

Phase 2: Initiation. The nurse uses a variety of therapeutic communication techniques and demonstrates genuine concern, compassion, and respect for the client. The nurse and the client also clarify client needs and establish mutual agreement on expected outcomes for the professional encounter.

Phase 3: Exploration. The client and the nurse examine and work on client needs and concerns. The nurse creates an environment to foster client sharing of needs and concerns. The nurse also helps the client manage anxiety resulting from discussion of sometimes potentially embarrassing personal issues. The nurse and the client work together to outline a plan to help the client. Finally, the nurse helps the client develop new skills to learn how to live with or resolve the concern (or need) for which the client sought assistance.

Phase 4: Termination. The nurse assesses the client's ability to independently manage and cope with the health-related issues. During this phase, the nurse summarizes client issues and accomplishments. The client and the nurse mutually agree to end the relationship.

Most of the approaches for developing a helping relationship address the need for the nurse to establish trust with clients by demonstrating the utmost respect for them.

Sometimes, the therapeutic relationship has permanent life-changing effects on clients. Occasionally, the nurse may encounter a former client in a social setting or the client may return to the health care setting for a brief visit. When this happens, memories of previous encounters may surface, resulting in an affirmation of the benefits of the helping relationship.

Roles of the Nurse in Therapeutic Relationships

The nurse assumes various roles, depending on the stage or phase of therapeutic relationship development