

can create problems or discomfort for people from many cultures. Nurses need not abandon hands on a shoulder or arm to show support and caring. Rather, clients should feel empowered to tell the nurse if such touching makes them feel uncomfortable.

- **Gestures:** People from some cultures may be more animated than others, using gestures and body language to communicate. Gestures that have a positive meaning in one culture may be considered insulting and rude in another.
- **Eye contact:** Traditionally, Americans have valued direct eye contact as a sign of confidence and respect, whereas not making eye contact has negative connotations. However, in many cultures, making eye contact with an authority Figure is considered an insult.
- **Silence:** People from some cultures prefer active verbal interaction and are uncomfortable with silence. Other cultures may value periods of contemplative silence. Cultural characterizations of the meaning of silence may lead to potential misunderstandings of communication style and motivation.
- **Body language:** The body is one of the more subtle ways people communicate meaning and sincerity. For example, a nurse may say all the right things but communicate tension through his or her body language.

Kinesics, the meaning of motor actions, and proxemics, the function of space in nonverbal communication, also play important roles in all aspects of life.