

You are assigned to care for Mrs. Jones, an 84-year-old woman who was admitted to the hospital 2 days ago after falling at her son's home. She recently moved in with her son, her only child, following the sudden death of her husband.

Her husband had been her primary caregiver since she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease 3 years ago.

Neither her husband nor her son wanted to put her into a long-term care facility.

She had emergency surgery to repair a fractured wrist.

During shift report on a medical-surgical unit, the nurse tells you that the patient is withdrawn and confused.

In addition, she has difficulty understanding verbal direction from the nursing staff.

1 Which steps are necessary to effectively communicate with a cognitively impaired patient?

When you approach the patient to perform an initial assessment, she is looking out the window and seems disoriented. She appears disheveled, and her lunch tray is untouched. You ask her if she needs assistance with ADLs such as bathing, dressing, and feeding, but you get a response that you cannot understand.

2 What should you do first to prepare to communicate with Mrs. Jones? Explain your choice(s).

You contact her son, who is her legal guardian; he tells you that he doesn't know his mother's baseline level of functioning because his father had been in denial about her mental decline and overall deterioration. The son does not know if she is capable of managing her own ADLs or needs assistance.

3 Describe strategies to use to determine Mrs. Jones' own sense of her ability to perform ADLs.

1 Ensure that the environment is quiet and free from disturbance. Show empathy and respect, speak slowly and clearly, and face the patient when speaking to her. Give the patient time to process and respond to the information. Obtain an accurate health history; use collateral sources to obtain health information.

Perform a mini-mental examination or tool used by your institution to establish a baseline of the patient's cognitive status. Repeat information as needed. Encourage patient to use any form of communication that she feels comfortable using. Avoid arguing with her.

2 Pause and consider your feelings and thoughts that are interacting with the cognitively impaired patient.

Assess orientation status of patient.

Try a calm, firm approach using a comfortable voice.

Use simple language. Make sure that patient has hearing aid and/or glasses.

3 Strategies useful to communicate effectively with a cognitively impaired patient include use of touch to aid concentration and offer encouragement, pictorial drawings, gestures, and yes-or-no questions

Which approach reflects an obstacle to effective nurse-patient communication?

1 Discussing fears about a patient with members of the health care team

2 Obtaining information about a critically ill patient from his or her family

3 Avoiding issues that are uncomfortable for a patient

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Rationale: A therapeutic nurse-patient relationship is goal directed.

It can also include the need to help a patient discuss any pertinent topics, whether comfortable or uncomfortable

The nurse is caring for a postoperative patient who is still having pain despite analgesia administration.

Which statement by the nurse best reflects therapeutic communication?

1 “I think your doctor needs to know that you’re still in pain.”

2 “What do you want me to do about your pain problem?”

3 “When it comes to pain, your doctor tends to undermedicate his patients.”

4 “Your pain will be a lot better in the morning.”

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- 4 “Your pain will be a lot better in the morning.”**

Rationale: Therapeutic communication is goal directed, which in this situation is better pain management for the patient.

A patient recovering from a bilateral mastectomy for breast cancer tearfully tells the nurse that she is feeling depressed and worthless as a woman. Which communication phrase is not effective?

1 “Many women have body image concerns after undergoing this surgery.”

2 “Tell me more about how you feel.”

3 “Why do you feel depressed and worthless?”

4 “How long have you been feeling this way?”

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Rationale: The use of “why” questions may cause defensiveness in the patient and hinder communication. The other options promote communication by encouraging the patient to communicate.

Which initial approach would be best when working with an anxious patient?

1 Tell the patient that everything he or she says will be kept private.

2 Ask the patient what he or she believes is causing his or her anxiety.

3 Watch the patient's behavior for the amount of anxiety being exhibited.

4 Explain what the patient can expect in terms that he or she can understand.

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Rationale: The nurse needs to first assess the level of anxiety so appropriate communication techniques and strategies can be used. The patient may not have the insight to understand what is currently causing his or her behavior.

A nurse is working with a potentially threatening patient. Which nursing intervention is most appropriate?

1 Speaking clearly and slightly louder so the patient does not need the nurse to repeat what was said.

2 Positioning himself or herself near the exit of the room to prevent being blocked by the patient.

3 Bringing in other team members so the patient knows there are others to help him or her gain control.

4 Asking the patient which comfort measures he or she uses when he or she becomes out of control.

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Rationale: Speaking louder and bringing in other team members may be perceived as threatening and may cause the patient's behavior to become out of control faster. The patient may not be aware of his or her behavior; therefore asking about comfort measures to relieve the threatening behavior may also cause him or her to escalate. The nurse may need to leave the room quickly. By positioning himself or herself near the door, he or she should not be trapped by the patient.

A visitor from another country became ill and required hospitalization. He is having difficulty getting the staff to understand his needs. Which approach by the nurse demonstrates the most cultural sensitivity?

1 Asking one of the patient's family members to help with the communication process

2 Using good eye contact while speaking clearly with easily understood words

3 Obtaining a medical interpreter to facilitate the communication Process

4 Touching the patient more often while assessing him to make him feel that the nurse cares about him

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Rationale: Direct eye contact and excessive touch can be offensive to persons from certain cultures. The patient's right to privacy must be guarded; therefore the use of a medical interpreter provides for correct, confidential communication.

A patient is exhibiting signs and symptoms of anxiety. What should be the first step in establishing communication with him or her?

1 Providing good personal hygiene

2 Letting the patient make as many choices as possible

3 Being nonjudgmental and accepting of feelings

4 Exhibiting appropriate nonverbal behaviors and active listening skills

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Rationale: Patients with anxiety need assistance in clarifying factors that cause the anxiety and coping more effectively.

Active listening helps to identify the source of the anxiety.

Meeting basic needs and being nonjudgmental and accepting of feelings is important but not your first step. Ultimately once a cause for anxiety is known, you can help the patient by letting him or her make as many choices about care as possible.

A nurse is working with an older adult with a cognitive impairment who is having a tantrum and acting hostile toward other patients in the dayroom.

Which approach by the nurse is most appropriate to handle this situation?

- 1 Asking three other staff members to help put the patient back to bed
- 2 Using the patient's favorite crackers to distract him from the other patients
- 3 Explaining to the patient how he will benefit by behaving better
- 4 Asking the family how they managed the tantrums while the patient was still living at home

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Rationale: Distraction is often effective for this type of patient. Strategies that may have worked before may not be as effective now. There is no time to call the family when the patient is already hostile. A show of force could make the patient agitated.

A patient recovering from a recent amputation of his foot because of diabetes has been very withdrawn and not sleeping or eating well. Which initial nursing intervention would be most effective to help him with his depression?

1 Suggesting the use of antidepressant medication to his health care provider

2 Spending time with the patient and telling him how lucky he is that he was able to keep most of his leg

3 Talking with physical therapy about how soon he can be fitted for a prosthesis

4 Encouraging the patient to talk about his feelings while allowing angry outbursts

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Rationale: Even though being positive about the situation is a strategy, this patient is grieving for the loss of his extremity and is depressed. Antidepressant medications are not given initially. The patient needs the opportunity to express feelings, especially anger, which is normal behavior. The health care provider, not the physical therapist, would be consulted about when he would be evaluated for a prosthesis.

**The nurse is preparing to provide patient education.
Which question is most appropriate for the nurse to ask?**

- 1 Are you ready to learn now?
- 2 Can you use a computer?
- 3 Is your family here to learn also?
- 4 How do you best learn?

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Rationale: The method of instruction should be based on the patient's preferred method of learning. It can incorporate a variety of methods that would be appropriate for the information being conveyed and how the patient learns best.

The other options are either demeaning (option 1), too narrow in scope and closed ended (option 2) or family-centered instead of patient-centered (option 3).