

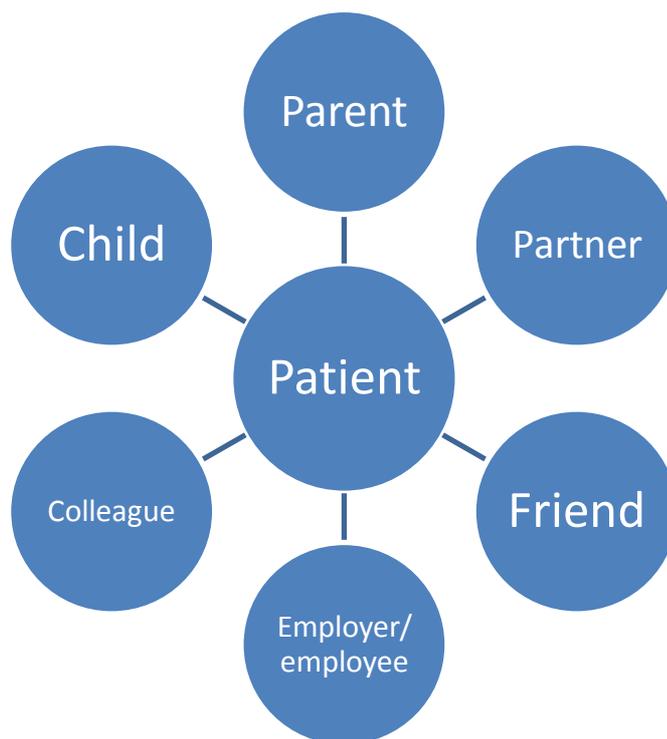


# Communicating in practical/clinical settings

Good communication skills are important for practicals as well as for your everyday interactions with clients once you enter the workplace. Developing verbal and non-verbal strategies to convey empathy and professionalism is an important part of the learning process.

## Earning clients' trust

Clients who see you for treatment bring not only their injury/illness with them but a range of roles, responsibilities, and relationships in their personal lives which this injury/illness will impact. It is important to keep in mind these many roles, responsibilities, and relationships and how the injury/illness may affect them.



Adapted from Candlin (2008, p. 27).

As a health care professional, you should strive to convey the following qualities:

- Warmth and caring
  - Trust
  - Genuineness and sincerity
  - Sympathy and empathy
- (Tamparo & Lindh 2008, pp. 63-64).

### **Verbal communication**

As a health care professional, it is important to follow the principles below when it comes to verbal communication with clients.

<b>You should be</b>	<b>What this means</b>
Accurate	Convey the facts, be specific and correct
Factual	Convey the facts, be honest and truthful
Objective	Do not make subjective comments or make negative comments about other people
Complete	Include all information relevant to the client; do not omit details
Concise	Avoid repetition, be brief and direct
Contemporaneous	Be timely in reporting important information, especially deterioration
Culturally sensitive	Be sensitive to other cultures and beliefs

Adapted from Halley (2009, p. 141).

Roadblocks to meaningful communication which should be avoided include:

- Moralising or lecturing
  - Being defensive
  - Evading a subject or not answering questions
  - Contradicting or criticising the client
  - Condescending or ridiculing them
- (Tamparo & Lindh 2008, p. 68).

It is also important to be aware of and sensitive to other people's different cultural backgrounds. Some barriers to multicultural communication that should be avoided include:

- Lack of knowledge of cultural differences
  - Biases and prejudices
  - Stereotypes
- (Tamparo & Lindh 2008, pp. 31-34).

Some key cultural and religious differences to keep in mind when dealing with different types of clients are discussed in Tamparo and Lindh (2008, pp. 39-46).

### **For English as a Second Language speakers**

If English is your second language and you plan to study and work in an Australian setting, it is worthwhile developing your English language conversation skills. The more comfortable you become speaking and listening to others in English, the easier it will be to communicate with clients.



There are many English language conversation groups and classes, many of them free, around Adelaide. A list of available classes can be found on the Study Help website under the Developing your English section. Under this section you will also find useful resources for developing your English and information about different clubs you can join to gain experience socially speaking and interacting in English.

Many clients will use colloquial phrases and slang in their everyday conversations which you may not recognise. For a list of commonly used phrases and their meanings, see Halley (2009, pp. 107-131).

### **Non-verbal communication**

In addition to developing verbal communication, it is important to be aware of your non-verbal communication. If your body language or facial expressions appear to contradict what you are saying, this can upset clients. Be conscious of the non-verbal signals you convey. In particular, avoid the gestures below which indicate impatience, anger or disinterest:

- finger tapping
- fidgeting
- clenching fists
- shrugging

(Tamparo & Lindh 2008, pp. 15-18).

### **Practice**

The more practice you have, the more confident you will be communicating with clients, responding to their queries, and interpreting and providing client cues in the healthcare environment.

### **References**

Candlin, S 2008, *Therapeutic communication: a lifespan approach*, Pearson Education Australia, Frenchs Forest, NSW.

Halley, MB 2009, *A guide for international nursing students in Australia and New Zealand*, Elsevier, Chatswood, NSW.

Tamparo, CD & Lindh, WQ 2008, *Therapeutic communications for health care*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Thomson Delmar Learning, Clifton Park, NY.