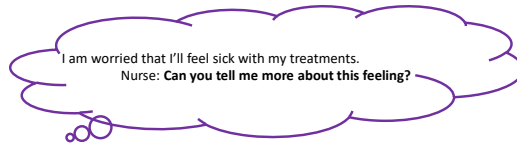
This must be...

Frustrating
Overwhelming
Scary
Difficult
Challenging
Hard

VisualTalk, 2019

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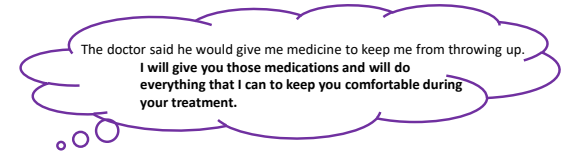


Exploring

- What is on your mind?
- Tell me more...
- Can you **help me understand** what you mean when you say ["I don't want to give up..."]?
- Can you **tell me more** about what [a miracle, fighting, not giving up, etc.] might look like for you?

VisualTalk, 2019

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Supporting

- "I wish" vs. "I'm sorry"
- "We will do our best to ensure you have what you need."
- "Our team is here to help you with this."
- Continuing the supportive role through bedside nursing report

VisualTalk, 2019

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Conversations must start with the **Patient**

- Assess Understanding (Ask – Tell – Ask)
- What worries you most?
- What is most important to you?



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Scenario #2:

The patient with heart failure came to the hospital with a high fever and was diagnosed with pneumonia. The cardiology team says that her heart failure is worsening despite all medical management. The nurse walks into the room...

ASK
TELL
ASK

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How to respond to...

"Is there any hope?"

Supporting: There are different things we hope for.

Exploring: Can you tell me what you hope for?

"I'm hoping for a miracle."

Supporting: I hope that for you too.

Exploring: Can you share what a miracle might look like to you?

Empathetic Responses Handout, 2019

Scenario #3:

A patient with severe lung disease has been struggling with dyspnea. She is planning to discharge to her daughter's home with hospice care. An hour ago, the patient was given a dose of oxycodone to treat her dyspnea. The nurse walks into the room...

Primary Palliative Care Education

End-of-Life Nursing Consortium (ELNEC)

- <https://www.aacnnursing.org/elneec>

Vital Talk

- <https://www.vitaltalk.org/>

Fast Facts Directory (Supporting primary palliative in a variety of challenging situations)

- <https://www.mypcnow.org/fast-facts/>

Simulation

- Difficult conversations
- End-of-life nursing care

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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