

Internalizing the principles of empathy, respect, and genuineness makes it possible for the nurse to demonstrate these behaviors and experience satisfaction in professional nursing practice. These principles also help nurses to establish healthy, helping relationships with clients and their significant others.

HELPING RELATIONSHIPS: THE NURSE AS HELPER

The nurse–client relationship is a special helping relationship that has the power to transform the lives of both the client and the nurse. Nurses tailor this private, platonic relationship to fit the needs of the individual client. Because the nurse has specialized knowledge and expertise to serve humanity, the nurse assumes the role of helper.

Rogers (1958) set the following essential conditions of a helping relationship, which are applicable to professional nursing.

1. The individual is capable of and expected to be responsible for him- or herself.
2. Each individual (the nurse and the client) has a strong drive to become mature and to be socially responsible.
3. The climate of the helping relationship is warm and permits the expression of both positive and negative feelings.
4. Limits, mutually agreed on, are set on behavior only, not on attitudes.
5. The helper communicates understanding and acceptance.

These characteristics of helping have positively influenced many health care professionals and serve as criteria for nurses as they develop effective helping relationships.

Nurses bear the responsibility to fulfill a helper role, regardless of the specific parameters and purposes of each relationship. The nurse must validate that the client knows why help was sought. The nurse also assumes that both the client and the nurse will share the responsibility for the outcomes of the nursing encounter. The nurse's helping role is viewed as a facilitative one in which the nurse uses self and expertise as therapeutic tools to assist the client to overcome threats to health and well-being or to obtain optimal health.

The nurse and the client bring unique talents, skills, and characteristics that affect the development of a helping relationship () (Benner, 1984, 2001; Northouse & Northouse, 1998; Riley, 2017). The nurse uses client strengths to facilitate the helping relationship. When the client is confused or unresponsive, his or her significant others (e.g., family members, close friends, those having medical power of attorney) bring these attributes into the therapeutic relationship. At times, as the nurse delivers physical care to the client, efforts are made to fulfill the psychosocial and spiritual needs of the client's significant others.

Theories on Therapeutic Relationship Development

Although the nurse always assumes the roles of facilitator, advocate, and coordinator, his or her specific functions and purposes evolve as the relationship proceeds through predictable sequential stages.

vary according to the relationship's helping purpose. For example,

The facilitator helps the client move toward improved health.

The advocate protects the client from stress inherent in the petitioner role and acts on behalf of the client in promoting access to and use of health care services.

The coordinator attempts to organize and articulate all the services related to meeting the client's health