

Then and Now: The Critical Nature of Caring

The investigators performed a qualitative historical research study that examined the writings of Florence Nightingale in Victorian times. They read and analyzed Nightingale's work using latent concept analysis (a technique to reflect different traits of an abstract idea) to discover key themes that were indicative of nurses establishing and maintaining caring relationships with patients.

The authors identified the following key themes in Nightingale's writings that represented the nurse's caring relationship.

"Attend to" referred to the behaviors and actions needed to respond effectively to meet patient and environmental needs.

"Attention to" defined the nurse's ability to maintain focus and identify the needs of patients using thinking and observation skills.

"Nurture" meant that the nurse conducted herself in a manner that "cherishes, strengthens, encourages, supports and promotes growth, and protects her patients" (p. 230).

"Competent" referred to the nurse's ability to provide effective, safe, and excellent care using science and art.

"Genuine" meant that the nurse had a truthful, honest, and sincere character and was able to display real concern for patients.

Nightingale wrote about the importance of caring in nursing in the same way that many contemporary nursing theorists espouse the critical nature of caring in the development of helping and healing relationships to clients. Today's health care clients expect that nurses genuinely care for them as people and rely on the nurse's ability to remain cognitively focused while engaging in nursing assessments, perform complex nursing skills safely, meet their holistic needs, help them in times of distress, create a safe and therapeutic milieu, and provide education about health issues. Nightingale's caring themes address many key elements of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes presented in the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) competencies.

Wagner, D., & Whaite, B. (2010). An exploration of caring relationships in the writings of Florence Nightingale. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 28(4), 225–234.

Because of its abstract nature, the concept of caring is difficult to define. Many nurses identify caring as the essence of nursing. The following actions are frequently used by nurses to show that they care: presence (being physically, emotionally, and spiritually with another to enter the world of the other), sharing (giving of one's skills, thoughts, and knowledge to help another), supporting (providing fortifying help, displaying concern, trusting others, and affirming persons in their actions), and competence (education and clinical skill). A _____ creates the uplifting effects for persons involved: feelings of being respected, feelings of belonging, personal growth, personal transformation, wanting to learn to care, and desire to care (Beck, 2001). In daily client interactions, nurses primarily use communication to demonstrate caring or noncaring. Caring communication strategies empower clients while being therapeutic. In contrast, _____ typically creates a nontherapeutic "power-over" relationship, with the nurse dominating the client. Noncaring communication creates feelings of ill will among clients, nurses, and other members of the health care team. _____ presents selected differences between therapeutic and nontherapeutic communication